



Commas and Introductory Elements: Phrases

An introductory element in a sentence is the word, phrase or clause that appears at the beginning of the sentence and before the main clause.

Example 1: *At the museum the students saw paintings and sculptures.*

In Example 1 *At the museum* is an introductory element. The main clause begins with the subject of the sentence, *the students*.

In this sentence the introductory element is a prepositional phrase beginning with the preposition *at*. In general a short introductory phrase does not require a comma after it unless a comma is needed to make the sentence understandable. Longer phrases of more than four or five words should have a comma following the phrase.

Example 2: *In the heat of the summer afternoon, Janet walked to the corner store.*

In Example 2 *In the heat of the summer afternoon* is an introductory prepositional phrase of seven words. There should be a comma after this introductory phrase.

Rewrite the sentences below, adding commas in the correct places.

- 1 On Tuesday we will go to the movies.
- 2 On the tall and slanted rooftop the cat sat silently watching.
- 3 To the sailor the ship was the most beautiful he had ever seen.
- 4 Across the lake a light flashed at the end of the dock.
- 5 Over the course of the semester the class will study fossils.



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Rewrite the sentences below, adding commas in the correct places.

1

On Tuesday we will go to the movies.

On Tuesday we will go to the movies.

2

On the tall and slanted rooftop the cat sat silently watching.

On the tall and slanted rooftop, the cat sat silently watching.

3

To the sailor the ship was the most beautiful he had ever seen.

To the sailor the ship was the most beautiful thing he had ever seen.

4

Across the lake a light flashed at the end of the dock.

Across the lake a light flashed at the end of the dock.

5

Over the course of the semester the class will study fossils.

Over the course of the semester, the class will study fossils.