

Harry Shaw in [*Punctuate It Right!*](#) gives us six basic comma rules. He maintains that if you master the usage of these six rules, you will use commas accurately most of the time.

1. Separate long independent clauses in a sentence

We went to the beach, and we fished off the pier.

2. Set off a long introductory phrase

The morning after the game, a policeman came to the door.

3. Set off words or groups of words in a sentence

My boss, Steve Smith, resigned yesterday.

4. Separate elements in a series

Her bag contained a hairbrush, mirror, lipstick, and a Swiss army knife.

5. Commas with dates, titles, and states

He played his last game on July 10, 2010, at the high school gym.
He played his last game in Atlanta, Georgia, on a hot July day.
Josephine Jones, MD, did my sister's surgery.

6. Prevent misunderstanding, promote clarity

Woman without her man is nothing.
Woman, without her man, is nothing.
Woman, without her, man is nothing.