

Mastering Speech Marks with Max the Mathematician

Learning objective: To use inverted commas (speech marks) accurately to punctuate direct speech in Year 4 English writing.

Read the story below carefully. Max the monkey is trying to explain his latest discovery to his friends. Use your knowledge of punctuation to insert the missing speech marks and commas where needed. Remember: speech marks go around the words actually spoken, and a comma usually separates the speech from the rest of the sentence.

Max the monkey sat in the jungle canopy surrounded by his maths equipment. He was so excited that he began calling out to his friends. Pip the caterpillar crawled over to see what the commotion was about. Max shouted I have solved the mystery of the missing prime numbers! Pip smiled and asked can you show me how you calculated that? Max replied it was quite simple once I used a grid. Suddenly, Nova the owl swooped down and hooted I would love to learn your method too.

Word bank: inverted commas · punctuation · direct speech · reporting clause · dialogue · clarity

1. Identify the direct speech in the sentence: 'Max shouted I have solved the mystery of the missing prime numbers!' and rewrite it with the correct punctuation. (2 marks)

2. Why do we use a comma before the closing speech mark when the reporting clause follows the speech? Explain your reasoning. (3 marks)

3. Rewrite the following sentence so the reporting clause comes before the speech: 'It was quite simple once I used a grid, Max replied.' (2 marks)

4. Compare the use of a full stop and a comma inside the speech marks. When would you use each? Justify your answer. (3 marks)

5. What might happen if a writer forgot to use speech marks in a story with many characters talking? Explain the impact on the reader. (3 marks)

Draw: Draw Max the monkey pointing at a blackboard full of complex equations, while Pip the caterpillar and Nova the owl watch in amazement. Include speech bubbles for each character to show what they might be saying to each other.



Extension challenge: Write a short creative dialogue (at least 6 lines) between Max and another BookFlik character about a new discovery. Ensure every line of speech is correctly punctuated with capital letters, commas, and inverted commas.