

COMMA RULES!

BCHS SELA C-2

Refer to this guide to help you with the proper usage of commas. Do not become COMMA-tose!

1. Use a comma **to separate the elements in a series** (three or more things), including the last two. "He hit the ball, dropped the bat, and ran to first base."
2. **Use a comma + a little conjunction** (and, but, for, nor, yet, or, so) **to connect two independent clauses**, as in "He hit the ball well, **but** he ran toward third base."
3. Use a comma **to set off introductory elements**, as in "*Running toward third base*, he suddenly realized how stupid he looked." (+ing)
4. Use a comma **to set off parenthetical elements**, as in "The Champlain Bridge, *which spans the St. Lawrence River*, is falling down." By "parenthetical element," we mean a part of a sentence that can be removed without changing the essential meaning of that sentence. The parenthetical element is sometimes called "added information."
5. Use a comma **to separate coordinate adjectives**. You could think of this as "That tall, distinguished, good looking fellow" rule (as opposed to "the little old lady"). If you can put an *and* or a *but* between the adjectives, a comma will probably belong there.
For instance, you could say, "He is a tall and distinguished fellow" or "I live in a very old and run-down house." So you would write, "He is a tall, distinguished man" and "I live in a very old, run-down house." But you would probably not say, "She is a little and old lady," or "I live in a little and purple house," so commas would not appear between *little* and *old* or between *little* and *purple*.
6. Use commas to set off phrases that express contrast.
 - Some say the world will end in ice, not fire.
 - It was her money, not her charm or personality, that first attracted him.
 - The puppies were cute, but very messy.
7. Never use only one comma between a subject and its verb. "Believing completely and positively in oneself is essential for success." [Although readers might pause after the word "oneself," there is no reason to put a comma there.]
8. Between a city and a province [Baie-Comeau, Québec], a date and the year [June 22, 2010], a name and a title when the title comes after the name [Stephen Kohner, Professor of English], in long numbers [5,456,783 and \$14,682], etc. With numbers, you may also just see a space [5 456 783 and \$14 682].