

All About Commas

Geographical names

Use a comma to separate geographical names. Use another comma at the end of the geographical name.

Europeans settled in **Grand Rapids, Michigan**, when the land belonged to the Ottawa Tribe.

This comma separates the two geographical names.

This comma signals the end of the geographical name.

Dates

Use a comma in between the day and year. Use another comma after the year.

On March **31, 1883**, Blackburn Olympic football team won the FA Cup Final.

This comma separates the day (31) and the year (1883).

This comma signals the end of the date.

Addresses

Use a comma at the end of an address.

They say not to give out your personal address on dating sites, so I listed mine as 143 Bostwick Ave. **NE**, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

The comma after "NE" signals the end of the address.

Interrupters

Interrupters are non-essential to meaning of sentence. Use a comma at the beginning of the interrupter to pause the sentence and another at the end to resume the sentence.

The restaurant is nice. The food, **on the other hand**, is bland.

Commas are placed before and after the phrase "on the other hand," because the phrase is not essential to the meaning of the sentence.

Free modifiers

Free modifiers are phrases at the end of a sentence that refer to the subject at the beginning or middle of the sentence. Only use a free modifier if it is clear what part of the sentence is being modified.

😊 Nancy waved enthusiastically at the docking ship, **laughing joyously**.

Who is laughing joyously? Nancy.

⊘ Lisa waved at Nancy, **laughing joyously**.

Is Lisa laughing joyously, or is Nancy? The sentence is unclear.

Lists

Use a comma to separate a list of three or more words, phrases, or clauses.

They decided to plant **lilac, rose, and blueberry bushes** in the front yard.

Commas are placed in-between the three words "lilac," "rose," and "blueberry" because they are all variations of the bushes that will be planted. Notice there is not a comma after "blueberry."

Similar adjectives

Use a comma to separate two or more adjectives that describe same noun.

They were **brilliant, captivating hosts** at dinner last night.

The words "brilliant" and "captivating" both describe the hosts, so a comma is placed between those adjectives.