Major Uses of the Comma

1. **Use commas to separate three or more items in a series.** Lists of three or more words, phrases, and clauses require commas between each item.

For example:
- The fox shouts, cackles, and yells.
- He liked going to the movies, eating at restaurants, and visiting museums.
- Mary liked to visit her favorite park when she was stressed, when she didn’t know what to do, and when she felt lost.

2. **Use commas after introductory phrases, words, or clauses.**

For example:
- However, the king did not have a son.
- While Sallie loves turtles, her brother would rather have a fox.
- Because he had to follow the rules, he wasn’t able to follow his heart.

3. **Use commas to separate independent clauses (clauses that can stand on their own as complete sentences) that are joined by a coordinating conjunction (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, or so).** You can use the acronym FANBOYS to remember these.

For example:
- The monarch was a great ruler, and during his eight-year reign England won many wars.
- Comma rules can be complicated, but they help students understand when to use the pesky punctuation marks.

4. **Use commas to separate off clauses or words that are interjected into the sentence.** These are also called non-essential clauses – the information is “extra” to the sentence.

For example:
- Albert Einstein, who was born in Germany, became an American citizen.
- The bill, which was popular with young voters, finally passed.
- My mother, therefore, never allowed me to chew gum.

5. **Commas can also be used subjectively to clarify meaning or indicate a verbal pause.**