

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**