Seven Rules for Using the Comma

from the video "Grammar Time: Understanding the Comma"

1. Use a comma when separating items in a list or series.

Mike ate candy, potato chips, and a banana.

2. Use a comma to separate two or more adjectives before a noun.

The big, heavy books were hard to carry.

3. Use a comma with conjunctions when combining two clauses. (and, for, but, so, etc. – clause = subject & verb)

Bill is a good student, so he does his homework.

The floor has been waxed, so it is slippery.

4. Use a comma after a sentence interrupter. (interrupters can identify, explain, or supplement the meaning of nouns or pronouns)

direct address: *We are going to eat, John, before we go skating.*

appositive: *Kim, a runner, jumped over the obstacle.*

interjection: Hey, I've got a great idea!

5. When writing letters, always use a comma after greetings or salutations, and closing remarks or goodbyes.

Greeting: *Dear Bob,*

Closing: *Sincerely, John*

6. Commas are used to separate the day, year, and date from each other; geographical locations are also separated this way.

I was born on June 21, 1978, to Sheila Watkins.

I live in Houston, Texas.

7. Use a comma with quotation marks to separate a direct quote from the rest of the sentence.

"Most excellent," said Bill and Ted after their adventure.

She asked, "Does my hair look stupid?"