

THE PUNCTUATION LINE UP

A practical, fun lesson to support the teaching of punctuation

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Introduction

This activity is intended to support and reinforce ongoing work on basic punctuation by using mime and movement to depict the shapes of the appropriate punctuation marks in a given sentence.

The work is divided into two sessions.

Lesson One (optional)

Lesson one links specific movements with punctuation marks and requires a hall or room for children to move around.

- On the word Go, ask the children to walk around the room until you say FULL STOP. When they hear this, they should stamp their feet once and stop.
- On the word Go they should set off again, but if they hear the word COMMA they should pause, take a diagonal step and then continue until you say FULL STOP again.
- Each time the children set off, add another punctuation mark with a movement (see below) You can vary them, like a game.

THE MOVEMENTS CHART

Full stop – Stamp one foot;

Comma – Take one step diagonally and sway slightly to and fro;

Opening and closing speech marks – Arch both arms above the head to make the shape of inverted commas;

Question mark – Make the arched shape of the top of a question mark by curving the arms above the head. Stand straight to represent the stem and make a small jump with feet together, to represent the dot underneath;

Exclamation mark – Stand straight and put both arms in the air with palms together to represent the stem. Make a small jump with feet together, to represent the dot underneath.

Lesson Two

- Clear a space at the front of the classroom
- Choose 5 children and give each child one of the following word cards as an example: *I hate toast said Jo* (or use your own)
- Ask the 5 children to stand in a line at the front of the classroom and make the words into a sentence by holding them in front of their bodies at waist height.
- Point to each word in turn and ask the class to read it aloud.
- Ask the class to tell you what would be missing if this sentence were written down. The answers should include punctuation.
- Write the sentence on the board, minus any punctuation.
- Ask them to suggest a missing punctuation mark. Whichever punctuation mark is suggested, ask the child who made the suggestion to stand at the front, in the place where the mark would be in the sentence. For example, the full stop would stand after the word card saying *Jo*.
- Add the punctuation to the sentence on the board as well.
- Continue until all the necessary punctuation has been represented.
- Then point to the punctuation in turn, asking each child representing a punctuation mark to perform the movement associated with it (see The Movements Chart). Explain the movements if they have not been taught them in lesson one. However, they will need to make a static version of each movement. The full stop can stamp. The comma must sway diagonally. The opening and closing speech marks must move their arms in the correct way to encompass the sentence.
- Now point to each child in turn and let them respond with either a movement or a word to perform the sentence. Alternatively, the class can call out as you point, but you will need to warn them to go slowly to accommodate all the punctuation.
- Next, replace the word *said* with another card saying *shouted* and ask the class if this changes the punctuation. Ask the child representing the comma to sit down and replace them with another child, who will represent an exclamation mark movement. Discuss how the exclamation mark will affect the way the words in between the speech marks are spoken.
- Perform the new version of this sentence with the direct speech being shouted.
- Choose a different group of children to represent the words *Do you like toast said Sam*. Repeat as before, but this time it will include a question mark movement.

Extension/development ideas

- Give group of children a piece of text and ask them to look for a sentence containing several punctuation marks. Ask them to copy the sentence on paper, with the correct punctuation and then write each word on a separate piece of A4 paper in large letters. They can then challenge the rest of the class to perform the sentence with the correct punctuation marks.
- Let pairs of children record different sentences using their own sounds to represent the different punctuation marks. Then ask the class to guess which sounds represent which marks.
- Lengthen the sentence to involve the whole class as a challenge then add the punctuation moves. The line can stretch around the perimeter of the room and include connectives.
- Ask children to invent sentences of their own to challenge the class to do a punctuation line up of their sentences.

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