

# COMMA TIP 3

## Use a comma to separate a concluding element from the main clause in front.

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Single words, **phrases**, or other **clauses** can follow a **main clause**. Here are common concluding elements:

CONCLUDING ELEMENT	DEFINITION	EXAMPLES
Participle phrase	Verb + <i>ing</i> Verb + <i>ed</i> Irregular form of irregular verb	<i>slurping</i> up the last few drops of a McDonald's chocolate shake, <i>wheezing</i> like a cat with a hairball, <i>bumped</i> from the list, <i>broken</i> by the news, etc.
Appositive	Noun phrase renaming another noun	the best <i>student</i> in Dr. Wright's biology class, my <i>roommate</i> with the worst table manners, the shyest <i>boy</i> in class, etc.
Noun of direct address	Name of the person [or other living being] receiving the information	Ned, Mr. President, Mom, Jo-Jo, etc.
Adverb	Type of modifier, often ends in <i>ly</i>	meanwhile, unfortunately, however, etc.
Subordinate clause	Subordinate conjunction + subject + verb	<i>when</i> the computer began to beep wildly, <i>unless</i> you have heard otherwise, <i>even though</i> I warned him, etc.

CONCLUDING ELEMENT	DEFINITION	EXAMPLES
Nonessential clause	<i>Who</i> , etc. + verb <i>Who</i> , etc. + subject + verb	<i>who</i> leaped across the counter at McDonald's to get his own ketchup packets, <i>where</i> I saw my first elephant, <i>which</i> Timmy ate with gusto, etc.
Speaker tag	Subject + verb [identifies speaker of a direct quotation]	Laverne shouted, Dr. Nordstrom stated, my mother asserted, etc.

Most **concluding elements** require a comma to connect them to the end of a main clause. **Appositives**, nouns of direct address, some **adverbs**, **nonessential clauses**, and speaker tags follow this pattern:

**MAIN CLAUSE** + , + **CONCLUDING ELEMENT** .

Lisa blew a kiss at Timmy, *the shyest boy in class*. [Concluding appositive]

Don't we have any more vanilla ice cream, *Mom*? [Concluding noun of direct address]

Jason did forget to buy more ketchup, *however*. [Concluding adverb]

On my seventh birthday, my family and I spent the day at Busch Gardens, *where I saw my first elephant*. [Concluding nonessential clause]

"Your sister needs to dump her loser boyfriend," *my mother asserted*. [Concluding speaker tag]

Usually, **subordinate clauses** and **participle phrases** require **no** punctuation if they are in the concluding position. However, when these two grammatical units create a strong break from the rest of the sentence, or when many words separate the participle phrase from the word it is describing, use a comma.

Kris drank six cups of strong coffee, even though I warned him that he would have to sit quietly during the three-hour opera. [Concluding subordinate clause/strong break]

During the long opera at Bob Carr Auditorium, Kris uncomfortably tolerated the performance, squirming constantly in his seat.  
[Concluding participle phrase/many words separating *squirming* from *Kris*]

## QUICK TEST

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**Directions:** Add commas where they are necessary.

1. Jennifer tolerated the family reunion slapping mosquitoes with a paper plate and drinking iced tea to combat the heat.
2. In a panic, Tony searched the interior of his car. He hoped to find his biology lab work under the front seat or among the clutter in the trunk.
3. At Burger King, James tried to keep pace with Theodore who can eat a Whopper in thirty seconds flat.
4. “Don’t bother to ask Mom” warned Sue. “She never extends curfew especially if you tell her that you will be out with a guy.”
5. At the West Oaks Mall food court, Aisha winked at Rodney a cute young man in a tight T-shirt.

