Inessential words and phrases

Commas are used to separate words or phrases in a sentence. The words enclosed (eingeschlossen) by the commas could be left out without changing the general sense of a sentence.

I felt, moreover, that he was being totally unreasonable.
David Fireham, our star player, broke his leg in the match last Saturday.
The book was, without doubt, the best she had read.
The man, who was wearing a green coat, slid silently into the room.
 (In these sentences you can leave out the words between the commas.)

But:

Men <u>who have beards</u> often smoke pipes.
(The underlined words are vital to the meaning of the sentence, so no commas are used)

Put commas:

1. The singer who was French had a very beautiful voice.

2. I felt however that he was unsuitable for the part.

3. The man who was taller would have been better.

4. He was without a doubt just as talented.

5. All the actors in the opera were of a very high standard.

6. The trumpeters who were playing in the overture started to tune up. *(= all trumpeters present)*

7. The trumpeters who were playing in the overture started to tune up. *(= not all of the present trumpeters, some weren't taking part in the overture.)*

Numbers

Commas are used to break up groups of numbers into thousands.

Back then, he population of London was 2,874,300.

Test yourself:

The players who were hurt lay on the ground but David kicked the ball into the goal which was close by. The goalkeeper ran jumped up but missed it and the ball shot in. The 12783 spectators mostly Arsenal fans were delighted and cheered and screamed for joy. The referee blew his whistle and waved his arms around but the match continued. Both coaches who were standing on the sides shouted and protested. Some of the Manchester fans threw things on the field: bottles papers lighters and even cassettes. It was without doubt one of the most interesting matches of the season.

Either you believe it, or you put a comma:

My three favorite things are eating my girlfriend and not using commas.