

Webinar:

#### Comma Basics

Scientific Publications

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#### What we will cover

- Guidelines for comma use
- Examples of correct and incorrect comma use
- Resources

#### What commas do

- Commas can help organize information in a sentence
- Commas can set off information that is not essential to the meaning of a sentence
- Commas can help clarify your meaning

### Use a comma to set off introductory elements

Over the past decade, the incidence of HPV-related oropharyngeal cancers increased dramatically.

### Use a comma to set off introductory elements

Over the past decade, the incidence of HPV-related oropharyngeal cancers increased dramatically. **However**, the incidence of tobacco-related oropharyngeal cancers has declined.

## Use a comma to set off introductory elements

If the patient's pain does not improve, palliative surgery should be considered.

The leading risk factor for non-small cell lung cancer, the most common type of lung cancer, is smoking.

The leading risk factor for non-small cell lung cancer is smoking.

Smoking is the leading risk factor for nonsmall cell lung cancer, the most common type of lung cancer.

Patient 2, who had no family history of breast cancer, presented with a palpable lump in her left breast.

Patient 2 presented with a palpable lump in her left breast.

But: Do not use commas to set off essential information.

Patients who have a history of heart disease are not eligible for this study.



Patients are not eligible for this study.

Such tumors should be treated with radiation, **not chemotherapy**.

Such tumors should be treated with radiation.

The patient's condition improved, **and** she was discharged the following day.

The patient's condition improved. She was discharged the following day.

#### Coordinating conjunctions:

- and
- but
- or
- for

- nor
- SO
- yet

The molecule has demonstrated activity against cancer cell lines, **but** it has not yet been tested in vivo.

The molecule has demonstrated activity against cancer cell lines. It has not yet been tested in vivo.

The molecule has demonstrated activity against cancer cell lines, but it has not yet been tested in vivo.

The molecule has demonstrated activity against cancer cell lines but has not yet been tested in vivo.

But: Use a semicolon to join independent clauses without a coordinating conjunction.



The molecule has demonstrated activity against cancer cell lines, however, it has not yet been tested in vivo.

The molecule has demonstrated activity against cancer cell lines; **however**, it has not yet been tested in vivo.

The FOLFOX regimen comprises leucovorin, 5-fluorouracil, and oxaliplatin.

I attended the banquet with my parents, Brad Pitt, and Angelina Jolie.

I attended the banquet with my parents, **Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie**.

Tissue samples were deparaffinized in xylene, rehydrated by successive incubations in 70% ethanol and water, and stained with hematoxylin.

We reviewed the records of patients treated for melanoma; breast, lung, and colorectal cancers; and glioblastoma.



We reviewed the records of patients treated for melanoma, breast, lung, and colorectal cancers, and glioblastoma.

## Use commas between adjectives of equal status

MD Anderson has a **talented**, **efficient**, **diverse** staff.

MD Anderson has a diverse, talented, efficient staff.

## Use commas between adjectives of equal status

MD Anderson has a talented clinical staff.



MD Anderson has a clinical talented staff.

# Use commas between adjectives of equal status

But: Do not use commas to separate adjectives in terms that are considered one entity.

**Diffuse large B-cell lymphoma** is the most common subtype of non-Hodgkin lymphoma.



Diffuse, large, B-cell lymphoma is the most common subtype of non-Hodgkin lymphoma.

# Use a comma to introduce a direct quotation

Marie Curie **said**, "I was taught that the way of progress is neither swift nor easy."

"I was taught that the way of progress is neither swift nor easy," **said** Marie Curie.

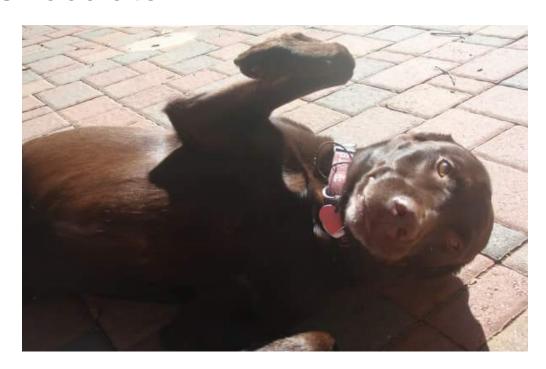
# Use commas to indicate that someone is being directly addressed

Fellow physicians, I urge you to support the proposed health care legislation.

# Use commas to indicate that someone is being directly addressed

It's time to eat, Chocolate.

It's time to eat Chocolate.



#### Use commas to set apart elements of dates

The conference will take place **Saturday**, **December 5**, **2018**, in Houston.

The conference will take place **Saturday** in Houston.

The conference will take place **December 5** in Houston.

The drug was approved by the FDA in **November 2017**.

## Use commas to set apart elements of addresses

The conference will take place at **Hotel ZaZa**, **5701 S Main St**, **Houston**, **Texas** 77005.

# Use commas to separate names from academic degrees

Gregory House, **MD**, **PhD**, is the study's principal investigator.

Dr Gregory House is the study's principal investigator.

#### Online resources

- AMA Manual of Style: available online through the Research Medical Library (go to <a href="http://www3.mdanderson.org/library/">http://www3.mdanderson.org/library/</a> and enter "AMA Manual" in the "Search the Library" box)
- MD Anderson Stylebook: available through Brand Central (go to <a href="https://mdabrandcentral.com/site/login">https://mdabrandcentral.com/site/login</a>, click "Editorial standards," and click the "Download MD Anderson Styleguide" button)
- Purdue University Online Writing Lab (OWL)
  <a href="https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/owlprint/607/">https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/owlprint/607/</a>

#### Sources

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- The Chicago Manual of Style, 16th ed. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press; 2010:311-325.
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- Purdue Online Writing Lab. Commas: Quick Rules.
  <a href="https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general-writing/punctuation/commas/index.html">https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general-writing/punctuation/commas/index.html</a>. Accessed July 11, 2018.
- Strunk W, White EB. Elements of Style, 3rd ed.
  Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon; 1979:2-5.

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