Comma Tip 5

When necessary, use commas for clauses that begin with *where, which, who, whom, whose, etc.*

Clauses that begin with relative pronouns and relative adverbs have two classifications.

**Essential Clauses**

The first classification is *essential*. An essential clause gives information that defines or clarifies the very general word coming before it. Essential clauses require no punctuation.

The student + Ø + **Essential Clause** + Ø + ran to his class.

The student *who saw a spaceship land in the parking lot* ran to his class.

The student *whom Dr. Skinner counsels* ran to his class.

Mrs. Mauzy returned the quiz to the student + Ø + **Essential Clause**.

Mrs. Mauzy returned the quiz to the student *who slept in class every day*.

Mrs. Mauzy returned the quiz to the student *whom everyone admires*.

**Nonessential Clauses**

The second classification of these clauses is *nonessential*. A nonessential clause gives information or clarifies an already specific word. Nonessential clauses, because they interrupt the flow of the sentence or cause a strong break at the end, require separation with commas.

Robert + , + **Nonessential Clause** + , + ran to his class.
Robert, **who saw a spaceship land in the parking lot**, ran to his class.

Robert, **whom Dr. Skinner counsels**, ran to his class.

Mrs. Mauzy returned the quiz to Kristy, who slept in class every day.

Mrs. Mauzy returned the quiz to Kristy, whom everyone admires.

**Quick Test**

**Directions:** Add commas where necessary.

1. People **who know their grammar rules** shouldn’t always correct those of us who don’t.

2. My brother James **who cannot please Dad** has decided to move to Michigan.

3. The basketball players **whom I admire the most** play for teams other than the Orlando Magic.

4. The movie *Aliens* **which I have seen twenty-seven times** contains too much violence for my nephews to watch.

5. We watched a crazy kid on a skateboard weave through the heavy traffic on Orange Avenue. The kid **who had no fear of death or litigation** leaped a curb and crashed into a lawyer walking along the sidewalk.