

Parentheses and Brackets

Parentheses

Parentheses () are used to enclose additional, non-essential information to clarify, explain, or add a side note in a sentence. Use parentheses to prevent disrupting the flow of a sentence.

Examples: She is coming to our house after work (around six o' clock).
I am going to visit my grandma (my dad's mom) today.

Parentheses can also be used to include dates or other referential information.

Examples: Amelia Earhart (1897-1937) was a famous aviatrix in the 20th century.
Hamlet's dilemma is "To be, or not to be" (Shakespeare 3.1.59).

Another use of parentheses is to enumerate a list.

Example: They asked me several questions in the interview: (1) What are my future goals?
(2) What are my greatest strengths? (3) Where do I see myself in ten years?

Unless the parentheses contain a complete sentence, punctuation should go outside of the parentheses, and the first word should not be capitalized, as noted in the examples above.

Parentheses should not be used in excess because they can be distracting.

Example: I have seven siblings (three half siblings) who attend seven universities (all CSUs) and have different pets (dogs, cats, monkeys, birds, bunnies, hamsters, and snakes) that like to eat a lot (mainly treats and candies).

Brackets

Brackets [] are used to clarify or explain a part of the sentence that is not present, especially in a direct quotation.

Examples: I read that novel [*The Great Gatsby*] in high school.
Lisa said, "[I] can't believe that he [Brad Pitt] is here!"

The word *sic* in brackets is used to inform the reader of a mistake in the original quotation.

Example: Roberts stated, "Dolphins is [*sic*] beautiful animals."

Activity 1

Place parentheses as needed in the following sentences.

1. They attended a benefit for a local charity Anna’s Animals.
2. In the novel, Rahim says, “There’s a way to be good again” Hosseini 198.
3. He was born in the year of the Ram 1979.
4. There were four possible dessert options: 1 raspberry cheesecake, 2 chocolate mousse, 3 fruit tart, and 4 Boston cream pie.
5. From the beginning to the middle of the semester around midterm season, I’m very diligent.

Activity 2

Place brackets as needed in the following sentences.

1. My sister exclaimed, “It the package is finally here!”
2. The writer wrote, “I have has *sic* enough of your attitude!”
3. We saw him Gary’s brother at the café yesterday.
4. Carraway mentions that “She Myrtle carried her surplus flesh sensuously” (Fitzgerald 25).
5. “I am surprised to see you two Alan and Amy in class,” the professor joked.

Answer Key for Activity 1

1. (Anna’s Animals).
2. (Hosseini 198).
3. (1979).
4. (1), (2), (3), (4)—note that you can also choose to list the items without numbers
5. (around midterm season),

Answer Key for Activity 2

1. [the package]
2. [*sic*]
3. [Gary’s brother]
4. [Myrtle]
5. [Alan and Amy]

References

Fitzgerald, F. Scott. *The Great Gatsby*. New York: Collier Books, 1980. Print.

Hosseini, Khalid. *The Kite Runner*. New York: Penguin Group, 2003. Print.

Lunsford, Andrea. *The Everyday Writer*. 4th Edition. Boston: Bedford/St. Martins, 2010. Print.

Shakespeare, William. *The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*. The Harvard Classics. New York: P.F. Collier & Son, 1909. Print.