Comma Handout

Commas are generally used to make a sentence clear and easier to read. These are the basic rules for using commas. Commas should never be overused.

1. **Use commas to set off introductory phrases or clauses unless they are very short.**
   --Trying to finish the term paper, Jennifer worked until three a.m.

2. **Use a comma before a coordinate conjunction--and, but, or, for, nor, so, yet--when it connects two complete sentences.**
   --Ralph gave millions to UPS, and he was left without enough for a large latte.

3. **Use commas to separate coordinate adjectives. Coordinate adjectives are adjectives that equally modify a noun or pronoun. If you can insert the word "and" between them without making the sentence awkward, then they are coordinate, and a comma should replace the "and."**
   --Julie drives an uncomfortable, noisy car.

4. **Use commas to set off items in a series. The series may be made up of single words or a whole group of words, but in order for it to be a series, it must contain at least three items.**
   --Her apartment is large, expensive, and dilapidated.

5. **Use commas before and after interrupters. An interrupter is a word or group of words that adds meaning to a sentence.**
   --My sister, who is an artist, lives on Vashon Island.

6. **Use commas to avoid misreading.**

   Remember....

   Use commas to avoid misreading and DO NOT OVERUSE COMMAS