Oh, commas!
How do they work again?

Commas are used frequently during the writing process. They are a form of punctuation, which aid in distinguishing separation of elements such as words and phrases.

Rule 1: Commas are used to separate words, phrases, and clauses in a series.

Ex. I bought apples, mandarin oranges, and bananas from the grocery store.

Rule 2: Commas follow introductory words, phrases, and dependent clauses.

Ex. Furthermore, researchers collected mandarin orange juice for use in flame retardant fabrics. (word)

Ex. Without the help of his friends, Teddy would not have been able to pick as many mandarin oranges from the grove on the field trip. (phrase)

Ex. Although it was raining, the boys played baseball outside with mandarin oranges (dependent clause)

Rule 3: Commas distinguish words that are not essential to the sentence.

Ex. The cat, eating mandarin oranges, walked across the front lawn in tiny boots.

Rule 4: Commas distinguish nonessential modifiers and appositives.

Ex. We walked to the park, which had mandarin orange-colored playground equipment, on Saturday. (modifier)

Ex. Michael, my best friend, enjoys eating mandarin oranges. (appositive)

Rule 5: Commas set off transitional expressions.

Ex. Mandarin oranges, in fact, are found in China.

Rule 6: Commas are used with attributive tags.

Ex. According to the Surgeon General, “mandarin oranges love to be eaten daily.”

© Trisha Lepa and Honors College Writing Center