

The Comma, Part 2

The Second Five Rules of Comma Use

1. TO SET OFF NONESSENTIAL (PARENTHETICAL) ELEMENTS COMING IN THE MIDDLE OF A SENTENCE

Use a comma pair (one comma before and one after) to separate words and phrases that come after a noun and are not essential in answering the question *which?*

All PCC students, **who recently benefited from the passage of a bond measure in the election**, will receive a discount on parking passes next term.

- This sentence is talking about *all PCC students* (not just certain ones).
 - All of them will receive a discount on parking passes next term.
- **Additional, nonessential information** is offered:
 - All of the students recently benefited from the passage of a bond measure.
 - The reason this information is nonessential is because **it doesn't help us decide which students**.
 - We already know which students: **all of them**.
- Because this information (it's a dependent clause) **could be put into parentheses**, it is also referred to as **a parenthetical element**.
- **Parenthetical elements are surrounded by a comma pair**:
 - All PCC students, **who recently benefited from the passage of a bond measure in the election**, will receive a discount on parking passes next term.

All PCC students **who purchased a parking pass last term** will receive a discount on parking passes next term.

- This sentence is talking about *only certain PCC students*.
- We can ask this question: **Which ones?**
 - Will all PCC students receive a discount on parking passes next term?
 - **No**. Only those who purchased a parking pass last term will.
 - Therefore, the dependent clause **who purchased a parking pass last term** is essential to the sentence because it answers the question, Which PCC students?
- So, it is **not a parenthetical element**; it is **essential**.
- Therefore, we **do not use any commas** around this word group.
 - All PCC students **who purchased a parking pass last term** will receive a discount on parking passes next term.

For the following, ask yourself if the underlined word group is necessary in order to answer the question which one or which ones about the noun that comes right before it. If it is *not* necessary for that purpose, put the word group in a comma pair.

- a. My brother who is a student at Ohio State University is visiting me. (There is just one brother in this case.)
- b. My mother an immigrant from Italy took many years to learn English well. (Obviously, there's just one mother.)
- c. All of her friends who live in Portland will be able to attend her wedding, but those living farther away will not.
- d. My best friend who lives in Portland will be the maid of honor.

- e. Writing 90 students who study the stages of the writing process and how to revise and edit generally go on to Writing 115.
- f. Writing 90 students who successfully complete the course with a C or greater will be able to go on to Writing 115.
- g. The writing student exhausted and stressed finally decided to take her exam.
- h. The colors red and blue remind me of the Fourth of July.
- i. The cupcakes frosted with red and blue icing looked delicious.

2. BEFORE NONESSENTIAL ELEMENTS AT THE END OF A SENTENCE.

The idea here is the same as above, but because the word group comes at the end of a sentence, it is introduced by one comma, not between a comma pair. Follow the same technique as above, asking if the underlined word group is necessary to answer the question *which one?* or *which ones?* If it is, do *not insert a comma*.

1. I will be entertaining my brother who is a student at Ohio State University.
2. I have four brothers, all in college. I will be entertaining my brother who is a student at Ohio State University.
3. I really enjoy painting which is my favorite art form.
4. She will be serving asparagus my favorite vegetable.

3. BEFORE DEPENDENT CLAUSES BEGINNING WITH THOUGH, ALTHOUGH, and EVEN THOUGH, COMING AT THE END OF A SENTENCE

BUT GENERALLY NOT:

before dependent clauses starting with other subordinating conjunctions (like before, after, since, and until)

1. The boss had written a letter before the arrival of the shipment.
2. Assume that I am lost if you do not hear from me by noon.
3. Susan sat by her phone the whole day before she realized that it was turned off.
4. I ordered shortcake for dessert although I really do not like strawberries.
5. I was unhappy because we had not won the match.
6. I was unhappy even though we had won the match.

4. TO SET OFF SHORT PARENTHETICALS LIKE HOWEVER, OF COURSE, THEREFORE, IN FACT

- I don't want change. I will, **however**, take dollar bills.
- It is necessary, **of course**, to register for each additional class.
- I would ask, **therefore**, that everyone turn in their paper immediately.

BUT NOT:

when such words are conjunctive adverbs introducing an independent clause

→ *That would create a comma splice!*



ASK YOURSELF:

Does a **complete sentence** follow this word? If so, put a **semicolon** before it and a **comma** after.

- I don't want change; **however**, I will take dollar bills.
- Paying twice is not necessary; **of course**, you will need to register for each additional class.
- Time is up; **therefore**, I ask that everyone turn in their paper immediately.

Comma splices (Don't do this!):

- I don't want change, however, I will take dollar bills. ☹ **Don't do that! It's wrong.**
- Paying twice is not necessary, of course, you will need to register for each additional class. ☹ **Boo!**
- Time is up, therefore, I ask that everyone turn in their paper immediately. ☹ **Nope. Not okay!**

5. TO SET OFF THESE OTHER SENTENCE ELEMENTS:

A. Interjections and Direct Address:

Oh & Well: **Oh**, I love that! **Well**, if you think so!

Yes & No: **Yes**, I will be present. **No**, I can't come. **Oh, no**, I don't like that. **Well, yes**, I do!

Address: **Dr. Bianco**, may I have an extension? Oh, **Bob**, don't do that! Well, no, **Sue**, I don't!

B. Quotation indicators:

He said / She said / We said / They said (etc.)

- **He said**, "I like milk chocolate."
- "I don't. I like dark chocolate," **she said**.

NOTE: Use a comma pair if the quotation indicator interrupts a complete sentence:

"I don't like milk chocolate as much," **she said**, "as I like dark chocolate."

BUT NOT: If the quotation indicator does not interrupt a complete sentence; use a period after it:

"I don't like milk chocolate at all," **she said**. "I like dark chocolate."

AND NOT: If a quotation in front of the indicator ends in a question mark or exclamation point:

- “I don’t like milk chocolate at all!” **she said.** “I like dark chocolate.”
- “Do you like white chocolate?” **he asked.**
- “Oh, no! Yuck!” **she exclaimed.** Then she asked, “**Do you like it?**”
- “Oh, no,” **he said.** “I like milk chocolate only.”

FINALLY, DON’T:

use commas around *any and all* quotations, just those involving a quotation indicator like he said/she said!

- He used to call her “**Maggie Pie**” when she was small.
- I read the article entitled “**What the President Will Do Now**” in *USA Today*.
- The globe fell to the floor with a loud “**Bam!**”

C. ABBREVIATIONS SUCH AS etc., Inc., Jr., i.e., **AND** e.g.,

1. Bring supplies such as pens, paper, pencils, erasers, **etc.** ← notice there is no punctuation after “*such as*”
2. He brought supplies such as pens, paper, pencils, erasers, **etc.,** to class. ← notice the **comma pair**

Don’t use “etc.” very often in college writing.

3. Send that letter to Haliburton, **Inc.,** before it’s too late.
4. We studied Martin Luther King, **Jr.** We studied Martin Luther King, **Jr.,** all month.

- The abbreviation **i.e.** means “that is,” as in: I want a kitten, **i.e.,** one younger than three months of age.
- The abbreviation **e.g.** means “for example,” as in: I like baby animals, **e.g.,** kittens and puppies.

D. TO SEPARATE NUMBERS IN A DATE ONLY WHEN THERE IS A MONTH, DATE, AND THEN YEAR:

- D-Day is June 6, 1944.
- June 6, 1944, is a day that will live in infamy! ← **notice the comma pair**
- The Western Allies invaded Normandy to liberate mainland Europe from the Nazis on the 6th of June 1944. ← **notice that the date comes *before* the month**
- The military recorded that date as 6 June 1944. ← **date *before* month**
- D-Day occurred in June 1944. ← **no date**

E. TO SEPARATE CITY FROM STATE WHEN NO ZIP CODE (AND CITY OR STATE FROM COUNTRY)

- We live in **Portland, Oregon.**
- My address is **Portland, OR 97216.** ← **notice the zip code**
- I lived in **Portland, Oregon,** before I lived in **San Francisco, California.** ← **notice the comma pair because the sentence continues**

- We visited **Salem, Oregon; Olympia, Washington; and Sacramento, California.** ← notice semicolons separating the city-state series elements, because they contain “internal commas”
- I was born in **Portland, Oregon, USA.**

F. AFTER AN INTRODUCTORY GREETING AND A COMPLIMENTARY CLOSING IN A LETTER:

- Dear Mike,
- Best wishes, ←notice that the second word in the closing is not capitalized

G. TO SEPARATE EVERY THREE DIGITS IN A NUMBER

- That family spent **\$11,750** on groceries and **\$24,000** on housing last year.
- The company’s assets were **\$5,000,000**, and this was only **\$100,000** more than last year.

PUNCTUATE AND TELL WHICH RULE (IF RULE 5, BE SURE TO INDICATE WHICH LETTER, SUCH AS 5a):

- __1. We visited Boston Massachusetts before returning home.
- __2. He said “I don’t remember what she said.”
- __3. Maria who studied hard will pass.
- __4. What do you intend to do Hamlet?
- __5. They live near Boston MA 02110
- __6. “Do not” she said “wait for me.”
- __7. We arrived before they had gone.
- __8. We arrived first although they had left before we had.
- __9. November 11 1918 is a day worth remembering
- __10. It was raining too hard, so the game was therefore cancelled.
- __11. It was raining too hard therefore the game was cancelled.
- __12. Oh no Maria! You couldn’t have been born on the 4th of July!
- __13. Did you watch that *Seinfeld* episode called “Newman’s Date”?
- __14. When you pack, bring warm things such as a sweater gloves hat etc. in your backpack.
- __15. There are many cities whose populations exceed 5000000 e.g. Mumbai India Beijing China Tokyo Japan and New York New York USA.

NEXT:

1. Review the **first 5 comma rules** (in the Week 5 Comma Part 1 packet, at www.marthabianco.com/WR90/Commasx.pdf)
2. Do **Quiz No. 1 for Ch. 11** at http://college.cengage.com/devenglish/brandon/sentences_paragraphs/5e/resources.html.
3. Take the **Ch. 11 Comma Practice test** at www.marthabianco.com/WR90/Chapter11_Practice.pdf
4. Bring a one-page, front-only cheat sheet to class for a **COMMA TEST IN CLASS** next week!