

# The Writing Center

## DLA: Comma Usage



This DLA is a writable PDF form. You can enter your answers directly into this document.

**YOU MUST DOWNLOAD AND SAVE THIS FILE TO YOUR COMPUTER.**

**Do not complete this form in a web browser. You will not be able to save your work.**

Student Name:

### Important Note

To get completion credit for this DLA, make sure you complete all the required activities. If you'd like help while working on a specific DLA, you can meet with a specialist at the Writing Center. Keep in mind that you might need to schedule a second appointment to review your work, check your understanding, and get your completion credit. You can only review ONE DLA per appointment. (Check the last section of this DLA for information on making your appointment and receiving completion credit for your work).

### Activities (approximately 1 hour)

Read the information, complete the activities that follow, and be prepared to discuss your answers when you meet with a tutor.

#### DLA Video Review

If you would like to watch a brief video that reviews parts of the [Comma Usage DLA](#), please use the QR code on the right:



**SCAN ME**

### Understanding Commas

Some writers believe that a comma should be used whenever a pause is needed in the sentence. Unfortunately, this belief often results in overused or misused commas. Look at the examples below.

- George's girlfriend in Seinfeld says, "I, am breaking up, with you!" (INCORRECT)
- Although this is how the audience hears this sentence in the episode of Seinfeld, it is nevertheless incorrect.
- I am breaking up with you. (CORRECT)

#### Comma Rule 1

When you use a conjunction to join two complete sentences, use a comma before the conjunction. The conjunctions are *for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so* (FANBOYS).

- Grace wanted to get some Chinese fried rice, **but** Muhammed wanted to get some Korean bibimbap.
- Jessica did not feel like cooking , **so** she decided to get take-out instead.

**NOTE: Be sure that the conjunctions do in fact connect two independent clauses (complete sentences). In the following sentence, the conjunction is not joining two whole sentences, so no comma is needed.**

- Marty tried Japanese takoyaki **and** was surprised that he loved it! (*There isn't a subject after the coordinating conjunction "and"; therefore, a comma is not used.*)

## Comma Rule 2

Put a comma between items in a series—a list of three or more items.

- My favorite dishes to get at *El Camino Real* are the carnitas nachos, the al pastor quesadillas, and the carne asada tacos.
- Robert went to Chik-fil-a and ordered three-pieces of chicken tenders, French fries, and a drink.

**NOTE:** *Some formats like those used in journalism do not require a comma before the conjunction and last item in the series; however, MLA and APA formats do indicate that there should be a comma. Check with your professor.*

- My favorite dishes to get at *El Camino Real* are the carnitas nachos, the al pastor quesadillas and the carne asada tacos. (*AP Style; Not correct in MLA or APA Styles*)

## Comma Rule 3

Put a comma after an introductory expression that is not part of the main sentence. The introductory expression can be a word, a phrase, or a dependent clause.

- Yes, Thai food is so delicious. (*one word*)
- For a falafel filling, you can have ground chickpeas or broad beans. (*a phrase*)
- Whenever Brian and Nicole go out for Indian food, they always get chicken tikka masala. (*a dependent clause*)

**NOTE:** *When a dependent clause follows a complete sentence, do not use a comma to separate the clauses.*

- Nicole and Brian always get chicken tikka masala whenever Brian and Nicole go out for Indian food.

## Comma Rule 4

When a sentence directly addresses someone by name, separate the name from the rest of the sentence with a comma.

- I heard, **Carlos**, that you don't like to eat sushi.
- **Jerry**, have you finished eating your breakfast?

**NOTE:** *Do not separate a name from the rest of the sentence when the person discussed is absent or is not being directly addressed.*

- I heard that Carlos doesn't like to eat sushi.
- Has Jerry finished eating his breakfast?

## Comma Rule 5

Watch for transitional expressions that interrupt the flow of a sentence. These transitions include words and phrases like *however, moreover, finally, therefore, of course, and on the other hand*. Transitional words and phrases can be used in different parts of a sentence, including the beginning, middle, and end of a sentence.

1. If the transition is at the BEGINNING of a sentence, serving as an introductory phrase, put a comma after it—see rule #3 above.
  - **Of course**, Teri loves pancakes.
  - **However**, she does not like toast.
2. If the transition is in the MIDDLE of a sentence and interrupts the sentence, put a comma before and after it.
  - Li and Pedro were, **of course**, happy to eat In' N 'Out.
  - David, **however**, was not so sure.
3. If the transition comes BETWEEN two complete sentences, put a semi-colon before it and a comma after it (if you do not do this, you will have created a run-on sentence).
  - Jenn won the pie baking contest; **in addition**, she won a lifetime of free flour.
  - Kim wanted to go to the new Italian restaurant; **however**, her friend wanted to go to a Greek restaurant.

## Comma Rule 6

Put commas around non-essential (also called nonrestrictive) material. Look especially for *who* or *which* clauses, appositives\*, and participial phrases\*\*.

- Gordon Ramsey, **who is the head chef on *Hell's Kitchen***, became a popular meme when he did a parody of his show in “Hell’s Cafeteria.”
- \*Carla Hall, **ex co-host of *The Chew***, “believes food connects us all.”
- \*\*Paul Hollywood, **shaking the contestant’s hand on *The Great British Baking Show***, only gives a handshake to those who have the best dishes for their baking challenges.

## Activities

Check off each box once you have completed the activity.

### 1. Comma Rules Review

Summarize the six places where a comma can be used.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

### 2. Online Quiz

Go to <http://tinyurl.com/commausagedlaquiz> and take the DLA Quiz. You must score at least 75% on the quiz before meeting with a specialist. After you complete the task, please take a screenshot of the page that has your score and show it to your specialist. Do not exit the quiz until you take the screenshot.

### 3. Writing Practice

Write two sentences for each of the comma rules above. You should have written a total of twelve sentences.

### 4. Review the DLA/Receive Completion Credit

1. Go to [EAB Navigate](#) and make an appointment (online or in-person).
2. Attend your session and be prepared to explain your understanding of the information you've learned in the DLA. Consider the main concept you learned and how you might use this in your future assignments/classes.
3. If your professor asks you to provide proof, you can review the "appointment summary report" through EAB Navigate (app or desktop). You will find all Writing Center appointments under "appointment summary reports" (app or desktop). Look for the summary report for your DLA appointment. This is where your writing specialist will indicate the title of your DLA and state whether it is "completed" or "not completed." If it is marked as "not completed," book a follow up appointment to complete.

Note: Appointment summary reports are also sent weekly to your instructor on record. If there is an issue, please contact us at [writingcenter@mtzac.edu](mailto:writingcenter@mtzac.edu) or (909) 274-5325.

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**Revised November 2025**