8 Comma Rules

Directions: After each rule and example, add commas to the sentences where needed.

1) Use commas to separate items in a list of three or more.

Remember that an “item” may refer to a noun, verb, or adjective phrase.

Note: Usage of a comma to separate the second-to-last from the last item is optional.

Example: I need to buy eggs milk lettuce and bread.

I need to buy eggs, milk, lettuce, and bread.

1. Carlos wants to visit Paris Italy Germany and China.
2. My favorite colors are blue red and pink.
3. I like to go hiking fishing swimming and camping during summer.
4. I have to clean my room walk the dog and take out the trash.
5. The tree is very tall old and green.
6. I need to visit my mother wash my car and buy six stamps.

2) Use a comma to separate independent clauses (complete thoughts) when they are joined by the following conjunctions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>and</th>
<th>or</th>
<th>for</th>
<th>nor</th>
<th>so</th>
<th>but</th>
<th>yet</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Note: The comma should come before the conjunction.

Example: I want to buy the new jacket but it is too expensive.

I want to buy the new jacket, but it is too expensive.

In this example, there are two independent clauses:

#1: “I want to buy the new jacket.” (complete thought)

#2 “It is too expensive.” (complete thought)

These clauses are separated by a comma before the conjunction “but”.

1. We can go to the zoo or we can go to the movie theater.
2. They like chocolate but they like vanilla better.
3. We will go to the restaurant now for we are very hungry.
4. I do not like biology nor do I like chemistry.
5. James wants to leave now yet we must wait for his little brother.
6. Terry is working on a project and he should be finished with it next week.

3) Use a comma to separate a dependent clause (incomplete thought) from an independent clause (complete thought).

Here are some examples of sentences with dependent and independent clauses:

1) When I get older, I will be able to drive. \( \rightarrow \) (Dependent), (Independent).
2) If you are good, I will buy you a toy. \( \rightarrow \) (Dependent), (Independent).

Example: Without water the plant will die.

\[ \text{Without water, the plant will die.} \]

1. In five minutes the building will be closed.
2. When I get home I am going to brush my teeth.
3. Until I reach my goal I will not stop working.
4. If I get a new job I will be very happy.
5. To become an astronaut it takes much hard work and determination.
6. Because she is only twelve she is not old enough to drive.

4) Use a comma(s) to separate any word or phrase from the rest of the sentence that is not essential to the sentence's meaning. This phrase usually provides extra information about the subject.

Here are some examples of sentences with words/phrases that are not essential to the sentence’s meaning:

1) My brother, a 26 year old male, is watching TV.
2) Amy Rivers, my best friend, is going to the mall today.
3) I am ready for my dad, a hard working man, to come home.

Example: My mother on the other hand does not like chocolate.

\[ \text{My mother, on the other hand, does not like chocolate.} \]

1. Daniel Garrison a farmer wakes up very early.
2. Tanner my teacher is wearing a gray shirt.
3. The car a 1967 ford mustang is very fast.
4. When school ends today at 3:15 p.m. we will play soccer.
5. Gold watches for example are going on sale today.
6. My favorite color navy blue is very popular.
5) Use a comma to separate a quotation from the rest of a sentence.

Example: “We need to buy more sugar” she said “before it runs out!”

“We need to buy more sugar,” she said, “before it runs out!”

1. “I am tired” he muttered.
2. He said “We need to lower taxes!”
3. “If I don’t wake up in time” he whispered “I will be in trouble.”
4. “Today will be rainy” the weatherman said with a frown.
5. The boy watched his mother and wondered “Could I ever be that strong?”
6. “Okay” spoke the teacher excitedly “Time’s up!”

6) Use a comma to separate an introductory element from the rest of a sentence.

Example: Hi how are you?

Hi, how are you?

1. Yes I would like more water please.
2. Sorry we do not have enough room.
3. Well I hope the problem will be fixed soon.
4. However I am very good at math.
5. Wait is there another way?
6. Unfortunately we do not have enough time.

7) Use a comma to separate the name of a city from a country or state.

Example: I live in Chapel Hill North Carolina.

I live in Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

1. We are moving to Spokane Washington.
2. I visited Florence Italy last summer.
3. The hurricanes hit Tulsa Oklahoma and Destin Florida.

8) Use a comma to separate the day of the week, the day of the month, and the year.

Example: Today is Thursday April 18 1943.

Today is Thursday, April 18, 1943.

1. Tomorrow will be Sunday December 2.
2. George Washington was born on February 22 1732.
3. I will be sixteen on Tuesday the 6th of July 1582.
4. September 11 2001 is a date that will be remembered.
3 Comma Rules
(Practice Quiz)

Directions: Add commas to the following sentences where needed.

Section 1: Lists of three or more.
1. My three favorite foods are pasta pizza and ice cream.
2. I need to call Sally Tom Brad and Kelly about the party.
3. The brown fluffy large dog ran across the street.
4. I have to run to the store get my hair cut and pick up the kids from daycare.
5. Jessica sings with power passion and strength.
6. The colors of the sunset include red orange yellow and pink.

Section 2: Separating Independent Clauses.
1. I like to run but not when it’s hot.
2. We can go to the grocery store or we can go to the mall.
3. I do not want a dog nor do I want a cat.
4. Karen wants to go to the farm yet her sister does not like farms.
5. We will go to the grocery store for we are out of food.
6. The car needs repairs but we cannot afford the costs.

Section 3: Separating Independent and Dependent Clauses.
1. When I get to the mall I will go to the food court.
2. After ten minutes I asked the nurse about the medicine.
3. Because the car broke down I had to call for help.
4. When the flight lands I will hug my family.
5. Until the gas prices go down I will work two jobs.

Section 4: Separating phrases that are not essential from the rest of the sentence.
1. Tomorrow Wednesday we will take a trip to the zoo.
2. My brother a 22 year old male graduated from college today.
3. I like video games but my sister on the other hand does not.
4. You however are very sunburned.
5. John for example likes to work.

Section 5: Using commas to separate quotes.

1. “Gas is too expensive” said the experienced driver.
2. “Ouch” screamed the boy after he was stung by a bee.
3. The sister told the brother “of course I will pick you up.”
4. “Ready, Set, Go” yelled the mom before the treasure hunt.
5. The crowd cheered “Happy Birthday” as the party started.
6. “Yes” said the girl to her mother “I am on my way home.”

Section 6: Introductory Elements.

1. Yes we can find a place for you to stay over the weekend.
2. I’m sorry I did not understand what you said.
3. Excuse me you left your bag on the counter.
4. Wait I think we need to make a left turn up ahead.
5. Unfortunately my favorite flavor was sold out.
6. Well you can call again tomorrow to see if Mr. Roberts is in.

Section 7: Separating towns, states, and countries.

1. Paris France is my favorite place to visit.
2. The capital of the United States is Washington D.C.
3. Taylor Lives in Nashville TN.

Section 8: Separating days and months.

2. The Summer Olympics will begin on Friday August 8th 2008.
3. His Birthday is on February 23rd 1972.
Apostrophes

The apostrophe has two primary functions:

1) to show possession of a noun
2) to show the omission of letters

1) to show possession of a noun

• add 's to the singular form of the word (even if it ends in -s):
  I drive near the president’s house every day.
  I like James's car.

• add ' to the end of plural nouns that end in -s:
  These are my sisters’ dresses.
  These are my friends’ pencils.

• add 's to the last noun to show joint possession of an object:
  We are at Todd and Anne's apartment.

Note: Apostrophes should not be used with possessive pronouns because possessive pronouns already show possession — they don't need an apostrophe. His, her(s), its, my, mine, your(s), our(s), their(s) are all possessive pronouns.

Note: As a general rule, if the possessive noun is an inanimate object (not living, no causal agency) then no apostrophe is needed. There are exceptions to this rule, however.

Example: That is the door of the car. → That is the car door.

In the example, notice that the car does not need a possessive apostrophe because it is an inanimate object.

Directions: Change the “______ of ______” phrases into possessive noun phrases using an apostrophe.

Example: That is the house of David. → That is David’s house.

1) This is the shoe of the girl. → ________________________________.
2) We are at the room of the hotel. → ________________________________.
3) He is the son of Marcus. → ________________________________.
4) This is the house of Julie and Juan. → ________________________________.
5) Please close the door of the car. → ________________________________.

6) The flowers of the plant are red. → ________________________________.

7) The website of the College is confusing. → ________________________________.

8) I want to play the guitar of Ernesto. → ________________________________.

9) Do you want to walk to the side of the river? → ________________________________.

10) I want to ride in the car of Bobbie. → ________________________________.

2) to show the omission of letters and to form contractions

- Apostrophes are used to show any omission of letters in a word.

- Apostrophes are also used to form contractions. A contraction is a combination of two words which results in a single word. The apostrophe is used where letters have been omitted. Contractions are common in speaking and in informal writing.

- Here are some examples of contractions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Affirmative Contractions</th>
<th>Negative Contractions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pronoun</td>
<td>to be</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>I am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>you</td>
<td>you’re</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>we</td>
<td>we’re</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>they</td>
<td>they’re</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>he</td>
<td>he’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>she</td>
<td>she’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>it</td>
<td>it’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>there</td>
<td>there’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>that</td>
<td>that’s</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** the only time you need to use an apostrophe for “it is” is when forming the contraction “it’s”. “Its” (with no apostrophe) is used to show possession.

**Directions:** Use apostrophes in the following sentences to make contractions.

**Example:** I am your friend. → I’m your friend.

1) I do not like vanilla ice cream. → ________________________________.

2) I am going to the mall. → ________________________________.

3) Who is the new student? → ________________________________.

4) They are my best friends. → ________________________________.
5) We are not waiting in the line. →

6) She will be the class president. →

7) He should not worry so much. →

8) They will be here in fifteen minutes. →

9) Where is my blue book? →

10) She does not eat spinach. →

Directions: Use what you have learned to punctuate the following sentences with apostrophes.

Example: Where is the book of John? → Where’s John’s book?

1) This is not the key I was looking for.

2) I want to pet the head of the dog.

3) That is the hat of Jones.

4) I need to go to the market of the town to buy milk.

5) Did you not wash the car of Bill?

6) This wallet belongs to Tito.

7) This one is nicer than the one that Dan has.

8) It is funny when the dog chases its tail.

9) We should not take the car of my father to the beach.

10) She is the best student in the college.
Apostrophes Quiz

Section 1: Possession

Directions: Change “_____ of the _____” phrases into possessive noun phrases using an apostrophe.

1. I need to wash the clothes of my son.  → ________________________________.
2. The colors of the college are green and yellow.  → ________________________.
3. The kid of Joe is an energetic boy.  → ________________________________.
4. Listen to the story of the family.  → ________________________________.
5. I want to go to the sale of the store.  → ________________________________.
6. Do you want to listen to the music of the band?  → ________________________.
7. The price of the toy is large.  → ________________________________.
8. Look at the color of the sky.  → ________________________________.
9. The artwork of Picasso is well known.  → ________________________________.
10. The sound of the boat was loud.  → ________________________________.

Section 2: Omission of letters.

Directions: use apostrophes in the following sentences to make contractions.

1. I do not understand math.  → ________________________________.
2. I will not go outside during storms.  → ________________________________.
3. I am waiting for a call.  → ________________________________.
4. Who is going to the movies?  → ________________________________.
5. They are brother and sister. → 

6. We could not receive our mail. → 

7. You should not believe everything you hear. → 

8. He will become president one day. → 

9. I did not win the lottery. → 

10. We are not new students. → 

Section 3: Contractions and Possession.

Directions: use apostrophes in the following sentences as either a contraction or a possession.

1. Where is the cat? → 

2. I want to smell the scent of the flowers. → 

3. What is the name of your friend? → 

4. We are dealing with trouble. → 

5. The home of James is clean. → 

6. We should visit the show of our friend. → 

7. Sarah does not like the taste of crab. → 

8. I missed the birthday of Wade. → 

9. The heat of the sun is intense. → 

10. It is a rainy day. → 
Semicolons

The semicolon has three primary functions:

1) To combine two closely related complete sentences (independent clauses) which are not joined by a conjunction.
2) To separate complete sentences (independent clauses) that are joined by a conjunctive adverb.
3) To separate items in a list when commas alone would be confusing.

1) To combine closely related complete sentences (independent clauses) which are not joined by a conjunction.

Example: The man was wet; he was standing in the rain without an umbrella.

In this example, there are two complete sentences (independent clauses):

#1: “The man was wet.” (independent clause)

#2 “He was standing in the rain without an umbrella.” (independent clause)

These clauses are separated by a semicolon.

Directions: Use a semicolon in the appropriate place to combine the following independent clauses.

1) I am hot I am wearing a sweater and a jacket.

2) The president was very popular he easily won the election.

3) I cannot buy a new car I do not have much money.

2) To separate complete sentences (independent clauses) that are joined by a conjunctive adverb.

Here is a list of common conjunctive adverbs:
Example: Jane likes fruit; however, she does not like apples.

In this example, there are two complete sentences (independent clauses):

1: “Jane likes fruit.” (independent clause)

2: “She does not like apples.” (independent clause)

These clauses are separated by a **semicolon** and the conjunctive adverb **“however”**.

**Directions:** Use a semicolon and a conjunctive adverb to combine the following independent clauses.

1) I am wearing a sweater and a jacket __________ I am cold.

2) The old dog is blind __________ it is deaf.

3) Mix all the ingredients __________ put the batter in the oven.

3) To separate items in a list when commas alone would be confusing.

Example: The school specializes in three fields of study: economics, the study of the economy; philosophy, the study of thought; and anthropology, the study of mankind.

**Directions:** Use a semicolon in the appropriate place to separate items in a list in the following sentences.

1) The answers to the test are: 1, A 2, D 3, F and 4, B.

2) The group was composed of three young people: Mary, who was 32 years old Javier, who was 28 years old and Ming, who was 17 years old.

3) On the trip, we drove through Tampa, Florida Wichita, Kansas and Fresno, California.
Semicolons
(practice quiz)

Directions: Use a semicolon in the appropriate place to combine the following independent clauses.

1) I want to wear the red shirt my favorite color is red.
2) Janie easily got an A on the test she studies very hard.
3) I hope I get a lot of presents today is my birthday.
4) The war is imminent the armies are ready.

Here is a list of common conjunctive adverbs:

| in addition | thus | nevertheless | therefore | still | however | indeed | furthermore | then |

Directions: Use a semicolon and a conjunctive adverb to combine the following independent clauses.

1) I am really tired ___________ I cannot get to sleep.
2) I am wearing a sweater and a jacket ___________ I am cold.
3) Our mission seemed impossible ___________ we tried our best to accomplish it.

Directions: Use a semicolon in the appropriate place to separate items in a list in the following sentences.

1) The store will be closed on the following days: Thursday, Dec. 24th, Friday, Dec. 25th, Saturday, Dec. 26th, and Sunday Dec. 27th.
2) The company hired three new employees: Robert, who was 42 years old Juan, who was 28 years old and Dana, who was 24 years old.
Answers:

Section 1

1) I want to wear the red shirt; my favorite color is red.

2) Janie easily got an A on the test; she studies very hard.

3) I hope I get a lot of presents; today is my birthday.

4) The war is imminent; the armies are ready.

Section 2

1) I am really tired; however I cannot get to sleep.

2) I am wearing a sweater and a jacket; still I am cold.

3) Our mission seemed impossible; nevertheless we tried our best to accomplish it.

Section 3

1) The store will be closed on the following days: Thursday, Dec. 24th; Friday, Dec. 25th; Saturday, Dec. 26th; and Sunday Dec. 27th.

2) The company hired three new employees: Robert, who was 42 years old; Juan, who was 28 years old; and Dana, who was 24 years old.