

## Use a comma to show a pause after a clause or phrase

When clauses and phrases start sentences, they often require a reader to pause before moving on.

To tell a reader to pause, use a comma.

Running at top speed , Gene chased down the school bus.  
Gerund Phrase                      Comma

During the night , Lindsey dreamed she saw a UFO.  
Prepositional Phrase              Comma

Because he enjoys music , Sean bought tickets to the orchestra.  
Subordinate Clause                      Comma

If no pause is necessary, don't use a comma.

Jennifer hid her lucky marbles in the bushes.  
No Comma  
Prepositional Phrase

## Commas and Names

Commas tell readers where to pause in a sentence.

When speaking to someone directly, surround his or her name with commas to show a natural pause.

I'm telling you , Jameson , that was the biggest cat I've ever seen!  
Comma Listener Comma

Carol , do you know where my waterskis are?  
Listener Comma

Do not use commas when mentioning a name, but not actually addressing someone.

Larry met up with Gwendolyn at the music festival.  
Name Name

No Comma No Comma No Comma

## Add or remove commas if necessary

Showing off her new cooking skills Minnie Mouse flipped the pancake behind her back.

Showing off her new cooking skills, Minnie Mouse flipped the pancake behind her back.

Frida started reading science fiction books, after the library added a new section.

Frida started reading science fiction books\_ after the library added a new section.

From the International Space Station Chance the Rapper sent an email to my science class.

From the International Space Station, Chance the Rapper sent an email to my science class.

Add or remove commas if necessary

Ross Geller grabbed the metal, fishing, pole from the mermaid's hand.

Ross Geller grabbed the metal\_ fishing\_ pole from the mermaid's hand.

Katniss Everdeen crammed the chuckling giggling snorting, clowns into the car.

Katniss Everdeen crammed the chuckling, giggling, snorting\_ clowns into the car.

Justin Timberlake stared at the old, top, hat on the gorilla's head.

Justin Timberlake stared at the old\_ top\_ hat on the gorilla's head.