

## COMMAS (STYLISTIC USES)

As mentioned previously, there are instances where commas are mandatory in college writing, and there are instances where commas simply are used for stylistic purposes in college writing.

Stylistic uses of commas can help readability while helping you to appear more knowledgeable and competent (in terms of knowing when to punctuate).

### INTRODUCTORY ELEMENTS

The use of a comma after an introductory element is one such stylistic use of commas.

#### COMMON INTRODUCTORY ELEMENTS

- +Regular Adverbs (Eventually, Generally, Usually, etc.)
- +Phrases (After the concert, Down the street, etc.)
- +Dependent Clauses (When I go to bed, etc.)
- +Interjections (Hello, Gosh, Wow, etc.)
- +Coordinating Conjunctions (And, But, So, Since, etc.)
- +Conjunctive Adverbs (However, Furthermore, etc.)
- +Exclamations (Hello, Wow, etc.)

When you have an introductory element, most writers prefer to separate this element from the independent clause (or complete sentence) by adding a comma.

EX:

After the game, we went to eat hamburgers.

Eventually, we won the last game of the season.

And, I cannot agree more.

Hello, welcome to Salt Lake City.

Of course, you can come to the play with us.

Notice how the material at the front of the sentence is extra information. The elements at the beginning are useful, but a pause before the actual idea may be preferable. Therefore, the use of a comma before the actual sentence is favorable.

### ABOUT COORDINATING CONJUNCTIONS

Common coordinating conjunctions (For, And, Nor, But, Or, Yet, So) appearing before independent clauses are dubious to some English instructors. However, think of this idea: A coordinating conjunction and a comma may help to show a final element in a series of events, an explanation, or a process. The conjunction signals the last item of the series. Consider the example below:

EX:

School is over. The students are gone. And, the teacher finally receives a vacation.

Notice how AND appears as an introductory element. This presence of the word, AND, actually helps the sentence and the surrounding structures by helping to manage this sequence of events. The word, AND, provides a sense of closure.

### INDEPENDENT AND DEPENDENT CLAUSES (AT THE ENDS OF SENTENCES)

Using a comma between an independent and dependent clause (towards the end of a sentence) is preferable when the subordinators used may also work as a coordinating conjunction.

Sometimes, subordinators may serve different purposes (as outlined below); however, because of their current usage and their different properties in introducing non-essential elements and/or dependent clauses, we typically use commas to set them away from the independent clause (just in case).

### COMMON SUBORDINATORS (NEEDING COMMAS):

Although (may function as a coordinating conjunction or subordinator)

Because (may function as a coordinating conjunction or subordinator)

Since (may function as a coordinating conjunction or subordinator)

Until (may function as a coordinating conjunction or subordinator)

When (may function as a coordinating conjunction or subordinator)

Whenever (may function as a coordinating conjunction or subordinator)

Where (may function as a coordinating conjunction or subordinator)

While (may function as a coordinating conjunction or subordinator)

Which (may function as a coordinating conjunction or subordinator)

EX:

Marianne goes shopping at the mall, while Tom is running,

Heidi has chosen to become an administrator, which she thinks is wonderful.

I will stay home, until I regain my strength.

If a fox eats a fish, then the fish will be eaten.

I have not filed my taxes, since it would not be prudent without the correct forms.

We would like to camp for the entire week, although we do not have enough food.

Some subordinators do not require commas, even for stylistic purposes. Many of these words are strictly subordinators.

### COMMON SUBORDINATORS (NOT NEEDING COMMAS):

After (may function as a subordinator and preposition)

As (may function as a subordinator and simile element)

Before (may function as a subordinator and preposition)

Than (may function as a subordinator and for comparative/superlative expressions)

That (may function as a subordinator and article/adjective)

Though (serves mainly as a subordinator)

Till (may function as a subordinator and adverb)

EX:

Jennifer has the hat that I was given at Christmas.

I hope to go to the store after we have returned from the mall.

I will remain in the store till the supervisor sends me home.  
I will go for a walk in the country as I have gone for a walk in the city already.

### CONDITIONALS

When using a conditional expression, use a comma before then.

EX:

If John shows fear, then the dog may attack him.

If Daniel gives Mary a flower, then she may go with him to the dance.