

Teaching English punctuation

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Sue McIntosh

Some of you can identify with the interesting challenge of teaching the intricacies of the English language to a large class of varying home languages. Teaching some of these language concepts piecemeal, as presented in the textbooks, provides our learners with one or two concepts out of a broad area of grammatical skills, which they find difficult to implement in their writing. The new textbooks are no better than the previous ones in this regard. Here we are, looking for help with the basic writing skills.

Because of this, I have developed a series of PowerPoint presentations for use in a classroom with learners speaking up to 10 different home languages (none of them English) or for a largely English-speaking private school classroom or for the small group at tertiary level. They are specifically geared to teaching language in holistic sections. By this I mean explaining all the rules systematically and applying them to the writing of English; not merely the answering of language questions which are found in the final section of Paper 1: USING LANGUAGE CORRECTLY. The presentations make use of visual stimuli, video clips, creative tasks and games.

One of the presentations which would be useful to teachers of

grades 10 to 12 is focused on punctuation. [Click on the link at the end to download the PP presentation.] A major challenge for learners who normally use SMS and BBM language is learning to punctuate their writing correctly. It is possible to teach punctuation in the classroom using short, rule-based slides, followed by a writing activity or a game to facilitate active learning. Where there is no data projector available, a hard copy of six slides per page may be printed and the learner may be encouraged to take notes and answer exercises on the page. Learners with laptops in the classroom can use a soft copy of the PowerPoint on which they can make notes and complete the exercises.

It is recommended that this grammar presentation be used at Grade 10 level, in Term 1. Teaching this at the beginning of the year provides a basis for correcting errors and enables revision at later points during the year. This presentation has also been used successfully at tertiary level for language support in small groups.

Once you have perused the presentation, you may wish to adapt it to make it more applicable to your learners. While learners are completing the exercises, move around and assist them. Many learners have never written a sentence with a colon or semi-colon, and they find Exercises 2 and 3 particularly difficult.

CLICK BELOW FOR POWERPOINT PRESENTATION.

[**Punctuation**](#)



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