

Quick Clues to English  
LBCC Developmental Studies

**Six Common Reasons to Use a Comma**

**1. Separate items in a series**

Ex.: Eggs, milk, bread, and cat food are all that we need from the store.  
The coach ran out on the field, called to the referee, and then ran back.

**2. Set off introductory material**

Ex.: While we were studying, the rain storm began.  
Yes, I'll be home at four o'clock.

**3. Before and after words interrupting the flow of thought**

Ex.: This book, for example, is the best one we've found.  
My son, who hikes a lot, will soon climb Mt. Hood.

**4. Before two complete thoughts connected by and, but, for, or, nor, so, yet**

(Note: each thought must have its own subject and verb set.)

Ex.: We went to the game, but we lost the tickets.  
I went to the store, and I bought groceries.

**5. Set of a direct quotation from the rest of the sentence**

Ex.: "That is right," she said.  
"That idea," he replied, "is not new."

**6. For certain everyday material**

➤ To separate the items in an address:

Ex.: They lived at 1414 Hill Street, Atlanta, Georgia, in the heart of the South.  
I drove past 925 Clover Street but didn't see anyone.

➤ To separate the items in a date:

(Note: do *not* use a comma when one part of a date is used alone.)

Ex.: School will be closed Friday, December 31, 2011, for a celebration.  
We should arrive on June 6 at six o'clock.

➤ Persons Spoken to:

Ex.: Sam, where did you go fishing?  
I hope, my friend, that you will join me for dinner.

Ex.: They lived at 1414 Hill Street, Atlanta, Georgia, in the heart of the South.

**Keep it simple!**

**Remember these six reasons to use a comma:**

- 1. To separate items in a series**
- 2. To set off introductory material**
- 3. Before and after words that interrupt the flow of thought in a sentence**
- 4. Before two complete thoughts connected by *and*, *but*, *for*, *or*, *nor*, *so*, *yet***
- 5. To set off a direct quotation from the rest of a sentence**
- 6. For certain everyday material**