

Comma Rule Cheat Sheet

Rule #1: Items in a series - Use commas to separate items in a series.

Words in a series: *Tobacco, hammock, canoe, and moccasin* are four of the words that English-speaking people owe to Native Americans.

Phrases in a series: *Tightening the spokes, checking the tire pressure, and oiling the gears,* Carlos prepared his bike for the race.

Clauses in a series: We didn't know *where we were going, how we would get there, or when we would arrive.*

Rule #2: Two or more adjectives that come before a noun

Use a comma to separate two or more adjectives that come before noun.

* An Arabian horse is a fast, beautiful animal.

Rule #3: Compound sentences

Use a comma before FANBOYS (*for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so*) when they join TWO COMPLETE SENTENCES ONLY!

* We went to Cedar Point last week, and I was glad to see that the attendance in the park was very low.

Rule #4: Use commas to set off an expression that interrupts a sentence.

* Putting their things in their lockers, the kids got ready for class.

* Harvard College, founded in 1636, is the oldest college in the United States.

* Wayne Gretzky, who retired from professional hockey in 1999, held forty regular-season records.

Rule #5: Use commas to set off an appositive phrase that is nonessential.

* The doorman, Sandy McSouthers, parked Judge Ford's maroon Mercedes.

Rule #6: Use commas to set off words used in direct address.

* Jim, are you going to the movies with us?

Rule #7: Use commas to set off a parenthetical expression.

* In my opinion, there should be twenty more days in the average school year.

Rule #8: Use a comma after *yes, no, or any mild exclamations such as well or why* at the beginning of a sentence.

* Yes, I'd love another slice of pie.

Rule #9: Use a comma after an introductory phrase or clause.

Since last year, temperatures across the state have been unseasonably high.

Rule #10: Use commas to separate a series of days, dates, and years.

* The Smashing Pumpkins' first concert ever was on Wednesday, October 5, 1988, at the Cabaret Metro in Chicago.

* The delegates to the Constitutional Convention signed the Constitution on Monday, September 17, 1787, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Rule #11: Use commas to separate elements in addresses.

* Their house was located on 15 West Lincoln Street, Baltimore, Maryland.

* That house on Lincoln Street in Baltimore, Maryland, was spacious and beautiful.

* People that live in Cleveland, Ohio, have to endure long, gray winters.