Objectives

In this mini-lesson, students will:
• Determine the purpose of punctuation in dialogue.
• Identify punctuation in dialogue.
• Use punctuation in dialogue.

Preparation

Materials Needed
• Chart paper and markers
• Punctuating Dialogue (BLM 9)
• Interactive whiteboard resources

Advanced Preparation
If you will not be using the interactive whiteboard resources, copy the modeling text and the practice text (with errors) onto chart paper prior to the mini-lesson. Be prepared to pair beginning ELs with intermediate and advanced ELs to support one another.

1. Focus

Explain Punctuating Dialogue

Say: Dialogue is a conversation between two or more people or characters. We use punctuation to set dialogue apart from the rest of the text so the reader knows what are the speaker’s own words. Quotation marks are put in front of and behind the words a person says in dialogue. End punctuation goes inside the final quotation mark. Depending on the position of the speaker’s tag, such as he said or she replied, a comma comes either before or after it. Let’s see how dialogue is punctuated.

Model Punctuating Dialogue

Display the modeling text on chart paper or use the interactive whiteboard resources. Read the text aloud to students.

Modeling Text

1. I asked her, “Grandma, why are you so sad?”
2. “What is your name?” she asked.

After sentence 1. Say: The speaker’s tag in the first sentence is, “I asked her.” A comma goes after the tag to separate it from the speaker’s actual words. Quotation marks are placed around those words: before the word Grandma and after the question mark after the word sad. This means that the first word the speaker said was Grandma and the last word was sad. The question mark goes inside the quotation marks. It tells me how the speaker said the words.

After sentence 2. Say: In the second sentence, quotation marks go before the word What and after the question mark after the word name. Here, the speaker’s tag falls at the end of the sentence. If the sentence were a statement instead of a question, a comma would be placed after the word name and before the final set of quotation marks. But because the speaker’s sentence ends with a question mark, there is no comma before the tag. Correct punctuation shows me the difference between the speaker’s actual words and the rest of the narrative. It makes the text easier to read and understand.
2. Rehearse

Practice Punctuating Dialogue

Display the practice text (with errors) on chart paper or use the interactive whiteboard resources.

Ask students to work with a partner to decide how to punctuate the practice sentences. (Students do not need to copy the sentences.)

1. "I am having a party for my ninth birthday," I said.
2. The author says, "My cousin had pulled a fast one!"

Practice Text

If your class includes English learners or other students who need support, use “Strategies to Support ELs.”

Share Sentences with Punctuation in Dialogue

Invite pairs to share their results with the class. Discuss their responses. Ask the following questions:

- Where do the quotation marks belong?
- What words make up the speaker’s tag?
- Where did you place a comma?

3. Independent Writing and Conferring

Say: We learned that we need to use quotation marks to show where a speaker’s words begin and end, and a comma before or after the speaker’s tag. Memoirs often recount what people said. Correct punctuation makes dialogue in your memoirs easier to understand.

If you would like to give students additional practice punctuating dialogue, have them complete BLM 9.

4. Share

Bring students together. Invite volunteers to read aloud their sentences from BLM 9. Use students’ answers to provide corrective feedback.

Strategies to Support ELs

Beginning

Pair ELs with an intermediate or advanced student and have each pair say a few phrases about an activity they like to do. Record each pair’s dialogue on the board, including quotation marks. Have students circle the quotation marks in their sentences.

Intermediate and Advanced

Provide simple sentences to help ELs punctuate dialogue. For example:

I like playing soccer I said.
She replied Let’s go home.
Do you have a pen? asked Sam.

All Levels

If you have ELs whose first language is Spanish, share this English/Spanish cognate: dialogue/el diálogo.