

Using Commas to Clarify Meaning



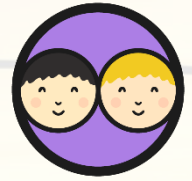
Aim

- I can use commas to make sure the reader understands precisely what I am trying to say.

Success Criteria

- I can tell when the meaning in a sentence is unclear.
- I can suggest different meanings that a sentence could have.
- I can add or remove commas to clarify the meaning of a sentence.

Can you give the reason that commas have been used in each of these example sentences? Discuss your thinking with a partner.



Max had bought cheese, pears, sausage rolls and pickle, especially for the picnic.

Artem, who was only 9 years old, was a better piano player than many students twice his age.

The rain was certainly heavy, but the Sun was suggesting it hadn't gone for good.

"I was amazed at how much I had got done in the day," she said.

When they finally reached their destination, they realised he had been right all along!

The artist, who was a bit of a dreamer, sat and painted the sea.



You may have already learned about using commas in these situations:

To separate items in a list.

After a fronted adverbial.

To indicate extra information in a sentence.

After direct speech.

This lesson may call on your knowledge of general comma use but it is primarily about using commas to make the meaning of sentences absolutely clear. On some occasions a comma may be needed even though there is no grammatical rule that requires it.



Sometimes a comma can make a huge difference to the meaning of a sentence. Consider these two interpretations...

Lower, please!



Lower please!



Independent Focused Activity



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Sentence Draw

I can suggest different meaning a sentence could have.

Can you show the huge difference one comma makes to the meaning of these sentences by illustrating each version or explaining the difference in words? Use colour in your illustrations!

Slow children crossing!	Slow, children crossing!
Eat Daniel!	Eat, Daniel!
Look at that blue, bearded man.	Look at that blue bearded man.

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Sentence Draw

I can suggest different meanings a sentence could have.

Can you show the huge difference one comma makes to the meaning of these sentences by illustrating each version or explaining the difference in words? Use colour in your illustrations!

Most of the time travellers take the bus.	Most of the time, travellers take the bus.
Edward tickled the boy with a bunch of carrots.	Edward tickled the boy, with a bunch of carrots.
Now blow up the pipe!	Now blow, up the pipe!

Draw the sentence Activity Sheet.

Can you see how the meaning of some sentences can depend on punctuation?

Use the drawings to interpret these sentences literally – draw exactly what they say.