

## Lesson 4 - SPAG: Commas for clarity

In order to make your writing clear, you need to use commas.

As well as using them to separate out key information, or divide up different clauses, commas can also completely change the meaning of a sentence if they're not used correctly.

### **Four ways to use commas**

#### **1. Writing a simple list**

When you're writing a list, use commas between each item in your list. Use and between the last two items, instead of a comma.

For example: Today I need to buy milk, bread, apples and potatoes.

#### **2. Making your meaning clear**

Adding a comma can change the meaning of a sentence completely, so it's important you put it in the right place.

For example: Let's eat Callum!

This means we're actually going to eat Callum!

Compare it with this: Let's eat, Callum!

A comma is used correctly after eat, so this means we're eating with Callum - phew!

#### **3. Adding extra information**

In longer sentences, you can use commas to separate out extra information (known as 'parenthesis') to make the sentence easier to read.

For example: Edinburgh, the capital city of Scotland, is famous for its castle.

#### **4. Breaking up sentences**

A clause is the building block for a sentence. Commas can be used to break up sentences that have more than one clause, to make them easier to read.

For example: When Albert saw the food, his tummy started to rumble.

This sentence has a subordinate clause: 'When Albert saw the food'.

Subordinate clauses do not make sense on their own because they need the main part of the sentence ('his tummy started to rumble') to be completely clear. When you have two clauses like these, they need to be separated by a comma.

You can explore commas more here

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/articles/zrdyvk7>

Task:

The passage below has had all of its commas removed. See if you can identify all of the missing commas and **write the passage out** with them in (this will be great handwriting practice). There are 24 missing altogether.

Professor Lupin appeared to have woken up at last. Harry could hear movements in his corner. None of them spoke. There was a soft crackling noise and a shivering light filled the compartment. Professor Lupin appeared to be holding a handful of flames. They illuminated his tired grey face but his eyes looked alert and wary.

“Stay where you are” he said in the same hoarse voice and he got slowly to his feet with his handful of fire held out in front of him. But the door slid slowly open before Lupin could reach it. Standing in the doorway illuminated by the shivering flames in Lupin’s hand was a cloaked figure that towered to the ceiling. Its face was completely hidden beneath its hood.

Harry’s eyes darted downwards and what he saw made his stomach contract. There was a hand protruding from the cloak and it was glistening greyish slimy looking and scabbed like something dead that had decayed in water ...

It was visible only for a split second. As though the creature beneath the cloak sensed Harry’s gaze the hand was suddenly withdrawn into the folds of the black material. And then the thing beneath the hood whatever it was drew a long slow rattling breath as though it was trying to suck something more than air from its surroundings. An intense cold swept over them all. Harry felt his own breath catch in his chest. The cold went deeper than his skin. It was inside his chest it was inside his very heart ... Harry’s eyes rolled up into his head. He couldn’t see. He was drowning in cold. There was a rushing in his ears as though of water. He was being dragged downwards the roaring growing louder... And then from far away he heard screaming terrible terrified pleading screams.