

Common Subordinating Conjunctions		
after	if	though
although	if only	till
as	in order that	unless
as if	now that	until
as long as	once	when
as though	rather than	whenever
because	since	where
before	so that	whereas
even if	than	wherever
even though	that	while

Comma Use

1. Use commas to separate independent clauses when they are joined by any of these seven coordinating conjunctions: *and, but, for, or, nor, so, yet*.

The game was over, **but** the crowd refused to leave.

The student explained her question, **yet** the instructor still didn't seem to understand.

Yesterday was her brother's birthday, **so** she took him out to dinner.

2. Use commas after introductory a) clauses, b) phrases, or c) words that come before the main clause.

a. Common starter words for introductory clauses that should be followed by a comma include *after, although, as, because, if, since, when, while*. **Other common subordinating conjunctions can be accessed above.**

While I was eating, the cat scratched at the door.

Because her alarm clock was broken, she was late for class.

If you are ill, you ought to see a doctor.

When the snow stops falling, we'll shovel the driveway.

However, don't put a comma after the main clause when a dependent (subordinate) clause follows it (except for cases of extreme contrast).

INCORRECT: The cat scratched at the door, while I was eating.

CORRECT: She was still quite upset, although she had won the Oscar. (This comma use is correct because it is an example of extreme contrast.)

b. Common introductory phrases that should be followed by a comma include participial and infinitive phrases, absolute phrases, nonessential appositive phrases, and long prepositional phrases (over four words).

Having finished the test, he left the room.

To get a seat, you'd better come early.

After the test but before lunch, I went jogging.

The sun radiating intense heat, we sought shelter in the cafe.

c. Common introductory words that should be followed by a comma include *yes, however, well*.

Well, perhaps he meant no harm.

Yes, the package should arrive tomorrow morning.

However, you may not be satisfied with the results.

PUNCTUATING DIALOGUE

1. Use quotation marks to begin and end a direct quotation. Separate the quoted material from the dialogue tag by commas. Do not use quotation marks to set off an indirect quotation.

I said, "The fable by James Thurber will surprise you."

I said that the fable by James Thurber would surprise you.

2. If a question mark or an exclamation point occurs where one of the separating commas should be used, omit the comma and use the question mark or exclamation point to separate the quoted material.

"Don't be late!" Bill warned.

3. The speaker's words are set off from the rest of the sentence with quotation marks, and the first word of the quotation is capitalized. When the end of the quotation is also the end of the sentence, the period falls inside the quotation marks.

He said, "We'll discuss the fable in one hour."

4. Both parts of a divided quotation are enclosed in quotation marks. The first word of the second part is not capitalized unless it begins a new sentence.

"This fable," our teacher said, "is a twist of an old tale."

5. When you write dialogue, begin a new paragraph whenever the speaker changes.

"Videotape is the wave of the future," declared Clarissa. "There's no doubt about it! Not only is it a popular medium for today's artists, but it has practical applications as well."

"You're right," Angela agreed. "Video has been a boon to us on the swimming team—even when we don't like what we see! When we see ourselves on tape, however, we see immediately where our shortcomings are: a kick that's uneven or too much time lost at the turn."

"I work with emotionally disturbed children," mused Carmen, "and, now that you mention it, perhaps videotaping the teachers at work would be helpful. It would give us a chance to study our interaction with the children and see where we might improve or change our approach."

"Well, I guess we have our work cut out for us," Clarissa said. "If we all become masters of the video camera, we'll be on the road to success."