

Rutgers Learning Centers

At Camden Campus

WRITING: USING COMMAS

This exercise will help to determine how well you know where and when to use commas. Insert commas where needed in the following sentences. Then read the explanations below.

1. The restaurant dessert tray featured carrot cake coconut cream pie and something called death-by-chocolate
2. Because I was three hours short of graduation requirements I had to take a course during the summer.
3. The weather according to last night's forecast will improve by Saturday.
4. Students hurried to the campus store to buy their fall textbooks but several of the books were already out of stock.
5. My sister asked "Are you going to be on the phone much longer?"

Understanding the Answers

1. The restaurant dessert tray featured carrot cake, coconut cream pie, and something called death-by-chocolate. *comma separates items in a series.*
2. Because I was three hours short of graduation requirements, I had to take a course during the summer. *comma separates an introductory phrase or dependent clause from the rest of the sentence.*
3. The weather, according to last night's forecast, will improve by Saturday. *The phrase 'according to last night's forecast' interrupts the main clause, so it is set off by commas.*
4. Students hurried to the campus store to buy their fall textbooks, but several of the books were already out of stock. *Place comma before a coordinating conjunction to separate two complete thoughts.*
5. My sister asked, "Are you going to be on the phone much longer?" *Comma separates a direct quotation from the rest of the sentence.*

Adapted from: Smith, R. K. & Goldstein, J. M. (1993). *English Brushup*. Marlton, NJ: Townsend Press

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