**Objectives**

In this mini-lesson, students will:

- Determine the purpose of commas in a series.
- Identify when commas are used in a series.
- Use commas in a series in sentences.

**Preparation**

**Materials Needed**

- Chart paper and markers
- Commas in a Series (BLM 8)
- Interactive whiteboard resources

**Advanced Preparation**

If you will not be using the interactive whiteboard resources, copy the modeling and practice texts (without commas) onto chart paper prior to the mini-lesson. If necessary, copy the sentence frame and practice sentences from “Strategies to Support ELs” on chart paper.

**1. Focus**

**Explain Commas in a Series**

Say: A comma separates words or phrases in a sentence. A comma tells us to pause for a very short time before we continue reading. Sometimes in our writing we need to list several things. If you have a series of three or more items, commas are used to separate the items.

**Model Using Commas in a Series**

Display the modeling text (without commas) on chart paper or using the interactive whiteboard resources. Read the words out loud without pausing where the commas would normally go.

I wore a coat, mittens, and a hat. My nose, fingers, and toes were cold.

**Modeling Text**

Say: As I read the sentences, I hear some of the words run together. And the sentences are hard to understand. I’m going to look for items in a series to see if I need to add commas to make the sentences clearer. Here are items in a series: coat mittens and a hat. These are three items of clothing. I need to add commas between the items to show that there are three different ones. The other sentence has another list. These are all body parts: nose fingers and toes. There’s no such thing as nose fingers. I know I need to add a comma after nose to show that these are two separate items. Fingers is the second item in the series, so I need to add a comma after it, too. (Reread the sentences with the commas in the series.) The commas tell me to pause briefly after each item in the series. That makes the sentences much easier to understand.
2. Rehearse

Practice Using Commas in a Series

Display the practice text (without commas) on chart paper or using the interactive whiteboard resources.

Ask students to work with a partner and read each sentence to find the words in a series. Ask them to decide where the commas should go to separate the words in each series. Remind them that sometimes each item in a series may consist of more than one word.

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

Practice Text

I went tubing with my mom, my dad, and my big brother.
I wore snow pants, two pairs of socks, and snow boots.
Afterwards we ate soup, salad, and sandwiches.

Share Sentences with Commas in a Series

Discuss pairs’ responses. Ask the following questions:

- Which words make up the series of items in this sentence?
- Where do the commas go in the series?
- How did you decide where to place the commas? Were you unsure about any of the items in the list? Which ones?
- Why is it important to separate items in a series with commas?

3. Independent Writing and Conferring

Say: If you use a series of three or more items in a sentence, remember to separate the items in the list with commas. This makes your sentences easier to read, and helps you avoid confusing your readers.

If you would like to give students additional practice recognizing and using commas in a series, have them complete BLM 8.

4. Share

Bring students together. Review and provide corrective feedback based on students’ answers to BLM 8. Ask students to share what they learned about using commas in a series.

Strategies to Support ELs

Beginning

Help beginning ELs understand how commas are used to separate items in a series. Place three classroom objects (such as a book, a pencil, and an eraser) in a row on the table. Draw commas on pieces of paper. Place the paper commas after the first and second items in your “series.” Move or change the three objects and ask students to put the paper commas in the correct places in the series. Write the following sentence frame on chart paper and fill in the names of the items in the series:

I have _____, _____, and _____.

Intermediate and Advanced

Provide simple sentences to help ELs use commas in a series. For example:

- I like reading writing and math.
- My friends are Ben, Sarah, and Mike.
- Soccer, baseball, and basketball are fun.

Encourage students to talk about how the commas make their sentences easier to read and understand.