

COMMA USAGE

Using commas can be tricky, especially if you have heard differing opinions on comma usage in the past. However, some rules are always the same. **Use commas:**

When listing a series of items

I speak English, Spanish, and French.

David, Leigh, and Robert want to learn a new language.

When using a conjunction (and, or, but, nor, for, so, yet) to combine two sentences

Instead:

Most citizens of Spain and France are members of the Catholic Church.

To separate a *that* clause from the rest of the sentence

She told me, that she would like to learn Spanish.

She thinks, that it would be a useful skill.

Instead:

She thinks that it would be a useful skill.

To join incomplete sentences with a conjunction

I want to travel to France, and want to go to Spain.

My sister wants to go there, but

Instead:

My sister wants

To separate an adjective from an adjacent noun

He is an engaging and knowledgeable, professor.

It was an informative, course.

Instead:

It was an informative course.

To break up an adjective phrase (an adjective modified by another word; these words depend on each other and should not be separated)

My French book has a dark, blue cover

My professor gives well, developed explanations.

Instead:

My professor gives well developed explanations.

If you are unsure about where to place commas, you may want to read your paper aloud and place commas where you naturally pause in speaking. However, this method is not always correct. You should not put commas in places that interrupt your flow of speaking. When in doubt, check your comma placement using the rules listed above or a writing handbook.

Sources Consulted

Ruszkiewicz, John, Christy Friend, and Maxine Hairston, eds. *The Scott Foresman Handbook for Writers*. 2nd ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2007.

Yarber, Mary Laine, and Robert E. Yarber, eds. *Reviewing Basic Grammar*. 4th ed. United States: Addison-Wesley Educational Publishers, 1997.