

Punctuation Rules: Commas and End of Sentence

Commas

1. Don't put a comma between main sentence parts: subject, verb, object/complement.

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(subject + verb + complement)

2. Don't join or "splice" two independent clauses by a comma only (aka the "comma splice").

X Writing tutors teach clarity, readers easily understand clear writing.

3. To join two independent clauses, put a comma before the coordinating conjunction (e.g., and, but, for, or, nor, so, yet).

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✓ Writing tutors teach clarity, and readers easily understand clear writing.

(independent clause 1 + comma + conjunction + independent clause 2)

4. To use an introductory (or dependent) clause before an independent clause, put a comma after the dependent clause.

X If a passage is ambiguous it has at least two possible interpretations.

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(dependent clause + comma + independent clause)

End Of Sentence Punctuation

1. Sentences must end with a punctuation mark (e.g., . ! ?).

✓ I found the recent electoral debate riveting.

✓ I am outraged at the recent election results!

✓ What do you think about the recent election results?

2. Use a comma to introduce a quotation. Use normal sentence punctuation within quotation marks when quoting directly.

✗ According to Joe Hockey “The Maple Leafs will win the Stanley Cup this year”.

✓ According to Joe Hockey, “The Maple Leafs will win the Stanley Cup this year.”

✓ Joe Hockey asked, “Will the Maple Leafs win the Stanley Cup this year?”

(introductory phrase + comma + direct quotation in quotation marks + end of sentence punctuation)

3. If your sentence starts with a direct quotation, use a comma in place of end of sentence punctuation.

✗ “The Maple Leafs will win the Stanley Cup this year.” said Joe Hockey.

✓ “The Maple Leafs will win the Stanley Cup this year,” said Joe Hockey.

(direct quotation in quotation marks + comma + identifying phrase + end of sentence punctuation)

4. When you use a parenthetical citation at the end of a sentence, use a period after the citation.

X The Maple Leafs rarely win the Stanley Cup. (Hockey, 2014)

✓ The Maple Leafs rarely win the Stanley Cup (Hockey, 2014).

(original idea from source + APA style citation + period)

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