

# Learning together

## On your Marks, Ready, Set, Punctuation!

ACTIVITY #7

SEQUENCE: SPELLING AND SENTENCE  
STRUCTURE 3<sup>RD</sup> CYCLE — PRIMARY

By Marie-Lou Laplante,  
Educational Specialist



### Purpose of the activity

In the activity *What is a Sentence?*, we discussed three components of whether a written statement is a sentence or not. In this activity, we will pay particular attention to the punctuation marks in a sentence.



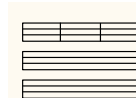
### Relevance of the activity

At the start of primary school, children learn how to recognize the start and end of a written sentence. This is called the graphic sentence. Children can identify sentences thanks to punctuation marks such as a capital letter, period, exclamation mark or question mark. Gradually, your child will start to formulate more complex sentences. They will probably use new punctuation marks, including commas, to separate certain groups of words. In the third cycle of primary school, we can still observe that they use them awkwardly.



### Supplies

- your child's vocabulary words to build sentences
- simple sentences from texts or books
- a table (in appendix, if needed)



## LET'S GO!

### Explain the activity:



Today, we will pay special attention to the punctuation marks in a sentence.

### Explain why:



In the activity What is a Sentence?, I showed you several statements, including the following: Tomorrow I will go to my basketball practice and eat lunch at a restaurant and play with my friends. We said the words were well organized and the idea made sense. However, some groups of words should have been separated by a comma. Maybe you are saying to yourself: That's not a big deal; I understand what is written. But imagine this in a text: Tomorrow I will go to my basketball practice and eat lunch at a restaurant and play with my friends then my parents will pick me up for supper. It is clear that in this example, there are several ideas, but we do not know which ones go together. This is exactly why we use punctuation marks such as an uppercase letter, period and comma: to help us make ourselves better understood.

### Explain when:



Since we write to be read, we must make sure that our message is clear to the person reading us. So, you need to pay special attention to punctuation marks every time you write: whether it's for an assignment at school or to send a message to someone you know.

### Try it together:



Let's take the example from earlier:

***Tomorrow I will go to my basketball practice and eat lunch at a restaurant and play with my friends then my parents will pick me up for supper.***

When I read this statement, I am able to understand the idea in general, but I am a little confused because there are several ideas that are presented at the same time. Let us try to unravel all this logically! So, we're going to ask ourselves the right questions to use the right punctuation marks in the right places. I'm going to go back to the table I used in the activity *What is a Sentence?*.

Who or what are we talking about?	What are we saying about it?	And this is happening? (where, when, why, how...)
I (me) <sup>1</sup>	will go to my basketball practice <sup>3</sup>	tomorrow <sup>7</sup>
	(I will) eat lunch at a restaurant <sup>4</sup>	
	(go) play with my friends <sup>5</sup>	
my parents <sup>2</sup>	are going to pick me up for supper <sup>6</sup>	then <sup>8</sup>

In this example, we are talking about me and my parents<sup>1 and 2</sup>. It says that I will go to my basketball practice<sup>3</sup>, eat lunch at a restaurant<sup>4</sup> and play with my friends<sup>5</sup>. It also says that my parents will pick me up for supper<sup>6</sup>. So, I have two different ideas. I also have additional information for each of these ideas: I know when and where it happens<sup>7 and 8</sup>. This will help me determine where I will start each sentence and where they will end.

Here's what it looks like:

***Tomorrow, I will go to my basketball practice, eat lunch at a restaurant and play with my friends. Then, my parents are going to pick me up for supper.***



Now I understand better. My ideas are now correctly marked off.

As you can see, I used the comma after the verb phrase *eat lunch* to show the beginning of a list. This process allows me to avoid repeating the same groups of words:

***Tomorrow, I will go to my basketball practice and /I will/ /eat lunch at the restaurant and /I will/ /play with my friends.***

The first three parts are almost the same, they repeat themselves. That is why they have been grouped in the same sentence. Since there are more than two groups of words listed, I must, therefore, use a comma to separate the first two groups of words I name to keep only one *AND*. You can also add a comma at the beginning of a sentence to separate a word or group of words that gives us an indication of time or place, but this is not mandatory. The words *tomorrow* and *then* function as sentence complements.



### Quick tips!

A comma is often used at the beginning of a sentence to separate a word or group of words that provide a time or place clue. These words or groups of words function as sentence modifiers.



## Table that you can use at home

Who or what are we talking about?	What are we saying about it?	And this is happening? (where, when, why, how...)