

Comma Worksheet

The comma is the most frequent used (and abused) aid to reading. Just as pauses and variations in voice pitch help to convey the meaning of spoken sentences, commas help to clarify the meaning of written sentences. (Try to avoid using pausing and breathing, however, since that causes confusion. Sentence structure is a much better way to punctuate.)

When the lightning struck, James Harvey fainted.

When the lightning struck James, Harvey fainted.

The sound of a sentence can serve as a guide in using commas. But many times sound is not a dependable guide. Rules that govern comma usage may become detailed and involved unless they are presented in an orderly manner. For this reason, consider first these five basic categories of comma usage:

1. A comma precedes the coordinating conjunction joining two **independent** clauses.
2. A comma follows certain **introductory** elements.
3. A comma separates items in a **series**.
4. **Nonrestrictive** clauses and phrases and other parenthetical elements are set off with commas.
5. Items in dates and addresses are set off with commas.

Area One

A COMMA PRECEDES THE COORDINATING CONJUNCTION JOINING TWO INDEPENDENT CLAUSES.

Note the following pattern in compound sentences:

INDEPENDENT CLAUSE, (**and, but, or, nor, for, yet, so**) INDEPENDENT CLAUSE.

Study the use of commas in the compound sentences below.

- A moment later we were traveling at top speed, and we almost drove off the side of the road.
- Most of his hair has fallen out, but he still acts young at heart.
- Justice stands upon power, or there is no justice.