

# 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.

# Introductory Activity



Can you give the reason that commas have been used in each of these example sentences?

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.

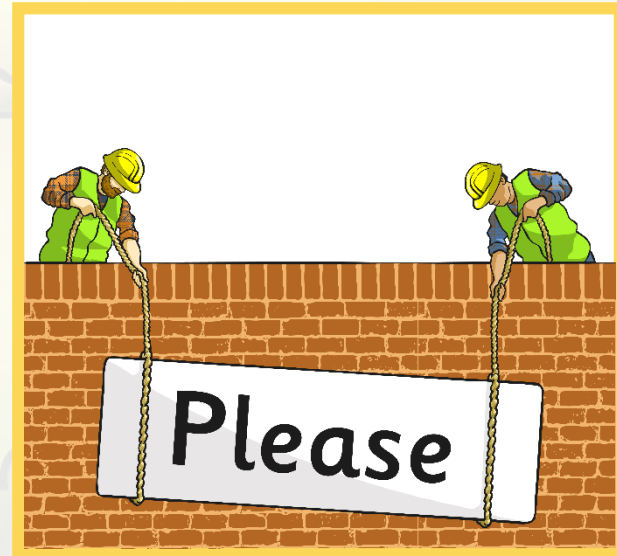
This lesson may call on your knowledge of general comma use but it is primarily about using commas to make the meaning of sentences absolutely clear. On some occasions a comma may be needed even though there is no grammatical rule that requires it.

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

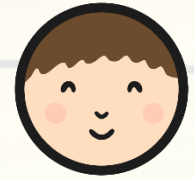
**Lower, please!**



**Lower please!**



# Independent Focused Activity



## Adding Commas

I can add commas to clarify the meaning of a sentence.

Read the sentences as an editor and decide if you think commas need to be added. If you decide to add commas, explain your reason for doing so.

Sentence	Explain your reason for adding commas or leaving the sentence as it is.
The rabbit had long sharp pointy teeth.	
As the campers sat round the fire eating the bear stayed in the bushes.	
Lucy wanted a biscuit but she couldn't have one.	
David who was 10 wore glasses.	
Hetty dressed and performed for the packed audience.	
There was lots to do at the fair including face painting and a raffle.	
While the onions were cooking soup was brought from the shop.	
If you have got everything you need then we are ready to go!	
Hanging out the washing is one of the most boring things in the world.	

## Adding Commas

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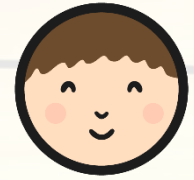
Sentence	Explain your reason for adding commas or leaving the sentence as it is.
The rabbit had long sharp pointy teeth.	
While the campers sat round the fire eating the bear crouched just metres away in the bushes.	
Lucy wanted a biscuit but she couldn't have one.	
David who was in year six had lots to say about most subjects.	
Hetty dressed and performed for the packed audience.	
There were a lot of different activities at the fair including face painting and a raffle.	
At the same time as the onions were cooking soup was being bought from the shop.	
If you have got everything you need then we are ready to go!	
Hanging out washing is one of the most boring things in the world.	

### Adding Commas Activity Sheet.

Can you decide for yourself if a sentence is unclear or not?  
Read these sentences carefully and add commas if you think they are needed to make the meaning clearer.

# Consolidation Activity





## Make Two Meanings

I can use commas to give a sentence two different meanings.

Can you use commas in the following sentences to ensure there are two different ways to read them? Some sentences may just need to be left without commas.

1. The view I imagined was amazing.  
The view I imagined was amazing.
2. When the lightning turned incredibly bright yellow people began to get scared.  
When the lightning turned incredibly bright yellow people began to get scared.
3. The girl who didn't like spiders was terrified.  
The girl who didn't like spiders was terrified.
4. He brought home some old folders and a donut which he ate as soon as he got hungry.  
He brought home some old folders and a donut which he ate as soon as he got hungry.
5. Hurry up and shoot grandad.  
Hurry up and shoot grandad.
6. David said the astronaut was scared.  
David said the astronaut was scared.
7. When she's not working she loves eating her dog and her family.  
When she's not working she loves eating her dog and her family.
8. She found to her horror films were boring.  
She found to her horror films were boring.

### Make Two Meanings Activity Sheet.

Experience the power of punctuation by altering the meaning of these sentences armed only with commas!

# Assessment

A stylized illustration of a landscape. In the background, there are rolling hills under a warm, orange and yellow sky. A large, calm body of water occupies the middle ground. The foreground is dominated by green grass and several trees with brown trunks and green foliage. The word "Assessment" is written in a bold, black, sans-serif font across the center of the image, partially overlapping the water and the sky.

# Assessment Activity



Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Using Commas to Clarify Meaning Mini Test**

1. Tick the sentences with meanings which could be changed with the addition of a comma.

a) She found a mouse trap and cheese all in the bucket as planned.

b) David had said he didn't care.

c) The weather was horrible all day so they stayed in.

d) He asked for money and Lego for his birthday.

e) Don't risk it Grandma.

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2. How do commas affect the meaning of these sentences? Explain briefly for each pair.

a) The man dropped the bullet in his mouth.  
The man dropped, the bullet in his mouth.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

b) Save him, not kill him.  
Save him not, kill him.

.....

3. Add or remove commas to give these sentences the required meaning.

a) Writing, clearly, isn't easy.  
Can you add or remove commas in that sentence to make it mean that 'writing so everyone can understand isn't easy'?

\_\_\_\_\_

b) The criminal said the judge was an idiot.  
Can you add commas in that sentence so it says the criminal is an idiot.

\_\_\_\_\_

c) Debbie's heroes are her parents, Spiderman, and Catwoman.  
Can you add or remove commas so that the sentence suggests that Debbie's parents are Spiderwoman and Catwoman.

\_\_\_\_\_

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Commas to Clarify Meaning

Can you demonstrate your ability to use commas to make the meaning of sentences clearer and decide whether sentences can mean more than one thing or not.

Work on your own to complete the **Using Commas to Clarify Meaning Mini Test Activity Sheet**.