

COMMA TIP 5

When necessary, use commas for clauses that begin with *where, which, who, whom, whose, etc.*

Clauses that begin with **relative pronouns** and **relative adverbs** have two classifications.

ESSENTIAL CLAUSES

The first classification is **essential**. An **essential clause** gives information that defines or clarifies the very general word coming before it. Essential clauses require no punctuation.

The student + Ø + **ESSENTIAL CLAUSE** + Ø + ran to his class.

The student **who saw a spaceship land in the parking lot** ran to his class.

The student **whom Dr. Skinner counsels** ran to his class.

Mrs. Mauzy returned the quiz to the student + Ø + **ESSENTIAL CLAUSE** .

Mrs. Mauzy returned the quiz to the student **who slept in class every day**.

Mrs. Mauzy returned the quiz to the student **whom everyone admires**.

NONESSENTIAL CLAUSES

The second classification of these clauses is **nonessential**. A **nonessential clause** gives information or clarifies an already specific word. Nonessential clauses, because they interrupt the flow of the sentence or cause a strong break at the end, require separation with commas.

Robert + , + **NONESSENTIAL CLAUSE** + , + ran to his class.

Robert, who saw a spaceship land in the parking lot, ran to his class.

Robert, whom Dr. Skinner counsels, ran to his class.

Mrs. Mauzy returned the quiz to Kristy + , + **NONESSENTIAL CLAUSE** .

Mrs. Mauzy returned the quiz to Kristy, who slept in class every day.

Mrs. Mauzy returned the quiz to Kristy, whom everyone admires.

QUICK TEST

Directions: Add commas where necessary.

1. People who know their grammar rules shouldn't always correct those of us who don't.
2. My brother James who cannot please Dad has decided to move to Michigan.
3. The basketball players whom I admire the most play for teams other than the Orlando Magic.
4. The movie *Aliens* which I have seen twenty-seven times contains too much violence for my nephews to watch.
5. We watched a crazy kid on a skateboard weave through the heavy traffic on Orange Avenue. The kid who had no fear of death or litigation leaped a curb and crashed into a lawyer walking along the sidewalk.

