WITH COORDINATING CONJUNCTIONS
Use a comma to join two independent clauses with a coordinating conjunction (For, And, Nor, But, Or, Yet, So). They’re easy to remember with the acronym “FANBOYS.”

The experiment concluded as predicted, and no results were unexpected. Bradford was happy living in England, but she came to America with her husband.

AFTER INTRODUCTORY CLAUSES, PHRASES, OR WORDS
Use a comma at the beginning of a sentence to set off an introductory clause, phrase, or word.
After they complete their FYS courses, first year students often notice their schedules ease considerably.

TO SET OFF NON-ESSENTIAL CLAUSES, PHRASES, OR WORDS
If you can remove a word, phrase, or clause from a sentence & the sentence still makes sense, set the word, phrase, or clause off with commas.

King Philip’s War, also known as the First Indian war or Metacomet’s War, was fought between 1675 and 1678.

TO SEPARATE ITEMS IN A SERIES
When including three or more items in a list, separate the items with commas.

Austin is home to several theatre companies including the Colonial Shakespeare Company, Playground Theatre, and Salvage Vanguard Theatre.

TO SEPARATE ADJECTIVES
If two sequential adjectives are describing the same noun, divide them with commas.

The dark, stormy sky was one she’d never forget. (Here we add a comma because the night is “dark” and “stormy.”)

The dark blue of the Sky set off the stars. (Here there is no comma because “dark” describes the color, not the sky.)

TO SET OFF PHRASES AT THE END OF A SENTENCE
If a sentence ends with a dependent phrase (one that could not stand on its own) set it off with a comma.

I wish I had chosen to go somewhere warm on my vacation, instead of going to Chicago.

IN PLACES, DATES, & TITLES
Use commas between cities & states, between days and years, and between names and titles.
Georgetown, Texas  December 15, 2014  Dr. Burger, President of Southwestern.

WITH QUOTATIONS
Use commas to introduce quotations or to transition from a quotation to your own words (these commas go inside the quotation marks).

“Writing,” as Toni Morrison once said, “is really a way of thinking.”