



## The Betty East Tutoring Center at Victoria College

Johnson Hall, Room 106  
2200 E. Red River St.  
Victoria, TX 77901  
361-571-6473

[www.victoriacollege.edu/tutoringcenter](http://www.victoriacollege.edu/tutoringcenter)

---

### Commas

Commas are that they are used to set apart words or phrases within a sentence. Use commas to:

#### **Separate:**

##### Parts of an Address:

Example: Margaret lived at **423 Long View, Jordan, Minnesota**, in 2015.

##### Numbers in a Date:

Example: Jamie's birthday is **December 20, 1970**.

Do not use commas if the day precedes the month: 20 December 1970

##### Questions from Statements:

Example: **You're late**, where are you?

##### Coordinating Conjunctions from Independent Clauses:

Coordinating conjunctions are: for, and, nor, but, or, yet, and so. The first letter of each word spells "fanboys."

Example: He saw the accident, **but** she did not.

##### Coordinating Adjectives:

Coordinating adjectives are two or more adjectives coming together, each of which modifies the noun.

Example: The **quiet, reluctant** crowd of students waited for their professor's entrance.

#### **Set Off:**

##### Names of People Being Spoken To:

Example: Julie, have you finished?

##### Positive and Negative Replies:

Example: **Yes**, I'm finished.

##### Long Introductory Phrases:

Example: **In the back of the little shed on my grandfather's farm**, there lived an old, mangy cat.

##### Parenthetical Expressions:

Use commas to set off transitional expressions such as however, first, in fact, and for example.

Example: That, **I believe**, is Cindy's aunt.

##### Contrasting Expressions:

Example: The dancers, not the instructors, let us down.

Nonrestrictive Modifiers:

Also referred to as “aside information.”

Example: Jessica Herman, **my niece**, is fifteen years old.

**Do Not Use Commas To:**

Pause for Breath:

Do not use a comma where you would naturally pause for breath or emphasis.

**Separate:**

Compounds:

Including subjects, verbs, complements, direct objects, or objects of the preposition.

Wrong Example: **Bob, and** Jack.

Parts from Verbs:

Including subjects from verbs, complements from verbs, or objects from verbs.

Wrong Example: **I, ran** away.

Complete Sentences:

Separating two or more complete sentences with a comma creates a comma splice. Avoid a splice by adding a conjunction, using a semicolon, or breaking the sentence into two separate sentences.

Wrong Example: It has been raining for days, **the ground is muddy**.

**Set off:**

Restrictive Modifiers:

Restrictive modifiers are essential because they identify the meaning of the term or phrase.

Wrong Example: My youngest son, **Jonathan**, is ten.