

Commas

(Fine, Edith H. & Josephson, Judith P. (1998). *Nitty-Gritty Grammar*. Ten Speed Press.)

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