The comma is used to set off an introductory element—something that comes before the main clause—from the main clause.

These are typical types of introductory elements:

- **Subordinate clauses** (beginning with words like although, if, when, etc.)
  
  If you're buying, I'm drinking.

- **Verbal phrases** (beginning with participles, the -ing or -ed forms of verbs)
  
  Running all the way, I arrived out of breath.
  Stunned by the catastrophe, America became unified.

- **Prepositional phrases**
  
  On the other hand, the blue shirt is nice, too.

- **Single words**
  
  Finally, we were ready to go.

These commas may be omitted after a very short introductory element, as long as there is no room for confusion. When in doubt, use the comma.

**Common Mistakes With This Rule:**

This rule does **not** mean that a comma should go between the subject and verb or between a verb and its object.

- The second type of teacher, is the dictator.  
  
  this comma is incorrect

The comma goes at the end of the introductory element, not after the first word of a clause or phrase.

- Because, we are good friends, we can share secrets with each other.  
  
  incorrect  correct
Decide whether the commas used for introductory elements are correct or not. Don't worry about other commas.)

1. The way to make Christmas a little more jolly, is to take the hustle and bustle out of it.
2. After checking to be certain we turned off all of the lights, we begin the actual journey to my parents' house.
3. First of all, I am the type of person who loves to talk.
4. Although, these celebrities are okay to look up to, Americans get away from the true meaning of a hero.
5. After living in this neighborhood for twenty years, I have become pretty aware of the people who live around me.
6. These students, are the ones who don't study for the exam.
7. Students and teachers alike, all have those days and weeks when they feel like pulling their hair out.
8. When I have had one of those days, I like to go golfing.
9. The clear, crisp air I smell on the golf course, always takes me away to a more relaxing and slow-paced world.

Determine where commas need to be added for introductory elements. (Don't worry about other commas.)

1. When a chance to play baseball arose I took it and came here.
2. Being the great woman she is she told me she would stick with me.
3. No matter where you live you will eventually find out what neighbors are like.
4. If I needed more money I could just call home or use my credit card.
5. In other words I was a big flirt.
6. If the professor says something in class that I can connect with I will make a comment without even thinking about what I was going to say before I say it.
7. While we were there we met some people from out of town.
8. When I think about all the interesting places I've been Florida and Iowa stick out in my mind most.
9. The first thing we do to get prepared for Christmas is decide whether to put up a real tree or get the old plastic tree out of the attic.
10. No matter what effort I put forth I never felt appreciated.