

Comma Rules

I can use punctuation (comma, ellipsis, dash) to indicate a pause or break (L2a).

Keep this list handy all year and refer to it when writing, revising, editing, and reviewing my comments. I expect you to use ALL these rules at a proficient level before leaving middle school.

#	Comma Rule	Example
1	Use a comma to separate independent clauses (sentences) joined together with a coordinating conjunction (FANBOYS).	She wanted her students to master comma usage, so she gave them lots of examples and opportunities to practice.
2	Use a comma to separate three or more words, phrases, or clauses in a list. Note: Standard English follows the Oxford Comma rule that places a comma before "and" in the list.	The state standards indicate students should know how to use a comma, an ellipsis, and a dash in their writing.
3	Use a comma between coordinate adjectives which describe the same noun and can be switched.	The musty, hot stench enveloped his nostrils as the cantankerous woman passed by his chair.
4	Use a comma after a dependent clause at the beginning of a sentence.	Because his family moved over the summer, Stan didn't play on a baseball team this year.
5	Use a comma after introductory phrases.	Running toward the exit, Sammie realized summer had finally started.
6	Use a comma after introductory adverbs.	No, I don't think I'm going to that concert.
7	Use a comma around interrupters that are not essential to the sentence (like an appositive/appositive phrase).	Mr. Langley, my 7th grade science teacher, named me as his Spirit of Canfield last spring.
8	Use a comma to separate a quote from the rest of the sentence.	According to NCAA research in April 2016, "More than 480,000 compete as NCAA athletes, and just a select few within each sport move on to compete at the professional or Olympic level."
9	Use a comma to separate dialogue from the rest of the sentence.	"Please return the magazine on your way out of class," requested the teacher. "Research," she said, "has found that an unhealthy diet increases the risk of cancer."
10	Use a comma in direct address (when directly talking to someone).	Jason, please stop making noises. Do you mind, Becky, if I borrow your book?
11	Use a comma to separate city and state.	I grew up in Bonners Ferry, Idaho.
12	Use a comma to separate the street address from the city/state when writing it in sentence format.	Mail her thank you card to 1234 Main Street, Hayden, Idaho 83835.
13	Use a comma to separate the day of the week from the month, and the day of the month from the year. Also, place a comma after the year when the sentence continues.	July 4, 1776, is considered the birth date of liberty because the Declaration of Independence was signed.