



Punctuation Rules

- 1 Place a comma before a coordinate conjunction (and, but, for, nor, yet, or) when it joins two closely related sentences.
- 2 Place a semicolon between two closely related sentences not joined by a coordinate conjunction.
Note: Words like *however, therefore, moreover, consequently, hence*, etc. require a semicolon before them if they are joining two sentences.
- 3 Place a semicolon before a coordinate conjunction when it joins two closely related sentences if there is internal punctuation. EX: *I like apples, oranges, and grapes; but pears are my favorite fruit.*
- 4
 - a. Place a comma after an introductory adverbial clause.
 - b. Place a comma after a long introductory phrase.
 - c. Place a comma after any introductory phrase containing a verbal. EX: *Studying intently, Mary did not hear the thief enter her house.*
- 5 Commas separate members of a series or coordinate adjectives before a noun.
Note 1: Adjectives before a noun are coordinate if they can be reversed and joined by and.
Note 2: Members of a series containing commas are separated by semicolons.
- 6 Commas set off nonessential elements: nonessential appositives, parenthetical expressions, adverbial or adjective clauses, prepositional phrases, nonessential words, interrogative expressions at the ends of sentences, mild interjections, etc.
- 7 Commas set off words of direct address.
- 8 Commas or question or exclamation marks separate words of saying from the words of the direct quotation.
Note: After quoted material, commas and periods always go within the quotation marks; semicolons and colons, outside.
- 9 Commas follow the salutation of a friendly letter and the complimentary close of any letter; a colon follows the salutation of a business letter.
Note: The first letter of the salutation and the first letters of titles and nouns in the salutation are capitalized. Only the first letter of the first word of the complimentary close is capitalized.
- 10 Commas separate and follow items of address and date.
- 11 Colons are used after an independent clause to direct the reader's attention to an enumeration, a formal list, an illustration and a long quotation.
Note 1: Do not place a colon between a verb and its object or predicate nominative or between any other closely related parts of a sentence.
Note 2: A capital follows a colon only to begin a new sentence.
Note 3: See also the following uses of the colon: John 3:16 and 7:30pm
- 12 Commas mark the omission of verbs that have already been expressed.