**Comma Usage**

**Commas Guidelines**

3 pages long (ELC charges 10 cents/page for print jobs)

Commas are used in the following ways:

1.

Commas join two or more independent clauses with coordinating conjunctions: for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so:

The cow jumped over the moon, and the dish ran away with the spoon.

2. Commas set off direct quotations from the rest of the sentence, unless the quotes are subjects or subject complements:

Susie sang, “Just a little bit of sugar makes the medicine go down, the medicine go down . . .“

3. Commas set off contrasting phrases or concluding questions from the rest of the sentence:

I saw the comet as it passed over the moon, did you?

4. Commas separate parts of dates or addresses:

Joe lives at 1111 Swift Lane, Tomball, Texas, in the Lonewood Subdivision.

5. Commas separate names from titles and degrees that follow them:

The speaker will be William R. Buckle, Ph.D.

6. Commas set off salutations of friendly letters and complimentary closings of business and friendly letters:

Dear Susie, Sincerely, Jane

7. Commas set off introductory elements and sentence interrupters, thereby signaling to the reader that these "extras" can be moved out of the way of the main ideas:

After the next semester, my instructors, Bill and Tom, will begin their new assignments.

8. Use commas to set off words and units that interrupt the basic sentence: nouns of direct address, appositives (unless they are very short), parenthetical expressions, nonessential modifiers:

This Tuesday is the first day, actually the first recognized day, of the Christmas season.

9. Use commas to set off individual items in a series, making clear by the commas that individual items are separate:

My favorite fruits are apples, oranges, bananas, black berries, and guavas.

10. Appositives defined: The meaning of subjects, objects, or complements is often made clearer by a word or group of words directly following them, renaming or explaining. These words, “in apposition with” the nouns or pronouns they follow, are called appositives .

Examples: The science teacher, Mr. Jones , described two planets. (in apposition with the subject, teacher)

Mr. Jones described two planets, Mars and Saturn.

(in apposition with the object, planets)

My favorite teacher was Mr. Jones, my science teacher.

(in apposition with the predicate complement, Mr. Jones)

An appositive may sum up the meaning of a whole group of words:

Mr. Jones chews gum noisily and constantly, a habit that distracts his students.

Sometimes an appositive precedes instead of follows the word it explains:

A writer of several science books, Mr. Jones enjoys research.

For emphasis an appositive may be placed last, even when the word to which it refers is in the first part of the sentence:

One of the books on that shelf is his, A description of Mars and Saturn.

11. Restrictive and Non-Restrictive Adjective Clauses: An adjective clause is a dependent clause which modifies a noun or a pronoun. The common connective words used to introduce adjective clauses are the relative pronouns who (and its inflected forms whom and whose ), which , that , and relative adverbs like where , when , and why . ( Where and when can introduce all three kinds of clauses.)

The underlined clauses in the following sentences are all adjective clauses:

• Stacey is a girl who is liked by everyone.

• Mrs. Smith, whose son is a teacher, loves flowers.

• We saw the house where Jim had lived.

• I went through a time when I fought for my life.

• He found out the reason why I left town.

ADJECTIVE CLAUSES ARE CLASSIFIED AS RESTRICTIVE (ESSENTIAL) AND NON-RESTRICTIVE (NON-ESSENTIAL).

A restrictive clause is necessary in a sentence, for it identifies or points out a certain person or thing; a non-restrictive clause adds information about the word it modifies, but it is not essential in pointing out or identifying a certain person or thing.

Edward Gorman, who flies for Continental Airlines, is a kind man. (The name Edward Gorman has identified the person, and the underlined clause is not essential.)

A person who knows how to drive will always have a means of transportation. (The underlined adjective clause is essential in identifying a particular kind of person.)

My mother, who is a good cook, has worked in a restaurant for years. (Since a person has only one mother, an identifying clause is not essential.)

The boy with whom I study is an athlete. (The underlined adjective clause is essential to the identification of boy.)

To determine whether an adjective clause is restrictive (essential) you may apply this test: read the sentence leaving out the adjective clause and see whether the removal omits necessary identification. Try this test on the following sentences:

Yesterday's Girl Scout meeting, which lasted until 7:00, was about learning good manners.

You will see that the removal of the adjective clause does not change the basic meaning of the sentence. The underlined clause is, therefore, nonrestrictive (non-essential).

Now read the following sentence, leaving out the underlined adjective clause:

Bus drivers who do not get plenty of sleep should not work.

If the adjective clause is removed, the statement is not at all what the writer meant to say. The adjective clause is, therefore, restrictive (essential).

PUNCTUATION : Non-restrictive (non-essential) adjective clauses are set off from the rest of the sentence by commas.

Punctuation Examples :

1. Stacey's money, which she left on the table, was gone when she got up this morning.

2. All of our pets, which live in the laundry room, love to play outside.

3. Coach Lender's baseball team, which practices every day, is the best team in the league.

**Comma Usage Grammar Module Activities**

3 pages long (ELC charges 10 cents/page for print jobs)

Instructions: Read the Guidelines Sheet for Comma Usage before you complete the following activities. The Extended Learning Center provides all the videos and books you will need to complete these activities.

Tutoring: You may see a tutor for help with understanding any of the following activities.

Activities:

1. The Allyn and Bacon Video Grammar Library, Lesson 8: Commas in Non-Restrictive Elements: Watch the video and write a ½ page summary of what you have learned.

2. SkillsBank4: To enter the computer program at Lone Star College–Tomball, click the SkillsBank Icon. At Lone Star College–Willow Chase Center, click the “Start” button in the bottom left-hand corner of your screen. Select “Learning Assistance” and then “SkillsBank.” Log in to SkillsBank with your assigned user name and identification number. In SkillsBank, select “Language” from the column of subjects on the left of the screen and then “Punctuation” from the list of lesson topics across the top.

¨ Do Lessons 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11 (from “Commas to Separate Items in Lists” through “Commas to Enclose Interrupting Phrases”)

After you’ve completed those lessons, select “Writing” from the list of subjects. Choose “Language Mechanics” from the list of lesson topics.

¨ Do Lesson 8 (“Using Commas with Clauses and Phrases”)

Your scores will automatically be reported to your instructor, so you will not need to print out a record of your activities.

Grammar textbook work: Do not write in the textbooks. Either photocopy exercise pages from the text or complete assignments on your own paper (writing short answers whenever possible, rather than copying entire sentences).

3. The Little, Brown Handbook (8th edition): Read Chapter 28 (pages 467-490), especially information in yellow boxes, and complete Exercises 1, 5, and 8.

4. Odyssey (3rd edition): Read Chapter 30 (pages 486-500) and complete Exercises 30.4, 30.6, and 30.7. Review the Commas Recap on page 500.

5. Writer’s Choice: Read pages 722-730 and complete Exercises 11 and12.

6. Worksheets: Complete Worksheets A3, B80, and B90 (the next pages in this document) and check your answers in the answer key in the Extended Learning Center.

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**PRACTICE TEST**

(3 pages, 10¢/page for print jobs in ELC)

DIRECTIONS: In each of the following sentences, determine if there is a comma usage error. Mark your answers as follows: “A” if the sentence does not contain an error in comma usage “B” if the sentence does contain an error in comma usage

1. Whether she liked it or not, Tammy had to finish all of her chores before she could get her allowance.

2. Laurin always boasts that her daughter was born on January 1, 2000 the first day of the century.

3. I was forced to call a taxi, and wait almost two hours for it to arrive.

4. “Success, on the other hand, is not as meaningful if it can't be shared with loved ones,” the guest speaker said.

5. The Happy Plate the only restaurant in my neighborhood is always crowded on Friday nights.

6. His beach house in Miami Florida is the perfect summer getaway.

7. Dripping wet and miserable I pressed myself against the corner of the bus stop until the rain stopped.

8. Nick got a job right after college, for he had spent his senior year making contacts and sending applications.

9. Cameron who wanted to look professional for his job interview wore a conservative suit.

10. Peeking into his bedroom, Gabe's mom shouted “Put down that video game and finish your homework!”

11. Washing the car myself is a hassle because I have to clean the windows, vacuum the carpeting, and wax and buff the paint; I'd rather pay to have all of that done.

DIRECTIONS: Read the following passage. Next, determine if there is a comma usage error in each of the numbered sentences. Mark your answers as follows: “A” if the sentence does not contain an error in comma usage “B” if the sentence does contain an error in comma usage

12) Engagement, in some form, has existed in almost every society in the world. 13) Since marriage is seldom taken lightly, most societies have provided some social structure to instill an awareness in the couple and the community that the relationship is a serious one and that marriage will likely occur. 14) In many societies engagement is considered extremely important and much more binding than it is in the Western world today. 15) Various rituals are conducted and gifts are given to reinforce the importance of the relationship, because engagement implies the final transition in the process of changing status from single to married.

16) Engagement, serves a variety of functions for the couple. 17) For one thing, it provides a clear indication that marriage is about to occur. 18) Additionally the engagement provides the function of making the couple's plans public. 19) Engagement also provides the final opportunity, prior to the legal union, for each person to understand himself or herself in relation to the other. 20) It is likely that many couples view an engagement as a kind of trial marriage, which may include the sharing of certain financial obligations and, in some instances, living together.

Adapted from The Family , J. Ross Eshleman

Answer Key: Comma Usage Practice Test

1. A

2. B

3. B

4. A

5. B

6. B

7. B

8. A

9. B

10. B

11. A

12. A

13. A

14. B

15. B

16. B

17. A

18. B

19. B

20. A