Using Commas with Introductions to Sentences

Introductions are dependent phrases that come before a complete sentence. These introductions cannot stand on their own as sentences and must be separated from the rest of the sentence with a comma.

- There are three types of introductions to sentences:
  1) **Introductory clauses**, which start with adverbs, such as after, although, as, if, because, since, though, when, before, like, unless, etc.
     - Ex - Although the date went well, she decided not to go on another.
  2) **Introductory phrases**, which often describe the subject or explain the action of the sentence.
     - **Infinitives** – To get into the dress, Malia had to be a contortionist.
     - **Prepositions** – In the cover of the dark alley, Tom escaped the police.
     - **Participles** – Crying loudly, the toddler was dragged away from the store.
     - **Appositives** – An intelligent and determined girl, Anne quickly solved the problem.
  3) **Introductory words**, such as meanwhile, however, therefore, moreover, still, furthermore, etc. This type is often used to transition between sentences or paragraphs.
     - Ex – Meanwhile, the girls were up to no good.

- Can’t decide if it is an introduction or not? Try taking it away or moving it to the end of the sentence. If the sentence still makes sense, it was probably an introduction and should be set off by a comma.

- There are some exceptions to using a comma with introductions:
  1) Only use a comma with a prepositional introductory phrase if the phrase is 5 or more words long
     - **Comma**: In the cupboard above the counter, you will find food.
     - **No comma**: In the cupboard you will find food.
  2) Sometimes, infinitive or participle phrases may be the actual subject of the sentence. In these cases, you should never separate the phrase from the sentence, because doing so would separate the subject from the verb.
     - **Infinitive subject**: To talk in class is very difficult for the shy girl.
     - **Participle subject**: Talking in class is very difficult for the shy girl.