Commas, Commas, Everywhere…

Use Commas:

To separate independent clauses (each containing a subject and a verb) with a coordinating conjunction (*and, but, or, nor, yet, for, so*). When you do this, the comma must come before the conjunction.

> Sam **closed** all the windows**, but** the predicted thunderstorms never **arrived**.
> Subj. 1 Verb 1 Subj. 2 Verb 2
> Charlie **ate** a chocolate bar**, and** he **found** a golden ticket.
> Subj. 1 Verb 1 Subj. 2 Verb 2

Be careful to not use a comma in a sentence that has 1 subject and 2 verbs; A comma should only be used in sentences with 2 subjects and 2 verbs.

> The doctor **stared** over his bifocals and **lectured** me about smoking.
> Subj. Verb 1 Verb 2

To separate a dependent clause from independent (main) clause. Words that indicate a dependent clause are: *after, since, before, because, if, as, when*

If I had a golden ticket, I could meet Willy Wonka.

To set apart an introductory phrase from the main clause.

Yes, we have no bananas.

Burping up a storm, Charlie and his Grandpa descended to the floor.

Introductory words: *Therefore, however, yes, no, well*, etc.
Introductory phrases: *In the past five years, From the top of the hill,* etc.

To separate elements that interrupt the main clause, but do not change the meaning of the phrase.

The incident in the chocolate river, however, was a clear sign of trouble.

The vinyl car seat, sticky from the heat, clung to my skin.

To create a list of 3 or more items (words, phrases, clauses)

The street vendor sold watches, necklaces, sunglasses, and earrings.

Yesterday I went to the store, bought some apples, and baked a pie.

To set off appositives (noun or noun phrases that are used to rename, but are not necessary to the sentence)

Wonka's latest invention, the Everlasting Gobstopper, should last forever.

Lisa, my friend, attends college in Philadelphia.

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