



The Basics

1. Use a comma:

- before a coordinating conjunction (and, but, or) when joining independent clauses (two parts of a sentence that may stand on their own).
 - Learning a new language can be exciting, but I just don't have the time for it.
- after an introductory word group.
 - After eating dinner, I sat down on the couch and promptly fell asleep.
- between all items in a series.
 - I plan to shop, eat, read and sleep over Christmas break.
Note: Many publications omit the comma between the last two items; however, be certain that this does not cause any ambiguity within the sentence

2. Use an apostrophe when:

- a noun is possessive.
 - Jessica's speech was mesmerizing.
- forming contractions.
 - Don't forget to lock the door when you leave.
- pluralizing numbers mentioned as numbers, letters mentioned as letters, words mentioned as words, and abbreviations.
 - Remember to ask for their ID's.
- COMMON MISUSES
 - The cat was cute; it's its collar was purple. (It's means it is)
 - Clerk's Clerks are very knowledgeable. (nouns that are not possessive)

3. Use quotations to:

- set off direct quotations.
 - Muriel exclaimed, "Don't let them in. I'm not ready."
 - NOTE: The period is inside the final quotation mark. For in-text citations, write the sentence as normal, but place the period after the citation.
 - "Dogs will never rule the Earth" (Brown, 2004).
- to set off titles of newspaper and magazine articles, poems, short stories, songs and book chapters.
 - The headline read, "Local Couple Scrutinized Due to Suspicious Activity."
 - NOTE: Titles of books, plays, Web sites, and films and names of magazines and newspapers are put in *italics* or underlined.
- to set off words used as words.
 - The words "affect" and "effect" are commonly misused.