

# Commas

Besides incidental jobs

(like separating the day from the year in a date, or the city from a state in an address on a letter),  
commas play 4 roles within a sentence:

- 1) commas separate items in a series of 3 or more
- 2) commas surround an interruption
- 3) commas show where an introduction ends
- 4) commas mark the beginning of an afterthought or a final qualifier

*Some definitions of key terms...*

an **incidental job** is a secondary, less important function of the comma (e.g. **January 21, 2009** or **Fremont, CA**) not included in the rules above

an **interruption** and an **introduction** are words, phrases, or clauses that are introduced into a sentence in such a way as to disrupt or complicate the simple flow of that sentence

an **afterthought**, a final **qualifier**– these are words, phrases or clauses introducing extra information that is attached to the end of a thought or sentence: **it is information that, while important, is not essential in order for the basic message of the sentence to be communicated**