As college students, we often come across the problem of when to use the word “that” or “which.” Here are some tips that may help!

**Commas are important:** A helpful strategy for knowing whether to use “that” vs “which” is a comma. Commas indicate whether or not a clause is essential. If essential, use “that,” but if nonessential use “which.”

**Using “That”**

“That” is used in defining clauses giving essential information to the meaning of a sentence.

Ex. Alabama A&M University is the school that I choose to attend for my undergrad.

In this sentence you see that the speaker had at least one other school to choose from, but decided to attend the illustrious Alabama A&M. This demonstrates the ESSENTIAL aspect because it explains what the writer intends what the readers to know.

**Using “Which”**

Which is used in introducing a *non-defining clause* where if used, the meaning of the sentence will not change.

Ex. Alabama A&M University, which is located in Alabama, is the school I choose to attend for my undergrad.

In this sentence, the location of the school is simply a description and NON-ESSENTIAL, meaning that without the “which is located in Alabama,” the meaning of the sentence will not change.