Parentheses and Brackets

Parentheses ( ) are used to enclose additional, non-essential information in order 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.

Example: 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?

Notes:

- 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 first example 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 [ ] 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.”

Exercises

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.

**Place brackets as needed in the following sentences:**

6. My sister exclaimed, “It [the package] is finally here!”

7. The writer wrote, “I have has *sic* enough of your attitude!”

8. We saw him Gary’s brother at the café yesterday.

9. Carraway mentions that “She [Myrtle] carried her surplus flesh sensuously” (Fitzgerald 25).

10. “I am surprised to see you two [Alan and Amy] in class,” the professor joked.


**Sources Referenced**


