Use Commas to Separate Definitions in a Sentence

1. Focus

Explain Using Commas to Separate Definitions in a Sentence

Say: We know that commas have many uses. One use for commas is to separate a definition, or meaning, of an unfamiliar word in a sentence from the word itself.

Model Using Commas to Separate Definitions in a Sentence

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

Draw the background, or setting, and color your picture.

Modeling Text

Say: I see two commas in this sentence. The commas are around the words or setting. If I didn’t know the meaning of the word background, I could get the meaning from the words inside the commas. Background means the setting of the picture. The writer gives me a definition right in the sentence. That is very helpful. When I write procedural text, I’m careful to give my readers the meanings of words in the steps that may be difficult to understand.

Objectives

In this mini-lesson, students will:

• Identify commas used to define words in context.
• Practice using commas to define words in context.

Preparation

Materials Needed

• Chart paper and markers
• Commas Around Definitions of Words in Sentences (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 (without commas) onto chart paper prior to the mini-lesson.
2. Rehearse

Practice Using Commas to Separate Definitions in a Sentence

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

Ask students to work with a partner to identify the word that is being defined in each sentence and to separate it from the rest of the sentence with commas. (Students do not need to copy the sentences.)

| 1. Draw two arcs, or curves, across the page. |
| 2. Add some freshly washed, or clean, grapes to the bowl. |
| 3. Scoop, or spoon, the meat into the taco shells. |

Practice Text

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

Share Sentences with Commas Used to Define Words in Context

Invite volunteers to come to the chart paper or use the interactive whiteboard resources and insert commas where needed in each sentence. Discuss their choices as a class. Use the following prompts to help students discuss the use of commas.

- What is an arc? How do you know?
- How does the text tell you what freshly washed means?
- What is a scoop? How do you know?
- How does the word or help you in these sentences?

3. Independent Writing and Conferring

Say: Remember that in a procedural text, sometimes you will want to define words for your readers. When you do, be sure to use commas around that definition, to separate the definition from the rest of the sentence.

If you would like to give students additional practice using commas to define words in context, have them complete BLM 9.

4. Share

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

Strategies to Support ELs

Beginning

Beginning ELs are not ready to focus on commas around definitions in a sentence. Use the time to support beginning ELs to produce oral sentences. Model saying a sentence and writing it on chart paper. Ask students to say a sentence and write it on chart paper. Demonstrate your use of commas and end punctuation marks as they apply to each sentence.

Intermediate and Advanced

Pair students with fluent English speakers to complete the practice activities and the BLM. Ask the pairs to write one or two sentences that use commas to define words in context. Explain that the words can be words they are familiar with. Provide help as needed.