**The Ten COMMAndments**  
  
1. Thou shalt put a comma before the third item in a series, e.g., *I would like eggs, toast, and coffee*.

2. Thou shalt use a comma with a compound sentence, but not with a compound verb, e.g., *She drives to school, and she parks in the student lot*. cf. *She drives to school and parks in the student lot*.

3. Thou shalt NOT use a comma to link two main clauses, e.g., *I came here to dance, I did not come here to fight*. [It’s a run-on].

4. Thou shalt put a comma after a dependent adverb clause when it precedes the independent clause but not when it follows the main clause, e.g., *When it rains, it pours*. cf. *It pours when it rains*.

5. Thou shalt separate non-restrictive phrases and clauses with a comma, but not restrictive ones, e.g., *Bobby, my step-brother from my father’s second marriage, is a chiropractor*. cf. *My step-brother Bobby is a chiropractor*.

6. Thou shalt use a comma to separate adjectives that could otherwise be separated by ‘and’, e.g*., I am short, balding, and middle-aged*. cf. *I am a grumpy old man*.

7. Thou shalt use a comma to set off introductory participial and prepositional phrases, e.g., *In the prologue to* The Canterbury Tales*, Chaucer celebrates the joys of springtime*.

8. Thou shalt use a comma to show contrast, e.g., *I came here to dance, not to fight*.

9. Thou shalt use a comma with a simple lead-in to a quote, e.g., *Macbeth says, “So foul and fair a day I have not seen.”*

10. Thou shalt NOT use a comma in any parenthetical documentation unless you have multiple sources by the same author, e.g., *(Dickens 334)* [for prose], *(Shakespeare 1.1.1)* [for drama], or *(Chaucer 18)* [for poetry].