

CONQUERING COMMAS: FIVE RULES

1. Put a comma after an introductory clause or phrase in a sentence:

After I ate dinner, I went for a long walk.

While I was in Canada, I noted its pristine landscape.

As a result, I decided to move to Vancouver.

Surprisingly, I stayed for several hours after the luncheon.

- Hint: most sentences that begin with these words require a comma after the introductory clause: after, although, as, because, before, if, since, unless, until, when, while

2. Put a comma between more than two items in a list:

w, x, y and z

3. Use commas **before** “FANBOYS” (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so) only when they connect two complete sentences:

*I would have gotten to work on time, **but** my car wouldn't start this morning.*

I studied for months, so I passed my oral comprehensive exam.

4. Put two commas around words that interrupt a sentence:

*Her apple pie, **however**, is well known.*

*My oldest sister, **Mary**, is a public accountant.*

5. Use a comma to separate a direct quote from its “tag”:

***She said**, “I don't remember that event.”*

*“I don't remember that event,” **she said**.*

Never put a comma in without a rule to defend it: “Commas for pauses” is an unreliable method. Some pauses get periods; others get semicolons; and others are so small that that don't get anything.

Remember: When in doubt, leave it out!