

WHEN TO USE COMMAS

Before any coordinating conjunction (and, but, for, or, nor, so, yet) that joins two independent clauses.

I went to the zoo, and I saw a cheetah.

To separate words and word groups in a series of three or more items.

I saw a lion, an elephant, and a chimpanzee at the zoo.

After introductory adverbs (actually, afterwards, easily, generally) and adverbial phrases.

Sadly, I got sick and couldn't go to the zoo. On the other hand, I was able to finish my homework.

When using a quote or dialogue. If before, place the comma outside the quotation marks. If after, put the comma inside the quotation marks.

The student said, "I saw a panda."

"I saw a panda," the student said.

To offset negation in a sentence.

I saw a black bear, not a grizzly bear, when I went to the zoo.

To separate elements in a date. Also, to separate a date from the rest of the sentence.

Friday, August 30, 2019

Friday, August 30, 2019, was a cloudy day.

To separate a city from a province/territory. Also, use a comma after the province in a sentence.

Toronto, Ontario, has a fantastic zoo.

When the first word of the sentence is a freestanding "yes" or "no."

Yes, I saw an otter when I went to the zoo.

When directly addressing someone or something in a sentence.

Ryan, did you see the python at the zoo?

Between consecutive adjectives that modify the same noun.

I saw the colorful, graceful peacocks when I went to the zoo.

After a dependent clause that starts a sentence.

When I went to the zoo, I saw a tortoise.

To offset appositives from the rest of the sentence ("A type of monkey" is the appositive, which gives more information about "a capuchin").

While at the zoo, I saw a capuchin, a type of monkey.