How to correctly use commas

★ Commas make sentences easier to understand
★ They are most often used:
  o To enclose parenthetical expressions
    ▪ Example: The Erie Canal, along with many other internal improvements, was built during the Jacksonian Era.
  o To enclose a name or title in direct address
    ▪ Example: Excuse me, Dr. Smith, but I missed your point about the importance of the Erie Canal.
  o After abbreviations
    ▪ Example: Carol Sheriff, Ph.D., wrote *The Artificial River: The Erie Canal and the Paradox of Progress, 1817 – 1862*.
  o In a list
    ▪ Example: The canal boat was full of corn, cows, chickens, and cotton.
      - Make sure there is a serial comma (aka Oxford comma) after the last term before the conjunction.
  o Before a conjunction joining two independent clauses
    ▪ and, but, nor, or, for, so, yet
    ▪ Example: The Hudson River was always an important waterway, but its prestige grew after the opening of the great western canal.
  o After an introductory phrase or clause that precedes an independent clause
    ▪ Example: Before you conclude your essay, you should take into consideration the impact of the Erie Canal on the Civil War.
    ▪ Example: In 1825, the Erie Canal opened with great fanfare.
  o To indicate tags and interjection
    ▪ Example: Yes, I came here via the artificial river.
    ▪ Example: Well, actually, I left the supplies in Lockport.
    ▪ Example: You know that the Erie Canal was responsible for America’s becoming a superpower, do you not?
  o To set off non-restrictive elements
    ▪ Words, phrases, or clauses that modify a word whose meaning is already clear
      - Example: A celebrated politician, DeWitt Clinton was a canal supporter.
      - Example: This book describes the life of Peter Ploughshare, an opponent of the Grand Canal.
• **Example:** The canal commissioners, all sporting their best attire, looked ready to do business.

- A restrictive element is a modifier that is necessary to preserve the intended meaning of the sentence.
  - **Example:** The commissioners who wore their best suits looked businesslike.
    - No commas are needed because the phrase “who wore their best suits” is necessary to know which commissioners looked businesslike.