COMMAS, THE SIX RULES

1. Use a comma before FANBOYS (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so) when they connect two complete sentences.

   ex. I hate Mondays, but I love Fridays. (use a comma)
       I hate Mondays but love Fridays. (no comma)

2. Use a comma between each item in a series or list.

   ex. He likes cake, ice cream and turnips.
       He ate dinner, felt sick, and looked for Pepto Bismol.

   Some words “go together” and don’t need commas: dear little old lady; dilapidated old building.

   Dates and addresses in sentences are like lists:

   ex. Olive lives at 213 Pimento Drive, Santa Fe, New Mexico.
       She was born January 23, 1923.

3. Put a comma after an introductory expression that does not flow smoothly into the sentence – a word, group of words, or a subordinate (dependent) clause.

   ex. No, I don’t want any.
       Rushing to the door, she dropped the pizza.
       When she picked it up, the pizza had dog hair stuck in the cheese.

Note: When the subordinate clause follows the independent clause, do not use a comma.

   ex. I didn’t eat any pizza because I do not like dog hair on it.

4. Put commas around the name of a person spoken to.

   ex. What I mean, Reginald, is that you’re in the dog house.

5. Put commas around an expression that interrupts the flow of a sentence (like however, finally, therefore, on the other hand, of course, by the way, I think, etc…)

   ex. We got our tweezers, however, and took the pizza to the kitchen.
       She thought, of course, that she would be able to fool everyone.

   Remember that words like however and therefore, when they separate two complete sentences, need to be punctuated differently.

   ex. She tried to remove all traces of dog hair from the pizza; however, Reginald made a point of telling the guests about what had happened.

6. Put commas around nonessential material – material that is not essential to the meaning of the sentence.

   ex. Gladys, who loves to ice skate, broke her toe.
       Working, a book by Studs Terkel, is a collection of stories of working class people.
       The house, which we painted last week, is for sale.