



#9995

PUNCTUATION: PROGRAM 7-- THE WILY COMMA

FILMS FOR THE HUMANITIES & SCIENCES, 2000

Grade Level: 8-13+

31 mins.

1 Instructional graphic enclosed

DESCRIPTION

A comma, by definition, shows the reader when to pause. Discusses the four main uses of commas: to separate items in a list, to separate introductory phrases or clauses, to isolate interrupting words or phrases, and to vary the composition style, pace, and tone of a sentence. Clarifies each use with grammatical rules and examples. Identifies optional uses of a comma.

ACADEMIC STANDARDS

Subject Area: Language Arts–Writing

- Standard: Uses grammatical and mechanical conventions in written compositions
 - ♦ Benchmark: Uses conventions of punctuation in written compositions (e.g., uses commas with nonrestrictive clauses and contrasting expressions, uses quotation marks with ending punctuation, uses colons before extended quotations, uses hyphens for compound adjectives, uses semicolons between independent clauses, uses dashes to break continuity of thought) (See INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS 1-5.)

INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS

1. To identify what commas do in sentences.
2. To explain when to use commas to separate items in a list.
3. To show the rules of using commas with introductory phrases or clauses.
4. To define interrupting words and phrases and identify when commas are used with them.
5. To illustrate some optional style uses of commas.

VOCABULARY

- | | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. appositive phrase | 7. elaborate |
| 2. clause | 8. expressions |
| 3. comma | 9. independent clause |
| 4. coordinating conjunction | 10. interjection |
| 5. dependent clause | 11. interrupters |
| 6. direct address | 12. introductory phrase |

C a p t i o n e d M e d i a P r o g r a m

- | | |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| 13. misreading | 18. phrase |
| 14. nonrestrictive clause | 19. prepositional phrase |
| 15. optional | 20. style |
| 16. participial phrase | 21. subordinate clause |
| 17. participle | |

BEFORE SHOWING

1. Analyze commas, as a whole class, using one or more extended excerpts (a paragraph or more) from a favorite story or essay.
 - a. Stop at each comma and ask why that comma is appropriate there. Is it required or optional? If optional, what does the writer achieve by using the comma?
 - b. Write down the reasons they came up with for justifying the use of each comma in the excerpt.
 - c. Review the list of reasons, and then speculate some “rules” for comma use based on the items on the list.
2. Copy and distribute the “Comma Use” worksheet. Explain that this organizer will be used during the video to follow along and record comma examples. (See INSTRUCTIONAL GRAPHIC.)

DURING SHOWING

1. View the video more than once, with one showing uninterrupted.
2. Pause as each example of comma use is shown on the screen. Allow time for the students to record the sample sentence from the video. (See BEFORE SHOWING.)

AFTER SHOWING

Discussion Items and Questions

1. Explain the four main uses of commas.
2. What kinds of words in a list can be separated by commas? What is the exception to the rule with adjectives? Give an example.
3. Define the terms *clause* and *phrase*.
4. Describe the four types of introductory clauses. Give an example of each one. Explain when a comma is optional with introductory phrases.
5. Discuss the four types of interrupters. Give examples of each one. In which case do you *not* use a comma?
6. What are some examples of style uses of commas?

Applications and Activities

1. Review the comma uses described in the video with the “Comma Use” worksheet. (See BEFORE SHOWING.)
 - a. Allow time to create original sentences for the third column or assign that for homework.

C a p t i o n e d M e d i a P r o g r a m

- b. Go over which items require commas, which are optional, and where commas are not used.
2. Practice proofing for correct comma use. Discuss and decide if the commas shown are correct or incorrect.
 - a. The carrots were cooked perfectly, the potatoes were overcooked.
 - b. Speaking tentatively, the senator appeared anxious, fatigued, and confused.
 - c. Apples, pears, rutabagas and yellow squash make a festive dessert.
 - d. After the meal we ate last night, no wonder we're not hungry this morning.
 - e. Hey, is that Rudy, the kid who got the new bike riding over there?
3. Practice using commas. Insert commas where they belong. (Remember, some comma use is optional, but some is not. Be ready to back up your choices with evidence from the video.)
 - a. The big brown ugly bear ate the picnic sandwiches.
 - b. The bear that ate the sandwiches was big brown and ugly.
 - c. Ms. Jones who entered Congress in 1967 retired last year.
 - d. After retiring last year Ms. Jones the former representative moved to France.
 - e. Wow it's an honor to meet you Ms. Jones!
4. Write a rough draft of a story or essay. Edit your own work checking for correct and incorrect comma use.
5. Analyze additional excerpts from stories by high-quality writers. Evaluate all comma use working in pairs or small groups. Then discuss responses as a class.
6. Create a bulletin board showing the correct and incorrect uses of commas.
7. Watch the other videos in this series on punctuation. Discuss and review all the rules and correct uses of various punctuation marks. (See RELATED RESOURCES.)

SUMMARY

This program inquires into the correct handling of the much-abused and frequently misused comma. Section 1 deals with the separation of items in a list. Section 2 shows how to setoff introductory elements such as interjections, prepositional and participial phrases, and independent, dependent, and subordinate clauses. Section 3 demonstrates the use of interrupters, including nouns of direct address, appositive phrases, and nonrestrictive clauses. Section 4 explains how to employ commas to provide emphasis and enhance clarity.

RELATED RESOURCES

- [*The Split-Infinitive World of English Grammar: Program 6* #10154](#)
- [*Punctuation: Program 6—Introduction to Punctuation and the End Marks* #9986](#)
- [*Punctuation: Program 8—The Semicolon, Colon, and Dash* #9994](#)
- [*Punctuation: Program 9—Surrounding Information* #9991](#)
- [*Punctuation: Program 10—Hyphens, Apostrophes, Slashes, and Ellipses* #9990](#)
- [*The Grammar Key* #9207](#)

World Wide Web



The following Web sites complement the contents of this guide; they were selected by professionals who have experience in teaching deaf and hard of hearing students. Every effort was made to select accurate, educationally relevant, and “kid safe” sites. However, teachers should preview them before use. The U.S. Department of Education, the National Association of the Deaf, and the Captioned Media Program do not endorse the sites and are not responsible for their content.

- **STANDARD DEVIANTS: ENGLISH PUNCTUATION**

http://standarddeviants.com/pls/brain/cerebellum.show_subj_resource?p_info_type_id=5&p_subject_id=21

Includes downloadable tests, interactive quizzes, puzzles, games, and helpful punctuation cards.

- **THE BLUE BOOK OF GRAMMAR AND PUNCTUATION**

<http://www.grammarbook.com/>

This award-winning site created by Jane Strauss includes printable punctuation exercises and tests.

- **PUNCTUATION MARKS**

<http://webster.commnet.edu/grammar/marks/marks.htm>

Includes information and explanation about various punctuation marks and provides interactive online quizzes.

- **COMMAS, COMMAS, AND MORE COMMAS**

<http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts/commas.html>

Long page with seven steps to comma use from the Writing Center at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

INSTRUCTIONAL GRAPHIC

- COMMA USE

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• • • • • Comma Use • • • • •

Directions: Write the example from the video in the second column, write an original example in the third column, and indicate if the comma is **Required**, **Optional**, or **Not Used** in the fourth column.

Video Example **Original Example** **R, O, or NU**

ITEMS IN A LIST:			
Nouns:			
Verb phrases:			
Adjectives (Same category.):			
Adjectives (Different categories.):			
INTRODUCTORY CLAUSE/PHRASE:			
Interjections:			
Prepositional phrases (At end.):			
Prepositional phrases (At beginning.):			
Participial phrases:			
Subordinate clauses:			
INTERRUPTERS:			
Interrupting expressions:			
Nouns of direct address:			
Appositive phrases:			
Nonrestrictive clauses:			
Restrictive clauses:			
FOR STYLE:			
Coordinating conjunctions:			
Adverbs:			

Captioned Media Program