

Commas with coordinate adjectives

Separate coordinate adjectives—those that apply equally to the noun they modify—with commas.

➤ **The *twisting, muddy* road led to a shack in the woods.**

The adjectives *twisting* and *muddy* both apply equally to the noun *road*, so a comma should separate them.

Not all adjectives that precede a noun are coordinate adjectives.

➤ **The *cracked bathroom* mirror reflected his face.**

The adjectives *cracked* and *bathroom* are not coordinate because *cracked* modifies *bathroom mirror*, not just *mirror*. Do not separate adjectives like these with a comma.

You can usually determine whether adjectives are coordinate by inserting *and* between them. If the sentence makes sense with the *and*, the adjectives are coordinate, so separate them with commas.

➤ **They are *sincere and talented* researchers.**

The sentence makes sense with the *and*, so the adjectives need a comma: *They are sincere, talented researchers.*

➤ **Byron carried an *elegant and gold and* pocket watch.**

The sentence does not make sense with the *and*, so do not use commas: *Byron carried an elegant gold pocket watch.*