

Commas, Commas Everywhere

Teacher Name(s): Success4Teachers

Grade level(s): 6-12

Content Areas: English/Language Arts

Description/Abstract: Students will come to understand the uses of commas by finding sentences using commas and describing how they are used by comparing the sentences to the rules for using commas.

Timeline: One to two classroom periods.

Goals/Content and Cognitive:

Students will learn how commas are used and the rules for using them properly.

Links to Curriculum Standards:

MI R.1.2.c Recognize capitalization and punctuation to convey meaning

Guiding Questions:

- Of what use are commas?
- When do we use them?
- Why should we all agree to the same rules for using them?

Assessment:

Students will create a poster with five rules of commas and examples for each. Before it is turned in as finished, they will check with the teacher to see that they have properly matched the rule with each sentence. Students will redo the portions that are not correct. The teacher may direct students to portions of text with sentences using commas in various ways so that similar sentences are not repeated. On-going assessment occurs as students produce pieces of writing and become more aware of the proper use of commas.

Learning Connections:

Students often use hit and miss punctuation because they don't understand the reasons for the correct placement. By learning the correct placement of commas, they will improve the clarity of their writing in all subject areas.

Learning Activities or Tasks:

Place the three guiding questions on an overhead and introduce the lesson by asking the questions, revealing one at a time. Record student answers.

Overhead Instructions for Commas Activity

Use the handout [Basic Comma Rules in Writing](#) or any resources in the room (including Writers Inc.) to complete this assignment.

Using the newspaper, locate and cut out paragraphs which contain five separate examples of commas. Highlight the complete sentences containing commas.

For each example, identify the rule for using commas that it illustrates. Paste the clipping on the left and write the rule to its right.

You should have 5 examples with a rule for each. The rules should deal with five *different* uses of the comma.

You may work in pairs or alone to produce one product.

Write a title and your name(s) on your poster.

After students complete this activity, return to the three guiding question overheads. Ask students to add/delete items on the lists and include reasoning for revising their thinking. At this point, it may be useful to discuss the history of the use of punctuation marks and in particular the comma, i.e. they were used by Greek dramatists as a guide to know when to take a breath. The purpose of commas (as all punctuation) is to help communicate meaning. When sentences are written, the task of commas is to separate, keep words apart or together. Using agreed upon rules of punctuation assures that the meaning intended by the writer is the meaning that is understood by the reader. Use commas for clarity. Example: What is this thing called love? What is this thing called, love?

Teaching Strategies:

The teacher's role includes making sure students understand the desired outcomes and successfully identify comma uses, assuring that students understand the purposes of commas and commonly accepted methods of use, and seeking follow-through in their proper use in student writing.

Management:

Students will work in pairs in the classroom. If computers are available, comma rules and examples may be accessed. Rules may be typed and added to the poster, the entire poster may be created in a text document, or students may access electronic news services to capture text and paste into a Power Point presentation. Students should then present their findings to the class.

Materials and Resources:

Computers with Internet and Power Point *–or–* newspapers, handout (or texts containing punctuation rules), scissors, glue sticks, markers, and construction paper are needed to complete the visual aid.