

## Use commas to separate three or more items in a series

Kyle wants to climb a tree<sup>Comma</sup>, chase butterflies<sup>Comma</sup> and nap<sup>Item #3</sup> today.

Eva<sup>Comma</sup>, Izzy<sup>Comma</sup>, Erin<sup>Comma</sup> or Allie<sup>Item #4</sup> will go ice skating with us tonight.

Placing a comma between the last two items makes it clear to the reader that each item is separate.

**Unclear:** Sue ordered **turkey, tuna**<sup>No Comma</sup> and **ham and cheese** sandwiches.

*Here, it's unclear whether she's ordering a "tuna and ham" or a "ham and cheese" sandwich.*

**Clear:** Sue ordered **turkey**<sup>Comma</sup>, **tuna**<sup>Comma</sup>, and **ham and cheese** sandwiches.

## Do not use commas to separate two items in a series

Frank ran in circles<sup>No Comma</sup> and jumped up and down after hearing the news.

Gregory will order leg warmers<sup>No Comma</sup> or mittens on eBay.

## When to use commas with multiple adjectives

Writers place a comma between two adjectives to show that the words have equal weight.

Lou plucked a juicy <sup>Comma</sup>, sweet apple from the tree.  
Adjective                      Adjective                      Noun

To decide whether or not the adjectives have equal weight, use these two tests:

**Test 1:** Does the sentence sound natural with the word "and" between the adjectives?

Lou plucked a juicy **and** sweet apple from the tree.      *sounds natural*

**Test 2:** Does the sentence sound natural after switching the order of the adjectives?

Lou plucked a sweet , juicy apple from the tree.      *sounds natural*

Place a comma between the adjectives **only if the answer to both questions is "yes."**

If the answer to either question is "no," do not place a comma between the adjectives.

Lou plucked three <sup>No Comma</sup> delicious apples from the tree.

In the above example, "three and delicious apples" and "delicious three apples" both sound *unnatural*, so no comma is used.

## Add or remove commas if necessary

Either Adele's guinea pig ferret or hamster ate her math homework last night.

Either Adele's guinea pig, ferret, or hamster ate her math homework last night.

Mrs. Prince, and her gerbil often go on long walks.

Mrs. Prince and her gerbil often go on long walks.

On hot days, Austen likes to sip lemonade, and lounge by the swimming pool.

On hot days, Austen likes to sip lemonade and lounge by the swimming pool.

Add or remove commas if necessary

Alexander Hughes PhD taught Ruth Bader Ginsberg about underwater volcanoes.

Alexander Hughes, PhD, taught Ruth Bader Ginsberg about underwater volcanoes.

The crocodiles snakes and lizards at President Snow's petting zoo are all friendly.

The crocodiles, snakes, and lizards at President Snow's petting zoo are all friendly.

As Audrey watched a music video being filmed at 55 Johnson Avenue Miami Florida, 33152, she started to dance.

As Audrey watched a music video being filmed at 55 Johnson Avenue, Miami, Florida, 33152, she started to dance.