Commas

When to use commas (,):

• **After a long introductory phrase or clause.**
  While heating last week’s leftovers, Susie Jo read The Star.

• **To separate elements in a list or series (called serial commas).**
  Commas help make ideas clear.
  **Unclear:** Jim stopped in the children’s maternity and toy departments.
  **Clear:** Jim stopped in the children’s, maternity, and toy departments.

• **To separate independent clauses joined by conjunctions.**
  Julia loved Justin, but he seemed oblivious.

• **To set off a phrase that describes a noun or phrase.**
  David Copperfield, the magician, has vanished.
  Pat’s ancient tent, a green canvas monster, collapsed last night.

• **To set off less important clauses. Use commas with “which” clauses.**
  Wigs, which come in all colors, are great for bad hair days.

• **In direct address or for greetings in friendly letters.**
  Henry, shape up.
  I’m speaking to you, Judy.
  Dear Joel,
  My dearest Buttercup,

• **To separate names and titles; to separate names of cities, states and countries.**
  Jasper Sludge, president of Sludge Sanitation, hates recycling.
  Paris, France
  Siren, Wisconsin