GRAMMAR AND MECHANICS
Using the Comma

Commas are used to separate or set off certain words, phrases, and clauses within sentences. As with other forms of punctuation, the proper use of commas helps to regulate the flow of information in your writing, which enables the reader to have a better understanding and appreciation of your content.

USE A COMMA:

- before a coordinating conjunction (**and**, **but**, **or**, **nor**, **so**, **for**, **yet**) to connect independent clauses:

    The class did very well on the exam, **and** we shared in their achievement.

    The first speaker was exceptional, **but** the next speaker was not well received.

    We can work on the project independently, **or** the entire group can meet and work together.

- after most introductory words, phrases, and clauses:

    Consequently, we had to miss the performance.

    In the last year, we have doubled our productivity.

    When the meeting was over, the refreshment committee served coffee and cake before everyone went home.

    In the above sentence, a comma is used to separate the introductory dependent clause from the independent clause; however, a comma is unnecessary when a dependent clause follows an independent clause. As such, there is no comma to separate "coffee and cake" from "before everyone went home."

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- to separate three or more items in a series (even though the comma before the last item is considered to be optional):

    Frank played **baseball**, **hockey**, and **football** in high school.

    The painting incorporated **vivid color**, **linear movement**, and **abstract expression**.

- to separate coordinate evaluative adjectives:

  The **sunny, cool** day was perfect for lying in the dark green grass.

  In the above sentence, "**sunny**" and "**cool**" are used as coordinate adjectives that modify the word "day"; however, there is no comma between "dark" and "green" because these adjectives cannot be reversed: The grass is not dark and green; it is dark green.

- to set off a transitional expression from the rest of the sentence:

  > We did, **however**, arrive in time for the fire drill.

- to set off a nonrestrictive element in a sentence (a modifier that contains nonessential or parenthetical information)

  > The auction, **which was held in the auditorium**, raised twice as much as last year.

  > Professor Reyes, **who was born in Puerto Rico**, was named the chair of the department.

- to set off a nonrestrictive appositive (a noun or noun phrase that renames or provides additional information about a prior noun or pronoun):

  > Jack Trimble, **my best friend**, is an accountant.

  > Maria went to see the film with Miranda, **a colleague from the office**.

  In each of the above examples, if the additional information was omitted it would not change the meaning of the sentence.

- after a verb that introduces a quotation:

  > The instructor **remarked,** "Let's begin with the first chapter."

- to separate items in an address (street address, city, state) or in a date (day of the month, year):

  > My new address is **4604 Linden Court, San Diego, California** 92213.

  > His date of birth was **December 15, 1965**.

- to separate the salutation (greeting) from the message in an informal letter (**Dear Alice,**) and the closing from the signature in all letters (**Yours truly,**).

- to set off the name of someone being spoken to directly:

  > **Jamal**, please answer the telephone.

DO NOT USE A COMMA:

- after an introductory word, phrase, or clause that functions as the subject of the sentence:

    Providing much needed aid was the most important issue.

- after the final adjective in a series:

    She was a kind, generous, and respected person.

    In the above sentence, the word "**respected**" is the final adjective in a series of words that modify the word "person" and does not use a comma.