

(last updated 5/17/16)

<p>Tips for applying the definitive/ not definitive comma rule: Identify the element. In other words, does it answer the question “which one?” If NO, use commas. If YES, leave out the commas.</p>	<p>The state of Utah, <i>which contains many famous national parks</i>, has numerous desert areas. NOTE: The italicized clause is just added information. It is not needed to answer the question “which Utah?”; thus, the commas are correct.</p>
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C. Set off most introductory fragments with a comma.

<p>Introductory elements that should be set off with a comma usually begin with -ing constructions or with clauses that start with words such as <i>after, although, as, because, even though, if, since, and when</i>.</p>	<p>As the sun rose, I ate my breakfast. Eating my breakfast, I watched the sun rise. In the distant horizon, the sun rose. Of course, she ate her breakfast while watching the sunrise.</p>
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D. Separate items in a list or series with commas.

<p>Items in a series need to total at least three for this comma rule to apply.</p>	<p>NO COMMAS NEEDED: Toasted bread and grilled onions make for a low budget lunch. COMMAS NEEDED: Toasted bread, grilled onions, and Swiss cheese make for a low budget lunch.</p>