

# COMMA TIP 5

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

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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 + , + **NONESSENTIAL CLAUSE** .

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

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**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.

