COMMA TIP 2

Use commas to separate an interrupter from the sentence that it divides.

Sentences will often have single words, phrases, or other clauses that interrupt them. Here are common **interrupters**:

INTERRUPTER	DEFINITION	EXAMPLES
Prepositional phrase	Preposition + optional description + noun	*at* midnight, *in* Count Dracula's castle, *under* Fred's nose, *on* the other hand, etc.
Participle phrase	Verb + *ing* Verb + *ed* Irregular form of irregular verb	*slurping* up the last few drops of the chocolate shake, *wheezing* like a cat with a hairball, *bumped* from the list, *broken* by the news, etc.
Infinitive phrase	*To* + verb	*to avoid* being eaten by a Great White shark, *to be* perfectly honest, *to conclude*, etc.
Appositive	Noun phrase renaming another noun	the best *student* in Dr. Wright's biology class, my *roommate* with the worst table manners, the shyest *boy* in class, etc.
Noun of direct address	Name of the person (or other living being) receiving the information	Ned, Mr. President, Mom, Jo-Jo, etc.

Interrupter	Definition	Examples
Adverb	Type of modifier, often ends in *ly*	meanwhile, unfortunately, however, etc.
Subordinate clause	Subordinate conjunction + subject + verb	*when* the computer began to beep wildly, *unless* you have heard otherwise, *even though* I warned him, etc.
Nonessential clause	*Who*, etc. + verb *Who*, etc. + subject + verb	*who* leaped across the counter at Bernie's Burger Emporium to get his own ketchup packets, *where* I saw my first elephant, *which* Timmy ate with gusto, etc.
Speaker tag	Subject + verb (identifies the speaker of a direct quotation)	Laverne shouted, Dr. Nordstrom stated, my mother asserted, etc.

These **interrupters**, grammatical units that disrupt the flow of the sentence, require commas both in front and behind. **Prepositional phrases**, **participle phrases**, **infinitive phrases**, **appositives**, nouns of direct address, some **adverbs**, **subordinate clauses**, **nonessential clauses**, and speaker tags can function as interrupters in a sentence. Follow this pattern:

THE FIRST PART OF THE SENTENCE + **,** + **INTERRUPTER** + **,** + **THE REST OF THE SENTENCE** .

My dog**, on the other hand,** hides under the bed as soon as he hears company knocking at the door. (Interrupting prepositional phrase)

Sara's old car**, choking and wheezing like a cat with a hairball,** climbed the steep hill. (Interrupting participle phrase)

Your girlfriend**, to be perfectly honest,** cares more for your wallet than she does for you. (Interrupting infinitive phrase)

Lloyd Williams**,** my roommate with the worst table manners**,** was caught putting ketchup on his vanilla ice cream. (Interrupting appositive)

Can you tell us**, Mr. President,** if the allegations are true? (Interrupting noun of direct address)

The company has**, unfortunately,** recalled the ketchup ice cream that the marketing department hoped would be the next big food craze. (Interrupting adverb)

Those fifty algebra problems that Professor Tyson assigned**, unless you have heard otherwise,** are due at nine o'clock. (Interrupting subordinate clause)

My friend Neil**, who leaped across the counter at Bernie's Burger Emporium to get his own ketchup packets,** slipped in a puddle of vanilla ice cream and suffered a concussion when his head hit the fry station. (Interrupting nonessential clause)

"All of your ideas**,**" **Professor Nordstrom asserted,** "are hogwash." (Interrupting speaker tag)

QUICK TEST

Directions: Add commas where they are necessary.

1. George used *War and Peace* a heavy, thick, intimidating book to smash the cockroaches he found crawling on the walls of his college dorm room.

2. Take this soup bone Joe and give it to the puppy before he starts chewing on our shoes.

3. "When you get hungry" my mother announced "I want you to try a bowl of this squid eyeball stew."

4. Mr. Finklestein who assigns more papers than he has time to grade keeps student essays half a semester before returning them.

5. January the month Julie usually dreads because of its cold, dark mornings was unusually warm this past year.