

Some comma rules:

Co-ordinate clauses

Clauses connected with **and**, **but**, or **or** are usually separated by commas unless they are very short.

- *John splurged and ordered the lobster platter, but Mae was more frugal and ordered the chicken.*
- *John had lobster and Mae had chicken.*

Subordinate clauses

When subordinate clauses begin sentences, they are often followed by commas.

- *If you are ever in Bielefeld, you should visit me.*

But never before that:

- *It is not surprising that you thought she was rude.*

Parenthetical insertions:

If words or expressions are put in unusual places in the sentence, and are not integral to the meaning, separate them with commas.

- *My mother, however, did not agree with me.*
- *Harold Ward, the head of marketing, called off sick today.*
- *They were, believe or not, calling for the fifth time.*

Direct speech

A comma is generally used between a reporting expression and a piece of direct speech.

- *He said, "don't step on my foot again!"*
- *She screamed, "I told you I was too tall to go on that ride!"*

Indirect speech: no comma before **that**, etc

We do not put commas before that, what, where, etc. in indirect speech structures.

- *Everybody knew that he had stolen the money.*
- *They quickly explained what to do.*
- *I don't know where I put my keys.*