

Changing punctuation

Rationale

The use of correct punctuation is important. Lack of punctuation can obscure meaning and make understanding very difficult. Incorrect punctuation can alter the learner's intended meaning. The use of paragraphs is also important for ease of reading, to help convey meaning and to follow accepted conventions of writing English.

This worksheet is designed to focus learners on the importance of punctuation, especially full stops, by showing how meaning can change by altering the sentence and paragraph boundaries.

Aim: To improve punctuation

Can be used: from Unit 12 onwards

Activity: Pair work

Focus: Punctuation

Materials: One copy of Worksheets 9.1 and 9.2 per learner; scissors for class

Estimated time: 30–40 minutes

Worksheet 9.1

- 1 Set the scene. Ask learners if any of them have been to Rome. Refer to the text on Vatican City on Coursebook p99.
- 2 Revise the rules for punctuation (capital letters, full stops, commas) and elicit why it is necessary (for sense). Ask learners to look at how the text on Vatican City is laid out in paragraphs and how they help understanding of a text (indicate change of topic for each new paragraph).
- 3 Hand out copies of Worksheet 9.1. Explain that in this text there are no capital letters, full stops, commas or paragraph breaks and that the learners have to put them in. Ask learners to read the text, silently first and then aloud, to develop phrasing and help with understanding.
- 4 Ask them to think about / discuss what Sandra is really trying to say. They should look for what makes sense and what is good English.
- 5 Ask them to use scissors to cut up the text and the 'missing' punctuation. Point out that they need to use all the full stops and commas. Remind them that where there is a full stop, there must be a capital letter for the following word as this is a new sentence.
- 6 They should try to assemble it in different ways until they are happy with the final version. This should be laid out in the way the learners believe to be correct, leaving spaces between blocks of text for the paragraph breaks. When learners are satisfied with their version, they can write in the capital letters at the beginning of sentences.
- 7 Put learners into pairs and ask them to read their version out loud to each other, following the new punctuation to see if makes sense. Then compare with other learners to see if they agree.

Worksheet 9.2

- 1 Hand out copies of Worksheet 9.2 and ask learners to read the two versions of the punctuated text. They should discuss the difference in meaning and which one they think is the most appropriate.
- 2 Learners discuss any errors they made and why their version was incorrect.

Worksheet 9.2 Changing punctuation

Look at two different ways of putting punctuation in Sandra's email. Is there a difference in meaning? Which do you think is correct?

Version 1

Dear David I'm having a great time.

In Rome I've been staying with Fabio. For a few weeks I absolutely love the weather and food and I am eating so much pizza yesterday. We went to the Villa Borghese – the sculpture is fantastic usually.

Fabio has to work but luckily he had a day's holiday so he came with me tomorrow. I'm going up to see Isabella who's doing a course on Italian, theatre music, and art. In Florence at the moment she studies, plays classical music and books opera. Tickets are really difficult to get but she's going to try to.

Get me some tickets. You know how much I love opera. I really want to go as it'll be amazing I hope. Everything's going well back at home. See you soon
Love from Sandra xoxoxox

Version 2

Dear David

I'm having a great time in Rome. I've been staying with Fabio for a few weeks. I absolutely love the weather and food and I am eating so much pizza. Yesterday we went to the Villa Borghese – the sculpture is fantastic. Usually Fabio has to work but luckily he had a day's holiday so he came with me.

Tomorrow I'm going up to see Isabella, who's doing a course on Italian theatre, music and art in Florence at the moment. She studies plays, classical music and books. Opera tickets are really difficult to get but she's going to try to get me some tickets. You know how much I love opera. I really want to go as it'll be amazing.

I hope everything's going well back at home. See you soon.

Love from Sandra xoxoxox