

# Year 4 Punctuation: A Step-by-Step Guide for Parents

This step-by-step explanation to punctuation can help you support your child's learning at home. The subject is broken down into manageable chunks, providing you with a simple guide to follow when learning about punctuation together, either as part of homework or if you decide to give your child some extra support. In this guide, you will find a step that matches your child's level as well as some ideas to support your child's learning.

Within **this area of the website**, you'll find a selection of resources intended to help your child learn about each step of this guide. Each step also contains a keyword or phrase that you can use to search the Twinkl site for more resources and activities. These are designed to support your child in achieving the stages. Simply type the keyword or phrase into the search bar and press enter to explore together.

using commas after fronted adverbials



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We hope you find the information on our website and resources useful. The contents of this resource are for general, informational purposes only. This guide is intended to offer parents general guidance on what subject areas tend to be covered in their child's year group and where they could support their children at home. However, please be aware that every child is different and information can quickly become out of date. There are some subject areas that we have intentionally not covered due to the nature of how they are taught or because a trained professional needs to teach these areas. We try to ensure that the information in our resources is correct but every school teaches the national curriculum in its own way. If you would like further guidance or are unsure in any way, we recommend that you speak to your child's teacher or another suitably qualified professional.

# Punctuation

## What Punctuation Is Taught in Year 4?

In year 4, your child will continue to practise the punctuation they learnt to use in previous years. By year 4, children should be able to use:

- **capital letters** for the start of sentences, proper nouns and the pronoun 'I';
- **full stops, question marks** and **exclamation marks** at the end of sentences;
- **commas** in lists;
- **inverted commas** to show direct speech;
- **apostrophes** for contracted words (e.g. I will = I'll) and for possession with singular nouns (e.g. Will's money).

If you would like to help your child revise and practise the punctuation they learnt in year 3, try these **Year 3 SPaG Activity Mats** at home. Throughout year 4, your child should be using the above punctuation with increasing accuracy within their writing. They will also be introduced to using:

- **inverted commas** and other **punctuation** to show direct speech;
- **commas** after fronted adverbials;
- **apostrophes** to show plural possession (for example, the boy's name and the boys' names).

Inverted commas are written as “ ” (double). Please note, some schools may teach the use of single inverted commas ( ' ' ) - please check which version is taught in your child's school to ensure that you are consistent with what they are being taught.

In this guide, you will find a step for each of the new types of punctuation introduced in year 4. However, these steps aren't sequential; therefore, you can do them in any order at home. It may be best to find out what your child is currently learning (or has learnt already) in class to ensure your support matches their school work.



As well as using the resources in this category and the suggested keyword searches to help your child with commas, a few ideas for games and activities to help your child develop their punctuation skills in their writing at home are outlined below.

### Read, Read, Read!

Sharing books together is the most powerful way for children to learn about language, spelling, grammar and punctuation. As you read together, identify examples of inverted commas and discuss how they are used with other punctuation to show speech.

### Read All About It!

This is a fun way to help your child identify inverted commas being used for direct speech. Give your child a highlighter and a newspaper or magazine. Ask them to highlight examples of direct speech used in the stories they read in the articles.

### Where Is It?

Using images in books, ask your child to think of a sentence to describe what they can see happening in the picture, such as 'the dogs were playing'. Then, ask your child to think about where, when or how their sentence takes place. For example, they may say, 'in the garden', 'in the afternoon' or 'happily'. Then ask your child to say their sentence again with the adverbial placed at the start (fronted):

In the garden, the dogs were playing.

In the afternoon, the dogs were playing.

Happily, the dogs were playing.

### What's the Difference?

Give your child examples of apostrophes used for possession on small bits of paper or card.

For example:

Ryan's, boys', girl's, children's, Jess'

Ask your child to sort the possessive apostrophe examples into two groups: singular (belonging to one person) or plural (belonging to more than one person).

Ask them to explain how they knew if the possession was singular or plural.



# Step 1

## Using Inverted Commas and Other Punctuation to Show Direct Speech

In year 4, as well as continuing to place inverted commas around direct speech, children will start to use other punctuation correctly to show speech. Although they seem fairly easy to use, they are difficult to master due to the many rules and conventions to set out speech punctuation (and other punctuation) correctly. To set out direct speech correctly, your child needs to learn to:

- place the inverted commas correctly;
- start all speech with a capital letter;
- separate the speech from the rest of the sentence using punctuation (using , ? ! or .);
- place the closing inverted commas after the punctuation that separates the speech from the rest of the text;
- begin a new line each time a new speaker starts;
- punctuate speech when it is split with a reporting clause;
- vary the position of the reporting clause.

Help your child to use inverted commas and other punctuation correctly for direct speech by following these tips:

1. Place the inverted commas around the part of the text that shows the reader what a character is saying. This is called direct speech. For example:

Direct Speech: "Time for break," the teacher said.

Reported Speech: The teacher told the children that it was time for break.

2. Add a capital letter at the start of the direct speech.

"Time for break," the teacher said.

The boy asked, "Can I go to the toilet?"

3. Add punctuation before closing inverted commas (not after).

"What's for dinner?" asked the boy.

Cheryl screamed, "Give me my toy back!"

4. Ensure the reporting clause is punctuated correctly. The reporting clause is the part of the sentence that tells the reader who is speaking. When writing speech, the reporting clause can be placed before or after direct speech, for example:

"What's for dinner?" asked the boy.

Cheryl screamed, "Give me my toy back!"

When the reporting clause is placed in the middle of speech, it can be followed by either a full stop ( . ) or a comma ( , ). A comma is used when the reporting clause is placed in the middle of a sentence. For example:

"Mum, can I have a chocolate?" becomes "Mum," shouted the boy, "can I have a chocolate?"

When the reporting clause is placed between two separate speech sentences, it is followed by a full stop. For example:

"My name's Jake. What's yours?" becomes "My name's Jake," said the boy. "What's yours?"

You could try using this activity book at home with your child to help them practise using inverted commas for speech.

## Step 2

### Using Commas after Fronted Adverbials

A fronted adverbial is an adverb or an adverbial phrase that is positioned at the front of a sentence (before the verb or action it is describing). It is always separated from the main clause with a comma. For example:

- Inside the sunken ship, a shoal of fish swam.
- Nervously, she walked onto the stage.

When discussing fronted adverbials with your child, it can be helpful to explain that fronted adverbials tell the reader where, when or how something happens. Any easy way to practise this is to ask where, when and how questions about images from your child's storybooks. For example, you may ask your child:

Where is the man eating dinner?

To which, you may get the response:

at the table or in the kitchen

These adverbial phrases can then be added to the front of the sentence to make a fronted adverbial: In the kitchen, the man is eating dinner.

## Step 3

### Using Apostrophes to Show Plural Possession

In year 3, children are taught to use apostrophes to show possession with singular nouns. For example, John's shoes or Shakira's coat. In year 4, children learn to use apostrophes to show plural possession (when something belongs to a group, e.g. the girls' dresses).

To use an apostrophe with plural nouns, you simply add an apostrophe after the final 's' of the word (if the word ends in s). For example:

the howls belonging to the wolves = the wolves' howls

However, not all plural nouns end in 's' (e.g. children, people). In these cases, an apostrophe s ('s) is added to the end of the word. For example:

the books belonging to the children = the children's books

To help your child practise doing this at home, you could try the activities outlined in this activity booklet.

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