Comma Power After Sentence Starters

Teacher		**Class**	Year 3
Subject	English	**Topic**	Fronted adverbials
Date		**Room**	
Lesson length	60 minutes	**Country**	United Kingdom

Pupils learn to spot a fronted adverbial and put a comma after it. They match starters to main clauses and arrest the missing comma.

Curriculum links

- use fronted adverbials [1]
- indicate grammatical and other features by: using commas after fronted adverbials [1]

Learning objectives

- Students will spot fronted adverbials that tell when, where or how.
- Students will put a comma straight after a fronted adverbial.
- Students will read sentences aloud pausing where the comma sits.

Success criteria

- I can find the starter words at the beginning of a sentence.
- I can add a comma straight after the starter words.
- I can pause when I read the comma aloud.

What students already know

Show: the ball rolled away under the table. Ask: which words tell where? Where could we move them?

Key words

fronted adverbial	words at the start of a sentence that give more news about the action [5][15]
comma	little curl mark that tells the reader to take a short stop [5]
when	tells about the time something happens [5]
where	tells about the place something happens [5]
how	tells about the way something happens [5]

Materials

- Slides 1-12 projected, including Slide 6 video and Slide 7 starter sentences
- long sentence strips with no commas made from Slide 7 and Slide 10 sentences
- big red comma cards and glue sticks
- printed copies of Worksheet Task F for plenary check

Before the lesson

- Load Slides 1-12 and test Video clip 1 commas after fronted adverbials 0:00-4:47 on Slide 6
- Print and cut long sentence strips with no commas and big red comma cards, plus glue sticks
- Print Worksheet Task F, one per pupil, and set tables for group matching

Lesson outline

0–5 min **Starter** 5 min · Whole class

Hook pupils with the missing comma and share the lesson goals.

YOU DO

1. Show Slide 1 Fronted Adverbials: Comma Power! and say the hook in a police voice.
2. Show Slide 2 Today we will objectives and read the three I can lines together.
3. Show Slide 5 mystery comma example and point to the tiny tail at the start.
4. Ask what starters pupils already use and take two quick ideas.

STUDENTS DO

1. Join in the Freeze call and repeat the lesson goals.
2. Look at the mystery sentence and point where the stop should be.
3. Tell a partner one way a sentence could start.

Say: Freeze! A comma has gone missing from these sentences. Can you arrest the right place for it? Today we are comma police. We will find the starter, then put the comma right after it.

Worked example: Slowly we opened the door. Step 1: find the starter at the front: Slowly. Step 2: put the comma right after it: Slowly, we opened the door.

Ask: Where does the comma live in Slowly, we opened the door? (Right after Slowly, before the rest of the sentence.) · What does a fronted adverbial tell us? (When, where or how something happens. [5])

Check understanding: Hands up to show where the comma goes on fingers in the air; reteach Slowly example if unsure.

Support: Show the comma card in red and let pupils only point to the gap. **Stretch:** Ask pupils to say the sentence with and without the pause to hear the difference.

Use: Slides 1-2

5–15 min **Teaching** 10 min · Whole class

Explain what a fronted adverbial is and why it needs a comma.

YOU DO

1. Show Slide 3 and explain an adverbial tells when, where or how [5], fronted means moved to the front.
2. Show Slide 4 and move the same words from back to front to show the comma rule.
3. Model underlining the starter and drawing the comma right after it in red.
4. Read both versions aloud with a clear pause at the comma.

STUDENTS DO

1. Repeat what when, where and how mean with actions for time, place and manner.
2. Watch the move from back to front and copy the pause with a finger wiggle.
3. Chant: find the starter, comma after.

Say: An adverbial tells when, where or how. Fronted means we move it to the very front, before the verb [5][6]. When it is at the front we put a comma right after it [1][5]. At the back we need no comma, but at the front we do.

Worked example: Back: We tidied the classroom in the morning. Step 1: move In the morning to the front. Step 2: add comma right after it: In the morning, we tidied the classroom.

Ask: In In the morning, we tidied the classroom, what is the fronted adverbial? (In the morning, it tells when.) · Why did we add a comma? (A fronted adverbial is usually followed by a comma to separate it from the rest [5].) · Where do we put the comma? (Immediately after the fronted adverbial [4].)

Check understanding: Mini-whiteboards: pupils write a comma in the air where it goes; model again if many miss the spot.

Support: Keep to two-word starters like After lunch and In the woods so the chunk is short [3]. **Stretch:** Ask pupils to say if the starter tells when, where or how before you add the comma.

Use: Slides 3-5

15–25 min **Guided practice** 10 min · Whole class

Practise hearing starters and seeing the comma pause together.

YOU DO

1. Play Slide 6 Video clip 1 0:00-4:47 and ask pupils to listen for when, where or how.
2. Pause when the finger pauses and ask pupils to shout comma.
3. Show Slide 7 Three jobs for openers and read the three sentences together.
4. Sort the three starters into When, Where and How with class votes.

STUDENTS DO

1. Watch the video and shout comma when they see it.
2. Read Slide 7 sentences with a partner and pause at each comma.
3. Vote When, Where or How for each starter.

Say: Watch where the finger pauses. Listen for when, where or how. When you see the starter at the start, shout comma. Then we will say if it tells when, where or how.

Worked example: Under the table, the ball rolled away. Step 1: starter at front is Under the table. Step 2: it tells where. Step 3: comma goes right after table.

Ask: In Slowly, the door opened wide, what job does Slowly do? (How, it tells how the door opened.) · What do we do right after the starter? (Put a comma and pause when we read.)

Check understanding: Thumbs up if they can point to starter and comma on Slide 7; replay one video bit if unsure.

Support: Give single-word starters first like Slowly, Carefully and Outside, which count too [8]. **Stretch:** Pupils explain why In the morning is When and Under the table is Where.

Use: Video clip 1 (0:00–4:47), Slides 6–7

25–50 min **Main activity** 25 min · Groups

Build sentences by matching starters to main clauses and placing the comma.

YOU DO

1. Give each group starter cards, main clause cards and red comma cards with glue sticks.
2. Model one match: lay starter, lay red comma right after it, then lay main clause.
3. Send groups to make three arrests: match, stick comma, underline starter.
4. Stop class halfway to hear one sentence read with pause and point to comma.

STUDENTS DO

1. Match starter cards like In the morning, Under the table, Slowly, After lunch to main clause cards.
2. Stick the red comma directly after the starter and underline the starter.
3. Read each new sentence aloud, pause where the comma sits and point to it.

Say: You are comma police. Pick a starter like In the morning or Behind the shed. Pick what happens. Put the red comma straight after the starter. Read it to your partner with a pause and point to the comma.

Worked example: Starter: Under the table + main: the ball rolled away. Step 1: put starter first. Step 2: put red comma immediately after table. Step 3: add main: Under the table, the ball rolled away. Step 4: read with pause after table.

Ask: Where must the red comma sit? (Immediately after the fronted adverbial [4].) · What does Behind the shed tell in Behind the shed, we found a ball? (Where it happened.) · How do we check our sentence? (Read it, pause at the comma, check starter is underlined.)

Check understanding: Groups hold up one sentence strip; class checks comma sits immediately after starter, fix together if wrong.

Support: Give three ready-made pairs with the fronted adverbial already underlined so pupils only choose the comma place [3]. **Stretch:** Pupils swap the main clause to make a sillier sentence but keep the same starter and comma.

Use: Slides 7, 10

50–60 min **Plenary** 10 min · Whole class

Compare with and without commas and check learning against goals.

YOU DO

1. Show Slide 10 and read In the hall we lined up with no pause, then In the hall, we lined up with pause.
2. Show Slide 11 vote and let pupils choose best opener and say why.
3. Hand out Worksheet Task F and do True or false together for comma rule.
4. Show Slide 12 exit ticket and set the one-sentence write.

STUDENTS DO

1. Read both Slide 10 versions and vote which is clearer.
2. Vote for favourite starter on Slide 11 and say when, where or how.
3. Complete Worksheet Task F tick and write Slide 12 exit sentence.

Say: No comma is hard to read. With a comma it is clear to read. Choose your favourite opener. Then show me you can put the comma after a fronted adverbial on your own.

Worked example: No comma: In the hall we lined up. Hard to read. With comma: In the hall, we lined up. Step 1: starter In the hall. Step 2: comma after hall. Step 3: pause when reading.

Ask: Which is clearer and why? (The comma one, the pause separates the starter from the rest.) · Does After lunch, we played outside need a comma? (Yes, after the opener "After lunch".)

Check understanding: Collect exit sentences and Task F ticks; reteach comma placement tomorrow if many miss it.

Support: Offer sentence frames with starter and comma already printed, such as In the morning, _____.
Stretch: Pupils add a single-word how starter like Suddenly or Slowly to a third sentence and check the comma [8].

Use: Slides 11–12, Worksheet Task F

Common mistakes

Mistake	How to spot it	How to fix it
Leaving out the comma after the starter	Sentence runs together with no pause, like After lunch we played outside	Underline the starter and add the comma immediately after it, then reread with a pause [4][5]
Putting the comma in the wrong gap	Comma lands inside the starter or in the main clause	Cover the starter with a finger, put the comma at its end, check it sits right after the whole starter [4]
Thinking no comma is needed because the back version has none	Pupil says In the morning needs no comma because we need none at the back	Show both orders: at the back we need no comma, but at the front we do, so add it after fronting [16]

Support

- Give three ready-made pairs with the fronted adverbial already underlined so pupils only choose the comma place.
- Use short starters and printed comma cards in red plus sentence frames to copy.

Stretch

- Pupils swap the main clause to make a sillier sentence but keep the same starter and comma.
- Pupils add one manner starter and one place starter without repeating the same starter twice.

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For the LSE or teaching assistant

Stay with target group during main matching, prompt find starter first, then comma, then read with pause.

Check for understanding

Question	Answer
Where do you put the comma with a fronted adverbial?	Immediately after it, before the main clause.
Tick the fronted adverbial: Carefully, we carried the tray.	Carefully
Fix it: Behind the shed we found a ball.	Behind the shed, we found a ball.

Homework

Write two sentences about your evening starting with After tea, and Before bed, with commas.

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