

1 Here's the Idea

When you speak, you rely on certain cues, such as pauses and body language, to help express your ideas. When you write, your use of such punctuation as commas supplies similar cues. The following rules for comma usage will help you communicate your ideas more clearly.

Commas with Introductory Elements

- ▶ **Use a comma after mild interjections or introductory words such as *oh*, *yes*, *no*, and *well*.**
Yes, I admit that I love to watch the Daytona 500.
 - ▶ **Use a comma after an introductory prepositional phrase that contains additional prepositional phrases.**
In the middle of the race, the lead car blew out a tire.
 - ▶ **Use a comma after an introductory adverb or adverbial clause.**
Unfortunately, that car is out of the race.
After the pace car exits the track, drivers may reach speeds of over 200 mph.
 - ▶ **Use a comma after an infinitive or participial phrase that serves as an introductory element.**
INFINITIVE PHRASE
To cover their expenses, racing teams solicit sponsors.
PARTICIPIAL PHRASE
Smiling politely, the driver accepted a \$200,000 check.
- For more on phrases, see p. 48, and for more on clauses, see p. 76.

Commas with Interrupters

- ▶ **Use commas to set off nouns of direct address.** A noun of direct address is the word naming the person or persons spoken to.
Marisa, have you ever worked as part of a pit crew?

- **Use commas to set off parenthetical expressions, such as *however, therefore, for example, I suppose, moreover, and by the way*.** A parenthetical expression interrupts the flow of thought in a sentence.

PARENTHETICAL

By the way, your favorite driver will participate in the next heat.

NOT PARENTHETICAL

You can tell **by the way** Janet Guthrie drives that she has a great deal of experience.

HOT TIP

Use a comma to separate a question tagged onto the end of a sentence.

That's a fairly common way of speaking, **isn't it?**

Commas with Nonessential Clauses and Phrases

- **Use commas to set off nonessential clauses and nonessential participial phrases.**

NONESSENTIAL CLAUSE

The pit crew manager, **who also serves as the chief engineer,** advised the driver of the car's condition.

NONESSENTIAL PARTICIPIAL PHRASE

The team, **working hard for its driver's success,** has won several races this year.