**10 Rules for Using Commas**

1. **Use a comma before a coordinating conjunction (FANBOYS=for,and,nor,but,or,yet,so) that separates two independent clauses.**

Example: There are eighty people in the room, but I do not think they are all planning on eating the buffet.

1. **Use a comma after an introductory word, phrase, or clauses that come before a main clause.**

Example: Strangely, no one has suggested fixing the switch.

Example: Despite the immigrant’s high hopes, their dreams were often unrealized.

1. **Use commas around words, phrases, and clauses in the middle of a sentence when they aren’t essential to the meaning of the sentence.**

Example: Numerous studies, however, have shown that negative reinforcement affects self-image more extensively than does positive reinforcement.

Example: Karl Marx, an important nineteenth-century sociologist, believed in his role as a social thinker to change the world.

1. **Use commas between items in a series.**

Example: The frigid, snowy, windy day was typical of Minnesota in January.

Example: Three reasons for the closing were insufficient funds, poor instructional materials, and inadequate staffing.

1. **Use commas to separate coordinating adjectives.**

-Coordinating adjectives are adjectives in a series that can be rearranged in any order and could be (but are not) strung together using “and.”

Example: A rusty, dented, broken-down car was left behind.

1. **Use commas before and after a quotation within a sentence.**

Example: “Cooperation between government and industry,” the President said, “must exist if the country is to prosper.”

Example: The author stated, “One must seek to discover.”

1. **Use a comma before an afterthought or contrasting element.**

Example: We are indebted to our forefathers, far more so than generations before us.

1. **Use commas to set off geographical names, items in date, and professional titles.**

Example: The speaker was from Atlanta, Georgia.

Example: Abraham Lincoln was born on February 12, 1809, in a log cabin near Hodgenville, Kentucky.

Example: Stephanie Glenn, Ph.D., will be the main speaker at the banquet.

1. **Use commas to set off conjunctive adverbs used as transitional devices.**

-Conjunction adverbs: *include, however, therefore, consequently, thus, furthermore, on the other hand, in general,* and *in other words.*

Example: Your watch indicates that we are on time. My watch, however, indicates that we are 2 minutes late.

1. **Use commas with markers of direct address.**

-Words that indicate you are talking to someone (yes/no, the reader’s name, question tags, or mild indicators “well” or “oh”)

Example: Yes, I am going to look for brown boots today.

Example: Oh, I don’t know.

Example: We are doing quite well, don’t you think?

**\*\*\*Watch out for COMMA SPLICES!!! (When you combine two complete sentences using a comma; this is INCORRECT! If you have two complete sentences, join them using a SEMI-COLON (;).**