Commas in a Series

1. Focus

Explain Commas in a Series

Say: Commas are punctuation marks that are used to separate the words in a list or a series of things. A series is three or more items written one after the other. The items may be single words or word groups. Listen to the series in this sentence: I need to use apples, peaches, pears, and grapes to make my salad. The series is made up of a list of fruit. If you don’t use commas, you may confuse your reader. Let’s look at two examples: one that is confusing and one that is clear.

Model Using Commas in a Series

Display the modeling text (without commas) on chart paper or use the interactive whiteboard resources. Read the text aloud to students.

Modeling Text

Now you’re ready to draw the eyes, smile, arms, and legs.

Say: This sentence is hard to read because it doesn’t use commas. I don’t know how many things I need to draw. I need to separate each item by using a comma. This will help my sentence make more sense. Insert a comma after eyes, smile, and arms.

Say: Now I’ll read the sentence again. (Read sentence aloud.) That sounds better. Each thing that I need to draw is separated by a comma. It makes more sense to me now.

Objectives

In this mini-lesson, students will:
• Identify commas in a series in sentences.
• Practice using 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 frames from “Strategies to Support ELs” onto chart paper.
2. Rehearse

Practice Using Commas for Items 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 to decide where the commas should go in the practice sentences. (Students do not need to copy the sentences.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Practice Text</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Draw a hat, necktie, and cane for your snowman figure.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. You will need pencils, a pair of scissors, paper, and glue.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Add the grapes, apples, walnuts, and celery to the bowl.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Put all the red, blue, yellow, and green counters in one box and the white, black, and purple counters in another box.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

Share Sentences with Commas in a Series

Invite volunteers to come to the chart or use the interactive whiteboard and insert commas where needed in each sentence. Discuss their choices as a class.

3. Independent Writing and Conferring

Say: We learned that we need to use commas when we list series of three or more things. The commas make the text easier to read. Remember to use commas in a series when you write your procedures.

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

4. Share

Bring students together. Invite volunteers to read aloud their answers to BLM 8. Use students’ answers to provide corrective feedback.

Strategies to Support ELs

Beginning

Use simple sentences to help beginning ELs understand the use of serial commas. Write the following sentences on chart paper and read them aloud. Have students read them with you. I see bananas. I see mangoes. I see pears.

Draw pictures to support students’ understanding of each fruit name.

Now write the sentence, “I see bananas, mangoes, and pears.” Read it aloud. Ask students to read it with you. Circle the commas in the sentence and name this punctuation mark for students.

Intermediate and Advanced

Pair students with fluent English speakers to complete the practice activities and BLM 8. Use the following sentence frames to help both students in the pairs talk about commas:

We need to use a comma after ______. The list of things is ______. Commas help by ______.