USE A COMMA

Before a coordinating conjunction (FANBOYS) when it joins two independent clauses:

We swam with the dolphins, **and** we fed the whales.

**After an introductory element:**

**However,** I enjoyed feeding the whales the most.

**Because I had taken photography,** I got some great pictures.

**To set apart nonessential items:**

My mother, **who is afraid of the water,** refused to get into the ocean.

**To set apart conjunctive adverbs that are asides:**

This vacation, **therefore,** was the best my family has ever taken.

**To separate three or more items in a series:**

I saw seahorses, starfish, and even a stingray.

**To separate two or more adjectives of equal weight:**

The **dry, soft** sand felt wonderful on my skin.

USE A COMMA

Before a coordinating conjunction (FANBOYS) when it joins two independent clauses:

We swam with the dolphins, **and** we fed the whales.

**After an introductory element:**

**However,** I enjoyed feeding the whales the most.

**Because I had taken photography,** I got some great pictures.

**To set apart nonessential items:**

My mother, **who is afraid of the water,** refused to get into the ocean.

**To set apart conjunctive adverbs that are asides:**

This vacation, **therefore,** was the best my family has ever taken.

**To separate three or more items in a series:**

I saw seahorses, starfish, and even a stingray.

**To separate two or more adjectives of equal weight:**

The **dry, soft** sand felt wonderful on my skin.

USE A COMMA

To separate a quote from the rest of a sentence:

“I caught a fish,” I yelled.

**To separate digits in a number:**

I counted at least 10 schools of fish. With approximately 100 fish per school, that equals about **1,000** fish.

**To separate parts of a geographical location:**

Even though this vacation was wonderful, I was happy to get home to **Bakersfield, California.**

**To separate parts of an address:**

I was most happy when we arrived at our home at 127 Gardenwood Lane, Bakersfield, CA **90010.**

**To separate parts of a full date:**

We got home the day before my birthday, which is **August 18, 1989.**

**To set off a title when it appears after a name:**

Because I was so sunburned, I spent my birthday with my personal physician, **Marcus Welby, M.D.**

USE A COMMA

To separate a quote from the rest of a sentence:

“I caught a fish,” I yelled.

**To separate digits in a number:**

I counted at least 10 schools of fish. With approximately 100 fish per school, that equals about **1,000** fish.

**To separate parts of a geographical location:**

Even though this vacation was wonderful, I was happy to get home to **Bakersfield, California.**

**To separate parts of an address:**

I was most happy when we arrived at our home at 127 Gardenwood Lane, Bakersfield, CA **90010.**

**To separate parts of a full date:**

We got home the day before my birthday, which is **August 18, 1989.**

**To set off a title when it appears after a name:**

Because I was so sunburned, I spent my birthday with my personal physician, **Marcus Welby, M.D.**
USE A SEMICOLON
To join two independent clauses:
Swimming is great exercise; it works out both the heart and lungs.

Before a conjunctive adverb joining two independent clauses:
Swimming is also enjoyable; therefore, many people continue to exercise.

To separate items in a series already containing commas:
At the beach, we saw many strange creatures; ate many strange foods; and explored the malls, the thrift shops, and the antique stores.

USE A COLON
To introduce a list, even of one:
Hint: Do not use a colon after the words such as and including.
The following items are useful at the beach: a towel, some sunscreen, and bottled water.
At the beach, I noticed a most curious person: a man in a clown’s suit.

USE A DASH
To add and set off information:
My best adventure at the beach—meeting Alanis Morissette—was also my most memorable.
She even agreed to sing my favorite song—“Hand in My Pocket.”