

PARENTHESIS

What is parenthesis?

Parenthesis allows a writer to provide additional information to a sentence. It could be an explanation, an interruption or afterthought in a sentence. The extra information can be inserted by using dashes, brackets or a pair of commas.

Be careful: the sentence is only punctuated correctly if the sentence without the additional information makes complete sense on its own.

Brackets

To add extra information without distracting too much from the main idea you can add it **between brackets**.

E.g We arranged a meeting on Saturday (21st January) outside the tower.

The actual date of the meeting is not necessary to understand the sentence. It is **additional information** and not very important. The writer does not want to distract us from the main idea of the sentence.

E.g Everyone fell silent when he (the officer) entered the room.

E.g The fire engine (which had sirens blaring and lights flashing) moved swiftly between the rush hour traffic.

Full stops

Brackets aren't always placed in the middle of a sentence. They can also appear at the end of a sentence. If this is the case, the full stop comes after the closing bracket (not inside the brackets).



Dashes

A pair of dashes can be used to emphasise the additional information and make the reader draw their attention to it. You only use dashes if this information is in the middle of a sentence, not at the end.

E.g Sandra Jones - the only famous gymnast from Staffordshire - won her first gold medal on Saturday.

E.g I stopped writing - I heard something outside - and went to the window.

E.g Their latest song - Hair - is expected to enter the charts in the top 5.

Commas

Sometimes we wish to add additional information just to make what we are writing a little clearer.

If we do not wish to draw too much attention to the extra information, we can use **a pair of commas**.

E.g Jack, the coach of the football team, was determined to win the next match.

E.g Matilda's best friend, Evie, invited her to her party.

E.g My youngest sister, Megan, will be visiting soon.