

## USES OF THE COMMA

The comma is one of the most used, and often misused, marks of punctuation. While the comma has a variety of functions, the major ones are listed below:

### **To set off introductory elements:**

- Trying to impress Mary, John bought a new sports car.
- Because Mary likes new cars, she went for a ride with John.
- On a high hill in the country, John proposed to Mary.

### **To set off non-restrictive elements, usually adjectives or appositives:**

- Mary's hair, thick and curly, has always been the bane of her existence.
- The old tree, bowed by years of fierce storms, finally cracked and fell.
- Mary Smith, who spent four years in the army, is now a teacher.
- Dr. Robert Young, an excellent physician, is chairman of the hospital renovation committee.

### **To join two independent clauses connected by a coordinating conjunction (and, but, or, nor, so, for, yet):**

- I want to go to the movie, but I don't have enough money.
- Mary loves John, yet she refuses to marry him.
- We cannot go to the movies tonight, for we need to study.

### **To separate three or more sentence elements in a series:**

- Mary loves to swim, play tennis, and sail.
- John, Mike, and Rich are on the football team.
- Susie teaches dancing, attends college, and sings in the choir.
- Our new dog is overweight, lazy, and generally worthless.
- Because I studied with a partner, because I listened in class, and because I took good notes, I was prepared for the test.

### **To separate equal modifiers (coordinating adjectives) of the same word:**

- Mike was a tall, lanky boy.
- Jane awoke to a loud, frightening crash.

### **To separate parts of a date:**

- I was born May 1, 1935, in Georgia.

### **To separate parts of geographic information:**

- Atlanta, Georgia, is my birthplace.

### **To set off a quotation:**

- Mary said, "John will lock all the doors when he leaves."