

PUNCTUATION

What can you do? Ask children to read through any writing with you at home, if they are pausing ask “do you need anything in that place?”; read their work to them as they have written it, including with punctuation missing, so they spot you are gasping for breath; discuss why they need to pause in reading.

Infants need to use full stops and capital letters. In year 2 they learn to use commas to separate items in a list e.g. *The woods were dark, gloomy and cold.* Question marks and exclamation marks are also introduced when the children are ready for them (the children might think of them as surprised full stops or excited full stops).

Juniors need to use the above, and learn to use speech marks and commas for clauses. Some move onto further internal sentence punctuation such as brackets, dashes, semi colons and colons.

When are different punctuation marks used?

Commas separate items in a list.

The small, scruffy, black and white dog ran to the gate.

Commas are used to separate clauses in sentences.

The scruffy dog, wagging its tail madly, sprinted towards the gate. (In this sentence *wagging its tail madly* is a subordinate clause – it does not make sense as a sentence on its own, and so commas go around it).

Speech marks/ inverted commas.

“How do we use speech marks?” asked John.

“You put the speech marks around what is said, remember to put punctuation before the second speech mark and start a new line for a new speaker,” explained his teacher.

Brackets and dashes are both used to add extra information; **colons** are used before an (often) bullet pointed list, summary or quotation; and **semi colons** to separate descriptive items in a list, or to link two sentences on the same theme e.g. *The teacher put out paint on the tables; they were studying pop art and needed bright colours.*

St John’s Mead CE VC Primary School



Supporting your child’s writing



In school we use VCOP to support the teaching and learning of writing:

**Vocabulary
Connectives
Openers
Punctuation**

By using these elements the children learn to structure their sentences to engage the reader.

If you have any queries about the contents of this booklet, please see Miss Hodge (Literacy Coordinator).

VOCABULARY

What can you do? Ask your child to describe what they see verbally with you; a character or setting in a book or film; describe what they have just eaten, or tell you about a fantastic day out. You can play word games, such as *What am I?* (you describe an object and the other person has to guess), or board games such as boggle or bananagrams. Vocabulary building can be verbal, or when children are completing writing tasks, such as Topic homework.

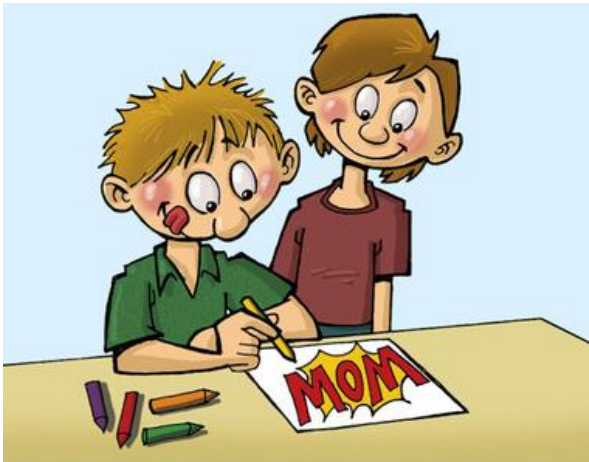
Technical terms:

Nouns are people, places or things e.g. a *farmer, farm or tractor* (older children may also look at abstract nouns such as *sadness*, which describe a feeling).

Verbs are (usually) states or actions e.g. *to enjoy or to run*. Children often use the term “doing word” to mean a verb.

Adjectives describe the noun e.g. *sharp pencil, funny clown*.

Adverbs describe the verb e.g. ran *swiftly*, hid *secretly*, enjoyed *immensely*.



CONNECTIVES

- Connect sentences together, or clauses (parts of sentences), e.g. and, also ...
- Extend ideas e.g. In addition to, furthermore ...
- Give reasons for things (causal) e.g. As a result, because, due to
- Show that time has passed e.g. An hour later, after lunch, last week, one blustery day ...
- Give a different point of view e.g. Despite, although, but, however, on the other hand ...

What can you do? Encourage children to use examples in their writing, or talk at home such as: but, and, so, when, then, if, because – and as children get older - however, whilst, while, furthermore, therefore, on the other hand, despite, although, due to and in addition to. This will mean they extend their ideas both in writing and verbally!

OPENERS

Using different openers means starting sentences in different ways.

Infants – this could be using a phrase such as: *Once upon a time ...*, *One sunny day ...*, or *Suddenly ...* within a story. Or in non-fiction *In ... At ...*

Juniors – as above, they might also:

- Use adverbials (which describe when/ how/ where something happens) e.g. *After a while ...*, *In a suspicious manner ...* or *Under the bridge ...*
- Start sentences with verbs e.g. *Hopping madly across the room ...*
- Start sentences with adverbs e.g. *Stealthily, the cheetah moved towards its prey.*

What can you do at home? Look at great ways of starting sentences in their reading, highlight when they have used a great opener in their speech or encourage them to change an example in their homework if all their openers are the same.