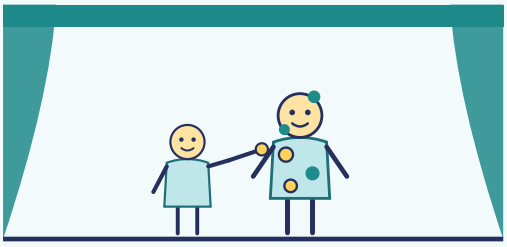
Name _____ Date _____

One comma, two meanings

One comma can change what a whole sentence means.

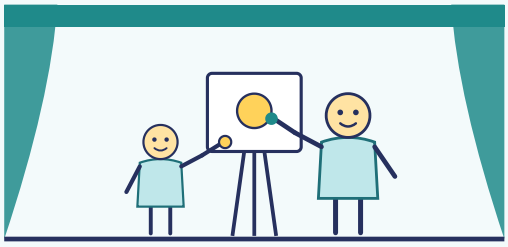
1 Learn

Commas are not just places to breathe. They show which words belong together. Move one, and the meaning changes!



"Let's paint Dad!"

Dad is the thing being painted.



"Let's paint, Dad!"

We are talking **to** Dad: come and paint with me!

Worked example: who needs help?

1. No comma
Can you help Sam?
Sam is the one who **needs** help.

2. Comma before the name
Can you help, Sam?
We are **speaking to** Sam. Sam should help.

3. Name first?
Sam, can you help?
The comma goes **after** the name.

Flip's tip: ask yourself, "Am I talking **to** this person, or **about** them?" If you are talking **to** them, the name needs a comma.

Warm up: is each sentence talking **to** the person or **about** them? Ring one.

Thank you, Mia.	I will ring Leo later.	Leo, ring me later.
to / about	to / about	to / about

Grown-ups: read both stage sentences aloud, pausing at the comma. Let your child enjoy the funny meaning, then ask, "Which one did the writer mean? How does the comma tell us?"

Name _____ Date _____

2 Try it together a child and a grown-up, about 10 minutes



Comma theatre

You need: some scrap paper or sticky notes, a pencil, and one small thing to be your comma (a dried pasta shape, a button or a raisin).

1. Write each word of this sentence on its own piece of paper: **Do** / **you** / **want** / **to** / **draw** / **Leo?** Lay them in a line.
2. Read it aloud with **no comma**. One of you acts it out. (Who or what is being drawn?)
3. Now put your comma between **draw** and **Leo?** Read it again with a little pause, and act out the new meaning.
4. Swap jobs. Try **Are you ready to eat Max?** (Max is the dog.)
5. Make up your own pair with a family name. Write the meanings in the table.

Sentence	With no comma it means…	With a comma before the name it means…
Do you want to draw Leo?		
Are you ready to eat Max?		

Grown-ups: when your child acts out a meaning, ask, "Who are we talking to?" and "Who is doing the action?" Point to the comma token each time it makes the difference.

3 Practise

A. Draw a line from each sentence to what it means.

Let's film Tom.	●	● We are telling Tom it's time to start filming.
Let's film, Tom.	●	● The dog is going to be dinner. Oh no!
Are you ready to eat Max?	●	● Tom is going to be in our video.
Are you ready to eat, Max?	●	● We are asking Max if he wants his dinner.

One comma, two meanings

Name _____ Date _____

B. Each sentence speaks **to** someone. Add the missing comma. One sentence is talking **about** someone and needs no comma: write **no comma** next to it.

1. Grace please shut the door.

2. Well done Noah!

3. Can I have a turn Lily?

4. I gave the book to Noah. _____

5. Mum look at this!

C. Explain what each sentence means. Who is being told to stop?

Stop Jack!

Stop, Jack!

D. Write your own pair. Use the same words both times, but add a comma before a name in the second one so the meaning changes.

No comma: _____

With a comma: _____

Challenge

Leo says, "You put a comma wherever you take a breath." He writes: **I want to go, to the park, with Ava.** Is Leo right? Do any of his commas help the meaning?

I can… Tick when you can.

- ☐ explain how one comma can change what a sentence means
- ☐ put a comma with the name of someone I'm speaking to
- ☐ leave a comma out when the meaning doesn't need one