

STYLE SHEET/ September 18/ After reading classroom observations

Comma use—arrgghh

1. Use commas to separate clauses in compound sentences. A comma precedes a coordinating conjunction (*and, but, or, nor, for, so, or yet*) that joins two independent clauses in a compound sentence. (*The title may sound important, but administrative assistance is only a euphemism for photocopier.*)
2. Use commas to separate three or more items in a series. (*History is preoccupied with politics, ideas, and movements.*)
3. Use commas to set off most quotations. (“*All I know about grammar,*” said Joan Dideon, “*is its infinite power.*”)
4. Use commas to set off direct address. (*Please continue reading, Hermione. You were told, Julio, to stop using your cell phone in class. Jason, what is your mother’s telephone number?*)
5. Eliminate unnecessary commas.
 - a. Do not use a comma after a question mark or an exclamation mark.
 - b. Do not use a comma when you introduce a quotation with that.

About “however”

1. Put commas around “however” if it is in the middle of a sentence. (*The two scholars, however, missed the game because they were in the library.*)
2. When you use “however” to link independent clauses in a compound sentence, put a semicolon before it and a comma after it. (*John cut chemistry every day; however, he still passed the class because his test scores were so good.*)

About titles of books and essays

1. Underline the title of a book, put quotations around items (poems, essays) in a book.
2. Do NOT underline the title of your essay, do NOT highlight it in bold, do NOT make it larger than the font of the body of your essay.

Ellipsis marks: Avoid. Why leave it up to your reader to fill in the blanks of your observation? [I’ll explain later how to use these to condense a quoted passage.]

Spelling: aisle, a lot

Active/ passive voice: (*He questioned us [active]. We were questioned by him [passive].*)

Miscellaneous notes: Say *opened*, not *opened up*. Avoid “*etc.*”— come up with another example or stop your list with the last item you wrote.