Comma

1. Use commas between three or more items in a list. Those items may be single words or phrases.

   The basket held apples, oranges, and bananas.

   The director hires workers, writes quarterly reports, and manages the budget.

2. Use a comma before a coordinating conjunction that joins two independent clauses.

   Note: There are seven coordinating conjunctions: for, and, nor, but, or, yet, and so.

   Note: An independent clause is a word group that can stand alone as a sentence.

   The reporter likes the semicolon, but the editor prefers the period.

   A storm was brewing, so the picnickers decided to pack up the baskets.

3. Use a comma after an introductory word group.

   When the tide is high, people should leave the beach.

   During the summer after her senior year, she worked as lifeguard.

4. Use commas to set off conjunctive adverbs and transitional phrases: therefore, however, consequently, for example, on the other hand, in fact, and others.

   Grammar, as a matter of fact, is her specialty.

   Nevertheless, the army continued its advance.

5. Use commas to separate phrases of attribution from quoted material.

   The man in the back on the room said, “I can’t hear the lecturer.”

   “English teachers especially are prone to stress-related illnesses,” declares the writer of a recent newspaper editorial.

6. Use commas to set off contrasted elements.

   The dash, unlike the semicolon, can indicate a dramatic shift in thought.

   That girl looks like her mother, not her father.
7. Use commas to separate cumulative adjectives, that is, adjectives that can take the word “and” between them.

   The chairperson is a friendly, energetic leader.

   It’s nice to sit in a warm, comfortable chair.

8. Use commas to set off nonrestrictive elements.

   Gandhi, a fervent believer in nonviolent protest, has inspired many leaders.

   The youngest brother, believing that he could fly, jumped off the roof of the playhouse.