

Learning together

On your Marks, Ready, Set, Punctuate!

ACTIVITY #7

SEQUENCE: SPELLING AND SENTENCE STRUCTURE
2ND CYCLE – PRIMARY

By Lise L'Heureux,
Special Education Teacher, Director,
Instructor, Consultant and Coach



Purpose of the activity

In the *What Is a Sentence?* activity, we discussed three components of whether a written statement is a sentence or not. In this activity, we will pay particular attention to **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 second cycle of primary school, we still notice that they are used awkwardly.



Supplies

- Your child's vocabulary words to build sentences
- Simple sentences in texts or books to read
- A table (in Appendix, if needed)



LET'S GO!

What?



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

Why?



You may think punctuation is not a big deal in a sentence as long as the meaning seems clear. But in a sentence like "I play with my brother my sister and my friend at the park after I am going to do my homework at home," the ideas run together and become harder to follow. This is why punctuation, such as capital letters, periods, and commas, is important: it helps make writing clear and easy to understand.

When?



Since we write to be read, we must make sure that our message is clear. 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.

How?



Let's take the example from earlier:

"i play with my brother my sister and my friend at the park after i am going to do my homework at home."

When I read this statement, I can understand the general idea, but I am a little confused because there are several ideas presented at the same time. Let's try to unravel the sentence with logic! We're going to ask ourselves some questions in order to use the right punctuation marks in the right places.

I'm going to go back to the table I used in the What Is a Sentence? activity.

Who or what are we talking about?	What are we saying about it?	And this is happening (where, why, how)?
i (me) ¹	play with my brother ³	at the park ⁷
	(play with) my sister ⁴	
	(play with) my friend ⁵	after ⁸
i (me) ²	am going to do my homework ⁶	at home ⁹

In this example, we are talking about me¹⁻². It says I play with my brother³, my sister⁴ and my friend⁵. It also says that I'm going to do my homework⁶.

I have two different ideas.

I also have additional information for each of these ideas: I know when and where it happens⁷⁻⁸⁻⁹. This will help me determine where I will start each sentence and where it will end.

Here's what it looks like:

"I play with my brother, my sister and my friend at the park. **After,*** I am going to do my homework at home." Now I understand better. My ideas are now clearly marked.

**We often use the 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.*

As you can see, I used the comma after the noun brother to show the beginning of a list. This process allows me to avoid repeating the same groups of words: I play with my brother at the park **and** /I/ /play with/ my sister /at the park/ **and** /I/ /play with/ my friend /at the park/. 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, the comma replaces the first **AND**.



Don't forget!

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, why, how)?