**COMMAS FOR THE TIMID AND BRAVE:**

**ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW BUT WERE AFRAID TO ASK**

When it comes to making comma errors, students generally fell into one of two categories: those who avoid commas altogether and those who sprinkle commas like salt on an order of fries. Don’t fall into either of these traps: use these six rules to help you use these important punctuation **marks** with confidence and competence.

**COMMA RULE 1: When you use a conjunction to join two complete sentences, use a comma before the conjunction. The conjunctions are: • for • and • nor • but • or • yet • so (FANBOYS).**

1. Elaine needed someone to proofread her paper, **so** Stephanie volunteered.

2. Juan has almost finished his draft, **but** Brian is still working on his.

**NOTE: Be sure that the conjunctions do in fact connect two independent clauses (complete sentences). In the following sentence, the conjunction is not joining two whole sentences, so no comma is needed.**

3. Marty tried to leave early **but** could not get his car started.

**COMMA RULE 2: Put a comma between items in a series—a list of three or more items.**

4. Dennis stopped by to turn in his **prewriting, rough draft, essay, and tape**.

5. Robert **left a note for his roommate, grabbed his backpack, and headed out the door**.

**COMMA RULE 3: Put a comma after an introductory expression that is not part of the main subject-verb pattern. The introductory expression can be a word, a phrase, or a dependent cause.**

6. **Yes,** Christina will be there.

7. **Well**, Danielle has not made up her mind.

8. **However**, Lydia and Conrad had other plans.

9. **In the middle of the class last Thursday**, Art fell asleep.

10. **Yawning widely**, Heng turned in his essay.

11. **When the students left**, the room was suddenly silent

**COMMA RULE 4: When a sentence directly addresses someone by name, separate the name from the rest of the sentence with a comma.**

12. I heard, **Carlos**, that you passed your exams.

13. **Jerry**, have you finished your reading of Jennifer's essay?

14. I was surprised to see you at the game, **Yvette.**

**NOTE: Do not separate a name from the rest of the sentence when the person discussed b absent or b not being directly addressed.**

15. I heard that Carlos passed his exams.

16. Has Jerry finished reading Jennifer's essay?

17. I was surprised to see Yvette at the game.

**COMMA RULE 5: Watch for transitional expressions that interrupt the flow of a sentence. These transitions include words and phrases like *however, moreover, finally, therefore, of course,* and *on the other hand*. Transitional words and phrases can be used in different parts of a sentence. If the transition is at the BEGINNING of a sentence, serving as an introductory phrase, put a comma after it. If the transition is in the MIDDLE of a sentence and interrupts the sentence, just put a comma before and after it. If the transition comes BETWEEN two complete sentences, put a semi-colon before it and a comma after it (if you do not do this, you will have created a run-on or run-together sentence).**

18. **Of course**, Teri was not really surprised.

19. **However**, the others had simply not expected it.

20. Sabrina and Barbie were, **of course**, happy to be in class.

21. David**, however**, was not so sure.

22. JoJo, **on the other hand**, was already at Happy Hour.

23. Jenn won the chemistry award; **of course**, she deserved it.

24. Kim wanted to go to the party; **however**, she knew she should study.

**COMMA RULE 6: Put commas around non-essential (also called nonrestrictive) material. Look especially for who or which clauses, appositives\*, and participial phrases\*\*.**

25. Mark McGuire, **who plays baseball for the Saint Louis Cardinals**, set a record by hitting seventy home runs in a single season.

26. Baseball, **which is considered our national pastime**, is a rustic sport in origin.

27. \*Toni Morrison, **winner of the National Book Award**, read from Beloved, her most famous novel .

28. \*\*Walter, **sighing loudly**, wished the film would end.