

USE THE COMMA . . .

1. To prevent misreading:

More and more generic manufacturing is becoming a viable business.

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The controversy surrounding Wounded Knee began immediately following the battle, with the reporters rushing to file their exclusive stories.

2. Before a coordinating conjunction that occurs between two independent

clauses-- , and , but , or , nor , for , yet , so :

Jim was exhausted, but he had to order his cap and gown immediately.

Jill realized it was too late to locate the book, so she selected another.

3. Between items in a series (Commas marked with asterisks are optional.):

Country, classical, new age,* and instrumental--all appeal to him.

The student swept, mopped,* and waxed the residence hall floor.

We were taught how to sit, how to walk,* and how to eat properly.

4. After all long (and most short) introductory elements:

As he entered the classroom, he tripped over the student's umbrella.

Hurrying across campus, the student forgot about his textbook.

5. Between coordinate (equal) adjectives. Coordinate adjectives can be reversed

or can have "and" inserted between them. Think of them as "switchable" descriptive words:

The tattered, dog-eared exams fell from the closet shelf inside the professor's office.

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6. To set off direct address:

Cheryl, please sit down. Henry, come on in and meet Cheryl.

7. In certain conventional situations (Commas marked with asterisks are optional.):

Heddy Plumkin, M.A., Ph.D., was born 265,000 miles from Wichita, Kansas.

Jethro Adams,* Jr.,* was born on July 4, 1954, in Johnson County, Missouri, USA.

Dear John, Sincerely, Best wishes, Cosmos Lamps,* Incorporated Love,

Housing in Venice, Italy, is too expensive for young Italian couples.

8. Before and after words which introduce a direct quotation to separate

the speaker from what was said, shouted, whispered, etc.:

Jack declared loudly, "I will not give in this time."

"Why are you going," she questioned, "when you haven't finished your dinner?"

9. TO SET OFF EXTRA INFORMATION (information of lesser grammatical rank)
•••MUCH OF WHICH IS DESCRIPTIVE:

a. a. descriptive phrases or clauses that are nonrestrictive--in other words, good to know and perhaps even important, but not necessary or essential to tell which person or thing we are writing about:

Betty, who sits next to Ed, lost the argument.

(unnecessary information--we have pinpointed Betty by name)

Last night's audience, which was made up largely of college students, applauded loudly .

(unnecessary---we ostensibly know which audience we're talking about)

The woman who lost her purse became absorbed into the crowd.

(necessary because the word "woman" ostensibly doesn't identify her well enough)

The works of a writer who has a sense of vision will remain pertinent year after year.

(necessary information because we need it to identify whom we're writing about)

Material beginning with "that" is presumed to be vitally important to meaning and thus is

not bracketed off by commas.

b. appositives or appositive phrases (An appositive is a word or phrase which follows a noun and renames it.):

Joanna, the honors student in the 8:00 class, is driving to St. Louis.

You must see Disclosure, a movie criticized by many reviewers.

c. a descriptor which isn't absolutely necessary to communicate meaning:

Joe, gesturing wildly, influenced the audience.

d. a loosely descriptive phrase which is preceded by an independent clause:

Having acted out of character, the sly and threatened Mr. Martin fooled everyone in the company, actually getting the new accountant discredited and fired.

We played tether ball, hitting the ball back and forth.

••*AND SOME OF WHICH IS NOT DESCRIPTIVE:*

e. contrasting expressions, e.g., those beginning with *not*, *never*, etc.:

She told him her ideas, not her feelings. She chose cats first, never dogs.

f. words or expressions we call "parenthetical":

Bob went to Denmark; however, he returned immediately.

Earlier, however, Bob chartered a plane to Sweden. Larry, in fact, drove across France.

She wanted to go with him, but, on the other hand, she didn't.

It was difficult, I think, because she couldn't make up her mind.

Regardless of your schedule, though, you must consider your health first.

Parenthetical words and expressions supply unity, transition, sophistication.