

## Comma Usage

### When should I use a comma?

1. Before a conjunction (*and, but, or, yet, so, for, and nor*) when they link two independent clauses together
  - Example: *Facebook has recently been criticized for allowing personal user information to become available to online advertising companies, but the site's popularity has soared in recent months.*
2. After an introductory word, phrase, or clause that is separate from the main clause
  - Example: *Despite its soaring popularity, Facebook has recently been criticized for allowing personal user information to become available to online advertising companies.*
3. To set off information that could be deleted from the sentence without changing its basic meaning (or what is commonly referred to as "nonessential" information)
  - Example: *Facebook, now the largest social network in the world, has been criticized for allowing personal user information to become available to online advertising companies.*
4. To set off absolute phrases [subject +verb (ing) OR subject + verb (ed/en)]
  - Example: *This Facebook user, a college student living far from her hometown, appreciates being able to stay in contact with her family and friends.*
5. To set off transitional words and phrases (e.g., *however, consequently, as a result, etc.*)
  - Example: *However, I do not log on to Facebook more than once a day.*
6. Around *yes* and *no*
  - Example: *When my friends and family ask me if I would consider leaving Facebook, I tell them, no, because then I wouldn't be able to keep in touch with them as easily.*
7. Around words of direct address
  - Example: *What are your thoughts, Mr. Zuckerberg, on the success of Facebook?*
8. Between items in a series
  - Example: *The profile page lists the user's personal information, including her name, age, birth date, relationship status, religious and political views, and the networks in which the user interacts with other Facebook users.*
9. Between two equal adjectives
  - Example: *Some users have become addicted to Facebook's colorful, flashy games like Farmville.*
10. Between the day and year of a date
  - Example: *I joined the site on November 28, 2007.*
11. To separate a quotation from a signal phrase (like *he argues* or *the author explains*)
  - Example: *One woman writes, "I've gotten in touch with lots of old friends whom I'd lost contact with."*

Back to our Resources page: <http://info.francis.edu/writing-center-resources-for-students/>

- Exception: Do not use a comma when the quotation is integrated into your sentence structure OR introduced by *that*.
- Example: *One woman writes that she has "gotten in touch with lots of old friends."*

### When should I not use a comma?

1. Before a conjunction (*and*, *but*, *or*, or *nor*) when they link pairs of words, phrases, or subordinate clauses
2. Between the subject and the verb
3. To set off information that is essential to the meaning of the sentence
4. After a coordinating conjunction
5. After a subordinating conjunction
6. Before or after a series
7. Between unequal adjectives (as a test, the two adjectives could not sensibly be joined by *and*)
8. Between a month or season and a year



For more information on comma usage, consult <http://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/commas/>

This website provides additional information regarding comma usage, including popular myths about commas and guidelines for their proper use.

#### Work Consulted

Aaron, Jane E. *The Little, Brown Essential Handbook*. 7th ed. Boston: Longman, 2011. Print.