Ellipses

1. Focus

Explain Ellipses

Say: An ellipsis is a row of three periods after a word. It is used to show that you have omitted words. For example, if you’re quoting someone and you want to shorten the quote, you use ellipses to show where you’ve dropped words or sentences. Ellipses are also used to show a pause in speech in dialogue. You can also use an ellipsis at the end of a sentence that shows an unfinished thought.

Display the following examples on chart paper or use the interactive whiteboard resources.

“Um . . . I . . . I guess I don’t know,” stammered Jesse.

“I don’t think Tamara should be part of our group . . .” Lou’s voice trailed off as Tamara came into the room.

The mistakes of the fool are known to the world . . . not to himself.

Example Text

Say: In the first sentence, the writer uses ellipses to show that the speaker, Jesse, was having a hard time trying to answer. The writer uses an ellipsis in the second sentence to show that Lou was interrupted and stopped speaking when Tamara entered the room. The last ellipsis shows that part of the quote was left out.

Model Using Ellipses

Display the modeling text on chart paper or using the interactive whiteboard resources and read it aloud to students.

There was a pause on the other end of the line. “They arrived yesterday, Mona. I . . . we . . . that is, Tony and I . . .”

“What’s wrong, Sylvia? You sound so odd.”

Modeling Text

Say: Notice the sets of three periods, or ellipses, between the words I and we and we and that. These ellipses are used to show a pause in speech. The speaker of this sentence pauses in between these words. This helps me know that the speaker is flustered and doesn’t know what to say.
**Science Fiction**

**Strategies to Support ELs**

**Beginning and Intermediate**

This concept may be too difficult for beginning ELs and even some intermediate students. Model reading aloud the parts from the mentor text “Dino-Pals Are Dino-Mite!” that contain ellipses, pointing to the text as you read. Exaggerate the pause when you stop for the ellipses. Enlist the help of a colleague to read aloud the parts where dialogue is interrupted, for example, on page 13.

**Intermediate and Advanced**

Pair EL students with fluent English speakers to complete the practice activity and BLM 8.

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**Say:** Now look at the three periods at the end of the sentence after the second I. The writer includes the ellipsis to show an unfinished thought. The speaker of this sentence doesn’t finish her thought as she is speaking. The ellipsis helps me understand that Sylvia’s words are interrupted by Mona. Let’s look at a second example of when we can use ellipses to omit unnecessary words.

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**2. Rehearse**

**Practice Using Ellipses**

Display the practice text on chart paper or use the interactive whiteboard resources. Ask students to work with a partner to read the sentences and tell what the ellipses mean in each example.

1. “We made our entrance and . . .”
2. “. . . they went back to acting like cute little dinosaurs,” Mrs. Ramos interrupted.
3. “Can you play with the . . . robots . . . while we get the packing boxes?”

**Practice Text**

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

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**3. Independent Writing and Conferring**

**Say:** Remember to use ellipses when you are quoting someone and you want to shorten the quote. Also use ellipses when you want to show a pause in speech or an unfinished thought at the end of a sentence.

If you would like to give students additional practice using ellipses, ask them to complete BLM 8.

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**4. Share**

Bring students together. Invite volunteers to read aloud their answers to BLM 8. Provide corrective feedback as necessary. Ask students to share what they learned about ellipses.

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