

COMMAS & SEMICOLONS HANDOUT**COMMAS****1. TO SEPARATE THREE OR MORE ITEMS IN A SERIES:**

Brandi likes apples, oranges, and bananas.

The pitcher adjusted his cap, pawed the ground, and threw the ball.

Carl painted the house white, the doors black, and the barn red.

2. TO SET OFF INTRODUCTORY MATERIAL:

Just then, Bruce saw a bat crash through the window.

Muttering under her breath, Sue stomped out of the house.

Although I am sleepy, I will stay up to watch Jay Leno.

Because he was angry, he punched a hole in the wall.

If you have good references, you will get a good job.

In answer to your request, we are mailing you a book.

3. BOTH SIDES OF WORDS THAT INTERRUPT THE FLOW OF THOUGHT:

The vinyl seat, sticky from the heat, stuck to my skin.

My new car, which my husband bought at the auction, is a Nissan.

Robert Frost is, I think, a remarkable poet.

Mr. Jones, whom you met today, is a perfect customer.

It may be necessary, therefore, to mail another copy.

Their teacher, Ms. Johnson, assigned chapter six for homework.

4. BETWEEN TWO COMPLETE THOUGHTS SEPARATED BY A COORDINATING CONJUNCTION (and, but, for, so, yet, or):

I like Italian food, and Bill likes Mexican food.

He wants to move north, but I don't like the cold.

I want to celebrate, for my new position is an accomplishment.

5. TO SET OFF A DIRECT QUOTATION FROM THE REST OF THE SENTENCE:

The carnival man cried, "Step right up and win a prize!"

"I'm sorry," said the hostess. "You'll have to wait."

"For your first assignment," said the teacher, "write a 10 page essay."

6. TO SET OFF CONTRASTED EXPRESSIONS:

Amanda says she wants a marker, not a pen.

It was Wolgast, not Adams, who won the golf tournament.

7. FOR CERTAIN EVERYDAY MATERIAL:

Persons spoken to:

Terry, I think you are arrogant.
 If you want, Chad, you can eat the whole pie.
 Are you going to watch the Super Bowl, Barbara?

Dates:

June 30, 2002, is the day I make the last payment on my car.

NOTE: Commas are not used with just the month and year or month and date.

Addresses:

For free information on this wonderful new diet plan, write to Wonder Diet, Box 000, Chicago, Illinois 20609.

Numbers:

My car will have cost me \$10,572.00 by the time I pay the loan.
 The new house next door is priced at \$150,500.00.
 How could anyone ever wear 6,000 pairs of shoes?

City and state/City and nation:

I used to live in Chicago, Illinois, before moving to Orlando, Florida.
 Arthur was not born in Paris, France, even though he lived there for a while.

NOTE: In the two sentences above, the commas after "Illinois" and "France" are there because a comma must be used after a city and a state and a city and a nation if the sentence continues on after them; the commas are NOT there because of the subordinating conjunctions "before" and "even though."

SEMICOLONS

1. Use the SEMICOLON to join two independent clauses (complete sentences) when a conjunction is NOT between the clauses:

The new mall is opening today; we are expecting a huge crowd.
 Kim did not like the movie; she left without seeing the surprise ending.

2. Use the SEMICOLON between two independent clauses when they are connected by a conjunctive adverb (also known as a transitional word or phrase):

Professor Crane used to teach at the university; however, he quit to do research on phobias.
 Harvey has difficulty making choices; in fact, he flips a coin when he has to decide on anything.