

[MUSIC PLAYING]

NARRATOR: Commas.

The comma is punctuation that separates, joins, sets off, or introduces specific parts of a sentence. It tells readers to pause briefly and helps them find the main word group or groups.

Let's take a look at the most important uses of the comma. Commas are used to separate three or more grammatically similar items in a series or list. Vanya and Ryan usually walk, swim, or bike before breakfast. A comma comes after each item in the series, except the last one. The last item has a coordinating conjunction before it. In this case, before.

Items in a series might be single words or longer word groups. The sharply hit ball went over the pitcher's head, under the shortstop's glove, and through a centerfield gap. Commas separate the prepositional phrases and the coordinating conjunction and comes just before the last phrase.

A coordinating conjunction usually comes before the last item in a list. You can remember the seven coordinating conjunctions with the acronym FANBOYS. For, and, nor, but, or, yet, so. A comma is also used with a coordinating conjunction to join independent clauses. The human body keeps all the iron it digests. The only way we lose iron is through bleeding.

Independent clauses are word groups with a subject and a verb that can stand alone as a sentence. A comma and the coordinating conjunction so, join these two sentences. The human body keeps all the iron it digests, so the only way we lose iron is through bleeding.

Comma's help readers find the main part of a sentence by setting off less important parts. Such as introductory elements, transitional terms, and nonessential word groups.

Sometimes a sentence opens with an introductory word or word group before the subject. Yes, the doors and windows were locked the night of the burglary. Introductory elements such as yes should generally be followed by a comma.

Here are some more examples. Deep in the tombs of Egyptian pyramids, archaeologists search for clues to ancient mysteries. When a dog exhibits dangerous behavior, it should be examined by a veterinarian. In each example, the comma sets off the introductory elements from the main word group. And tells the reader to pause.

Commas also set off transitional terms from the main word group. Transitional terms include words such as for example, however, in fact, and moreover. When they come at the beginning of a sentence, transitional expressions are followed by a comma. In fact, the electricity is out in much of the state.

When they come in the middle of a sentence, transitional expressions are surrounded by commas or other punctuation. Avocados, for example, are very high in fat.

In this sentence a semi colon joins the two independent clauses before the transitional expression however. And a comma comes after it. Both transitional words, for example, and however, are surrounded by punctuation marks, to set them off from the main word groups.

Commas are particularly useful for setting off the main word group from extra information that interrupts a sentence. The Picasso exhibit downtown, which I have visited three times, will be closing next week. The main information in this sentence is that the Picasso exhibit downtown will be closing next week.

The two commas set off the additional, but less important information, from the main word group. Which I have visited three times, describes the noun, exhibit. But it does not provide important identifying information. So we call it nonessential or non restrictive.

A nonessential element can usually be removed from a sentence without much loss

in meaning. The Picasso exhibit downtown will be closing next week. We have lost a small detail, but we still know which exhibit is closing.

And a positive is a nonessential element to that renames a noun. Derek Jeter, the former Yankee shortstop, won five World Series rings in his career. In this sentence, the former Yankee shortstop is in a positive that renames the noun, Derek Jeter.

A positive should also be surrounded by commas and can be deleted without a significant loss in meaning. Derek Jeter won five World Series rings in his career.

Commas are sometimes used to introduce direct quotations in which writers borrow others words. The lawyer glared at the reporter and stated coldly, "No comment." The comma comes between the introductory word group and the quoted word group.

Commas aren't always needed with direct quotations. Use a comma before the quotation, when the two word groups need to be distinct.

Remember, the comma is punctuation that separates, joins, sets off, or introduces specific parts of a sentence. It tells readers to pause briefly and helps them find the main word group or groups.