

What is a parenthesis?

A **parenthesis** is a word or phrase inserted as an **explanation** or **afterthought** marked off with the following:

- brackets
- dashes
- commas

1

How are brackets used?

Brackets are used in order to add **extra information**, or a **thought**, to a sentence to give **greater detail**.

This extra information is not really necessary to the sentence and, therefore, it could be removed without affecting the structure of the sentence.

Sometimes, commas or dashes can be used instead of brackets but using brackets can bring extra variety into your writing.

2

Using brackets correctly

Brackets are used to **enclose** a word or a group of words within a sentence. They are used in two main ways...

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Using brackets correctly

1. As an afterthought

E.g. The boy put up his hand (he'd taken a good five minutes to think) and gave the teacher his answer.

E.g. We saw a small coloured bird (it was obviously some sort of finch) fly down and take the fruit.

E.g. The present turned out to be a magnificent painting (definitely not what I was expecting).

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Using brackets correctly

2. As an explanation

My little sister threw a wobbly (better known as a tantrum) when she couldn't have the toy.

Most of Bangladesh is less than 15 metres (50 feet) above sea level.

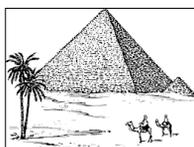
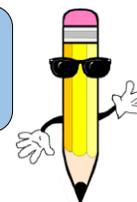
Roald Dahl (an award winning author) wrote some wonderful children's stories.

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Challenge 1

Insert the brackets in the correct place in the sentence below.

The Great Pyramid of Giza situated in Egypt is one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World.



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Using brackets in a play script

Action and voice directions to help the actors are placed in brackets when writing a **play script**.

PATIENT: (Sitting down in front of the desk) Good morning, Doctor.

DOCTOR: (Without looking up) Good morning. What can I do for you today?

PATIENT: (Anxiously) I have terrible wind. Can you give me something for it?

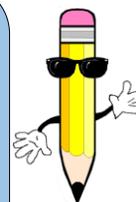
DOCTOR: Yes, certainly. Here's a kite! (He laughs out loud.)

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Challenge 2

Insert brackets into the play script below.

- LUCY: Putting up her hand Excuse me, Miss Steel!
- TEACHER: Looking up from desk Yes Lucy?
- LUCY: Nervously Please Miss, will I get into trouble for something I haven't done?



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Using dashes instead of brackets

A dash can also be used as a pair to add strong or additional ideas into a sentence.

E.g. Terry was upset – no, devastated – that his cat had disappeared.



Dashes are considered to be less formal than using brackets but can help to draw more attention to the content of the added information.

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Using dashes correctly

When a pair of dashes are used in place of brackets, the surrounding punctuation should be removed.

Upon discovering the dwarfs (all seven of them), Snow White immersed herself in domestic bliss.

Upon discovering the dwarfs – all seven of them – Snow White immersed herself in domestic bliss.



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Using dashes correctly

When using dashes in place of brackets at the end of a sentence, only a single dash is used.

The singer turned out to be really talented (definitely not what I was expecting).



The singer turned out to be really talented – definitely not what I was expecting.

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Challenge 3

Which sentence is punctuated accurately?

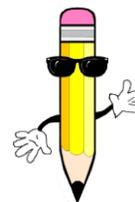
He has to cycle 3kms – just under – 2 miles to school.

He has to cycle – 3kms just under 2 miles – to school.

He has to cycle 3kms – just under 2 miles – to school.

He has to cycle 3kms just under 2 miles – to school.

Tick **one**



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Using commas instead of dashes

A pair of commas can also be used to add additional ideas into a sentence.

My strategy, that I worked on for a while, was very successful.



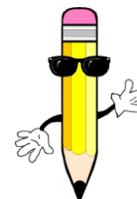
Gary, who trained hard, was sure he would get into the football team.

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Challenge 4

Insert commas in the correct place in the sentence below.

The chair which Helen had broken had to be thrown away.



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Reflection

Remember to use these tips to help you use punctuation for parenthesis.

- Brackets are used to enclose any word or group of words within a sentence.
- Brackets can be used as an afterthought or an explanation.
- Action and voice directions to help the actors are placed in brackets when writing a play script.
- When dashes are used in place of brackets, the surrounding punctuation should be removed.
- A pair of commas can also be used to add additional ideas into a sentence.