

## THE CLAUSAL COMMA

*Snooty, insists on marking boundaries to keep independent clauses separated*

**Replaces:** periods/semicolons

- I love veggies. He does too.
- I love veggies; he does too.

**Purpose:** shorter pauses between clauses

- I love veggies, and he does too.

**Assistants:** coordinating conjunctions (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so)

- I really think he wants to ask me out sometime, but maybe he's too nervous to drop the question.
- I'm exhausted, so I think I'll head home pretty soon.

**Exception:** optional when clauses are short

- I like her and she likes me.

## THE PARENTHETICAL COMMA

*Eager, drops orange cones around sentence tangents to reroute traffic*

**Replaces:** parentheses/em dashes

- Give it a try (like this).
- Give it a try—like this!

**Purpose:** casually give nonessential info

- Give it a try, like this.

**Assistants:** relative pronouns, subordinating conjunctions, participles, adverbials, etc.

- I agree with Alf, which is funny.
- When I get there, I'll kiss you.
- Hey, Mom, can I steal your car?
- He was born July 16, 1995, in Portland, Oregon, in a coffee shop.

**Exception:** omitted when info is essential

- That man with the yellow hat takes care of Curious George.

## THE SERIAL COMMA

*Efficient, wants to streamline lists*

**Replaces:** and/or

- I want this or that and these or those.

**Purpose:** smoother flowing lists

- I want this, that, these, and those.

**Assistants:** and/or, semicolons

- Her kids are Jett, who is 15; Punky, who is 11; and Brewster, who is 9.

**Exception:** optional when list is vertical

- Please overlook the following:
  1. grumpy people
  2. ignorant remarks
  3. unintentional faux pas

## THE QUOTATIONS COMMA

*Quiet, shifts mic between host & guest speaker*

**Replaces:** formal intro with a colon

- This is what he said: "You really should try this."

**Purpose:** escort in and out of quotations

- "I'm not sure," she began, "if that comma is really the best idea."

**Assistants:** said/asked (etc.), capital letters

- He said, "You really should try this."

**Exception:** omitted when the quote fits into the structure of the sentence

- Some people say that "radioactive rodents" are to blame for the rise in bubonic cancer rates.