

Commas: How It Works

A comma tells the reader to pause. Here are the places a comma belongs.

1. Items in a list

Use commas between three or more things in a list.

We saw ducks, geese, and swans.

The comma before and is the serial comma.

2. Dates

Put a comma between the day and the year.

July 4, 1776

3. Cities and states

Put a comma between the city and the state.

Austin, Texas

4. Talking to someone

Set off the name of the person you are talking to.

Kim, please open the door.

Thank you, Kim.

Where does the comma go?

1

A list of three or more?

A comma after each item but the last.

2

A date or a place?

Day and year. City and state.

3

Two sentences joined?

Before and, but, or, so.

After a starting word

Use a comma after **yes**, **no**, **well** and **first** at the start of a sentence.

Yes, I can come.

First, wash your hands.

And in a letter:

Dear Grandma,

Watch out

Two things do not need a comma.

~~X~~ I like apples, and pears.

✓ I like apples and pears.

No comma between a subject and its verb.

~~X~~ The big dog, barked.