

Commas with Interrupters

11j. Use commas to set off elements that interrupt the sentence.

EXAMPLES Emily Dickinson, the poet, says that hope has feathers. [Commas set off the phrase *the poet* from the rest of the sentence. Since the sentence means the same thing without the phrase, the phrase is nonessential.]
What do you think she meant, Eric? [One comma sets off the name *Eric*, which is used in direct address at the end of the sentence.]
In my opinion, she probably meant that hope has qualities similar to those of a bird. [One comma sets off the parenthetical expression *In my opinion* from the rest of the sentence.]

EXERCISE A Circle the letter of the sentence that is correctly punctuated in each of the following pairs.

Example 1. **a.** Flash, a Shetland sheepdog, is my favorite dog.

b. Nicole my neighbor, is my closest friend. [Commas should appear before and after nonessential information.]

1. **a.** A large SUV I believe, uses far more fuel than a large car.
b. A small car, on the other hand, is usually the most fuel-efficient of all. [Does one word group have a parenthetical comment set off by commas?]
2. **a.** You're right Rudy, you are next in line.
b. We need to load up the picnic supplies, David. [Does one group of words contain a name used in direct address correctly set off by a comma or commas?]
3. **a.** This air conditioner, a Kool-Aire, is the most energy-efficient model on the market.
b. My teacher Ms. Brown, assigned an essay on civil rights.
4. **a.** Long-distance runners according to sports medicine doctors, should watch their diets.
b. The house, nevertheless, needs to be painted.
5. **a.** The big black bear, a handsome example of the animal, rose on his hind legs.
b. Why won't Tom, the karate instructor offer more classes after school?
6. **a.** Tomorrow according to the weather forecaster will be sunny and hot.
b. This soup, in my opinion, needs more garlic.
7. **a.** I'm already on my way, Cheryl.
b. Reuben what time do you think we should leave for San Antonio?
8. **a.** Alicia's cousin, Marlene, has five sisters.
b. The bluejay a noisy and aggressive bird chased the other birds from the feeder.

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9. a. We will arrive at our first stop on the tour, Cairo about 10:00 Tuesday morning.
b. The Egyptian pyramids, one of the Seven Wonders of the World, are breathtaking.
10. a. Ms. Johnson’s car, a red sports car, is in the shop for repair.
b. My mother Mrs. Gibson works as a chemical engineer.

REMINDER Information essential to the meaning of the sentence should not be set apart by commas.

EXAMPLE We will read Emily Dickinson’s poem “A Narrow Fellow in the Grass” for tomorrow’s assignment. [No commas set off “A Narrow Fellow in the Grass” because Dickinson wrote many poems. The title is needed to identify which poem has been assigned, so the information is essential.]

EXERCISE B Read each of the following sentences containing interrupters. If the sentence is incorrectly punctuated, insert commas where they are needed. If the sentence is already correctly punctuated, write C on the line provided.

- Examples** _____ 1. Robert, you’d better slow down. [The name *Robert* is used in direct address, so a comma must set it apart from the rest of the sentence.]
- _____ ^C 2. My neighbor Mr. Murphy is building a boat. [No commas set off the name *Mr. Murphy* because the speaker has more than one neighbor. Mr. Murphy’s name is needed to identify him.]
- _____ 11. Recycling, generally speaking is good for the environment. [Does the sentence contain a parenthetical phrase that needs a second comma to fully set it off from the rest of the sentence?]
- _____ 12. Could this be a case of mistaken identity Maria? [Does the question include a name used in direct address?]
- _____ 13. My cat Smudge, would never have climbed into Dad’s new car.
- _____ 14. That nevertheless is exactly where I found him.
- _____ 15. Pablo Picasso, the world-renowned artist still has thousands of admirers today.
- _____ 16. The game consequently will have to be rescheduled.
- _____ 17. Moreover, the dramatic lighting adds to the sense of danger.
- _____ 18. Have you computed the figures, Ellen, for the final report?
- _____ 19. According to the survey in the *Sun Times* our only newspaper the election will be very close.
- _____ 20. My friend Elena will vacation in Montana this summer.