

Use of the Comma

It's easy to get confused about using commas. Most of us remember being told to use a comma to indicate a pause. The trouble is, we all seem to pause in different places. Trask (1997) provides some simple instruction, listing four uses of the comma as follows:

Use commas for four reasons

Listing comma

Use this in place of **and** or **or** to join three or more words, phrases or possibly sentences.

For example:	The three musketeers were Athos, Porthos and Aramis. You can fly to Bombay via Moscow, via Athens or via Cairo.
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Joining comma

Use this to join two sentences into one complete sentence. The connecting words **and**, **but**, **or**, **while** and **yet** must follow the comma.

For example:	You must hand in your essay by Friday, or you will receive a mark of zero. Norway has applied to join the EC, and Sweden is expected to do the same.
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Gapping comma

Use this to show that one or more words have been left out to avoid unnecessary repetition.

For example:	Italy is famous for her composers and musicians, France, for her chefs and philosophers, and Poland, for her mathematicians and logicians.
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Bracketing comma

Use a pair of bracketing commas to mark off an interruption in a sentence. The text within a pair of commas must not be essential to the grammatical meaning of a sentence – it should provide additional information.

For example:	These findings, we would suggest, cast doubt upon his hypothesis. Darwin's <i>The Origin of Species</i> , published in 1859, revolutionised
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Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg. This document is available in Welsh.

biological thinking.

References and further reading:

Trask, R.L. (1997) *The Penguin guide to punctuation*. London: Penguin Books.