

# Commas

Remember the old saying that when you take a breath you should add a comma.

Not true!! There really are rules and none of them have to do with breathing.

Use a comma to

- Set off an introductory word, phrase, or clause
  - "Haltingly, Jim answered the question in class."
  - "Even though tired from lack of sleep, Sally made an a on her Greek test."
- Separate clauses in compound sentences (make sure you also use a coordinating conjunction)
  - "Alan build a snowman yesterday, and he also shoveled the driveway."
- Set off nonrestrictive elements (clauses, phrases, and words that do not limit the words they modify)
  - "Gene March, who attended Austin Seminary, is a wonderful professor and a great asset to LPTS." "Who attended Austin Seminary" is not essential to the meaning of the sentence because it does not limit who it modifies.

If there were two Gene Marchs at LPTS then "who attended Austin Seminary" would be essential information distinguishing between the two Genes and the commas would not be added.

"Gene March who attended Austin Seminary is a wonderful professor and a great asset to LPTS."

- Set off appositives (a noun or phrase that renames a nearby noun)
  - "John Grisham's new book, *Skipping Christmas*, is an easy read about a middle age couple who decide to forgo all the social conventions of Christmas.
- Separate three or more items in a series (back to the "old" way of doing it!)
  - "Spring semester I am taking Scripture II, CHATS, and NT Exegesis.
- Introduce a quotation
  - "Raymond Brown opines that, 'NT writing about Jesus and his disciples relate a story enacted on the stage of history.'