review of the comma

Use a comma before and, but, for, or, nor, yet, so when they connect two independent clauses—two clauses, each with a subject and a verb (see below, “Sue wanted” and “she felt”).

Sue wanted to chat more, but she felt compelled to get back to work.
Jenelle registered for the class, yet she failed to show up for it.

However, notice sentences with one subject:

Sue wanted to chat more but felt compelled to get back to work.
Jenelle failed to show up for the class she had registered for.

Use commas around nonessential material.

My sister, whose own children are in day care, spoke of the need to enhance the program.
Jane, who heads the department, will speak tonight.
New York, which is the capital of the world, is where I was born.

Use a comma between coordinating adjectives that describe the same noun.

Lynne is a strong, articulate, creative contender.

However, do not use a comma between cumulative adjectives—a series of adjectives, the first modifying and combining with the second and subsequent ones, leading up to the noun:

The 23 fascinating young foster children asked stimulating questions.
The four small blue boxes should be moved to the corner.

To test whether a comma is needed, check whether the word “and” works between each adjective.

Two small bright white lights illuminated the stage.

Two and small and bright and white lights does not work, therefore, no commas.

John’s friend is tall, dark, and handsome.

John’s friend is tall and dark and handsome, therefore, commas

Use a comma after an introductory clause, one that begins with words indicating when, where, why, or how the main action occurred.

Because Martha kept on talking, I didn’t have time to eat.
Near the gas station at the fork in the road, I took a left.

Use a comma after an introductory expression that does not flow smoothly into the sentence.

Well, that was the end of that.
It’s cold this morning, isn’t it?
When everyone had left, the lights were shut off.

Use commas around the name of a person spoken to.

I think, Jane, I love your mother.
Are you ready for your presentation, Lisa?

Use commas around an interrupter, like however, moreover, finally, therefore, of course, by the way, on the other hand, I think.

I hope, of course, that they'll come.
It should, I think, take only an hour.
The taxi, however, was late, causing us to miss the plane.