

Commas

Commas are punctuation marks that separate words within a sentence. They are important for maintaining clarity.

Use commas to

1. Separate items in a list

Ex. My passions are hard work, art, and writing.
The cool, crisp air of fall is so pleasant.

2. Set off sentence openers

Ex. When she whispered in his ear, Janie was able to calm the dog.
Whispering in his ear, Janie was able to calm the dog.
Calmly, Janie whispered in the dog's ear to make him behave.

3. Set off a sentence interrupter (in a pair)

Ex. Hard work, which I learned from my parents, is important to me.
Art, a passion of mine, comes in many forms.
A passion of mine, writing, allows me to express myself.

4. Combine two complete sentences with a joining word

Ex.
The leaves turn a beautiful array of colors, and then they fall gently to the ground.
The autumn leaves turn a beautiful array of colors and fall gently to the ground.

5. Set off quoted text from the rest of the sentence

Ex. Janie whispered to the dog, "Lie down now."
"Lie down now," Janie whispered to the dog. "That's a good boy."
"The leaves have turned colors," observed the hiker, "and soon will fall."

6. In numbers, addresses, dates, and greetings

Ex. Sam sold his sculpture for \$1,000.
My son lives at 443 Park Avenue, Tampa, Florida, in a gated community.
Today is October 3, 2011, the first Monday of the month.
Dear Dr. Himmelfarb, Sincerely, Ellen Hernandez
Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus.

Colons

Colons are used at the end of a complete statement to introduce a list, definition, a further explanation or a long quote. They are also used instead of a comma in the greeting of a formal letter.

List –

The tutoring center is open until 5 on certain days: Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays.

Quotation –

In the article on web videos in this week's newspaper, John Thompson maintains that people who make web videos can make a good amount of money: "On YouTube, online hits are created every day. Anyone who can make videos (and that's more and more of us) can post them for millions to see and share. And now, with ad dollars flowing from their content, many video-makers are becoming moneymakers."

Explanation –

Here's a saying that has always seemed like good advice to me: No one can make you feel bad about yourself without your permission.

Greeting –

Dear Portfolio Reviewer:

Semicolons

A semicolon marks the break between two complete thoughts or separates items in a series when the items themselves contain internal punctuation (such as commas).

Separating Two Complete Thoughts –

The leaves have changed to an array of beautiful colors; soon they will fall gently down.

Items in a Series –

I have a passion for hard work, which I learned from my parents; art, which comes in many forms; and writing, which allows me to express myself.