These tips explain where and when commas should be used in your writing.

1. **Joining Independent Clauses**
   An independent clause is a clause, “a sequence of words containing a subject and a predicate,” that can stand alone as a complete sentence. When two independent clauses are joined with a coordinating conjunction, a comma must be used before the coordinating conjunction.

   To easily remember the seven coordinating conjunctions think of them as FANBOYS:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>For</th>
<th>And</th>
<th>Nor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Independent Clause</td>
<td>,</td>
<td>Independent Clause.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>But</td>
<td>Or</td>
<td>Yet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>So</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

   Examples: I was anxious to know my grades, yet I was afraid of failing.
   The day started out sunny and pleasant, but the weather quickly changed.

2. **Subordinating Conjunctions**
   Subordinating conjunctions begin a subordinate clause, which has a subject and a verb. Some common subordinating conjunctions are after, before, while, when, since, because, although, as, and if. If a subordinate clause precedes an independent clause, place a comma after the subordinate clause, not after the subordinating conjunction.

   Examples: *While I cleaned out my locker,* I thought of the journey ahead of me after high school.
   I thought of the journey ahead of me after high school *while I cleaned out my locker.*

3. **Making a List**
   Commas should separate lists of three or more items.

   Examples: I want to start my career, buy a home, and begin my family.
   College prepares you for life, work, and family.
4. **Using Multiple Adjectives**
Two rules apply when you are using more than one adjective to describe a noun:

**RULE 1**
If the word “and” can be placed between the adjectives, a comma is needed.

Example: Mr. Hyde is such a dirty and dastardly villain.

**RULE 2**
If the order of the adjectives can be reversed and still make sense, a comma is needed.

Examples:

The beautiful, expensive class ring is a symbol of your hard work.  
(Notice that we could say “beautiful and expensive class ring” or “expensive, beautiful class ring.”

I dream of marching towards a diploma in a crisp, soft gown.  
(Notice that we could say “crisp and soft gown” or “soft, crisp gown.”

5. **Using Quotes**
Commas must be used to set off the person or publication being quoted.

Examples:
The speaker asked, “Will those receiving their Bachelor’s in Education degree please rise?”
“Teaching will be my love,” she said, “once I step into the classroom.”
“Enrollment has increased by a considerable amount,” stated the Registrars’ annual report.

6. **Writing Dates and Addresses**
Commas MUST be used to separate items in a date and address or to separate the date and address from the rest of the sentence.

Examples: I graduated from Texas A&M International University in Laredo, Texas, in December.
I expect to be teaching at a college by August 21, 2006, in the new academic year.