

Punctuation – Brackets

Punctuation – Brackets

There are several different types of bracket.

Round brackets, or parentheses (),

Square brackets [],

Curly brackets, or braces {}.

Formal writing rarely uses these.

We have to be careful with punctuation.

Parentheses

Parentheses are used to separate additional information from the main part of the sentence.

Removal of the parentheses cannot change the main information.

Also, when the parentheses are removed, the sentence must still be grammatically correct.

The text in parentheses can be whole sentences, phrases, single words, or even punctuation marks.

Parentheses – Examples #1

Removal of the parentheses cannot change the main information.

- Our German neighbours made *Schwarzwaldtorte* (black forest gâteau) – it was delicious!
- Our German neighbours made *Schwarzwaldtorte* – it was delicious!

- I'm so stupid (no, really!) – I don't know what I was thinking.
- I'm so stupid – I don't know what I was thinking.

Parentheses – Examples #2

When the parentheses are removed, the sentence must still be grammatically correct.

➤ I bought beer, bananas, crisps (and chocolate) for our picnic.

If we remove the parentheses, we end up with a bad sentence.

➤ I bought beer, bananas, crisps for our picnic.

➤ I bought beer, bananas, and crisps (and chocolate) for our picnic.

➤ I bought beer, bananas, and crisps for our picnic.

Parentheses – Examples #3

The text in parentheses can be whole sentences, phrases, dates, single words, or even punctuation marks.

- I was very ill after eating at that restaurant. (I won't be going back again.)
- It hasn't stopped raining (3 days and counting) yet.
- The unemployment figures report (May 2018) showed a falling trend.
- The politician expressed regret (sure^^) when the affair came to light.
- He managed to eat twenty (!) hotdogs yesterday.

Parentheses – Examples #4

A single parenthesis is used when listing items.

➤ Your tasks for today are:

- 1) Task one
- 2) Task two
- 3) Task three

This is the only case where a single parenthesis is used.

All other examples have pairs of parentheses.

Square Brackets

Square brackets are used in censorship.

They are used within quotes to add information.

They can be used in nested brackets to make things clear.

They have a specific [*sic*] use.

Square Brackets – Examples #1

Square brackets are used in censorship.

They replace an offensive word, often in a transcript.

- The defendant told the court that the “[EXPLETIVE DELETED] copper kicked him in the [EXPLETIVE DELETED] head.”
- She told the reporters, “My brother’s a right [EXPLETIVE], but he’s still my brother.”

Square Brackets – Examples #2

They are used within quotes to add information.

The extra information is being supplied by the author, not the person being quoted.

- Paul said, “The teacher sneezed **20 times** [emphasis added].”
- The teacher said, “They [the children] will leave school early tomorrow.”
- “She [the teacher] told us this would not happen every week.”

Square Brackets – Examples #3

They can be used in nested brackets to make things clearer.

➤ I have a new job. (My cousin got me a job at my aunt's [his mum's] firm.)

They also indicate that a portion of text has been omitted to make reading easier. The omitted text is not deemed relevant to the report.

➤ "I know what you mean. After all, [...] it was her decision."

Square Brackets – Examples #4

They have a specific [*sic*] use.

This is to indicate that there was a mistake in a quotation.

The mistake has not been corrected in the original and is being quoted verbatim.

- Bob wrote, “It’s up to them - it’s there [*sic*] money.”
- Peter asked, “Why is the puppy chasing it’s [*sic*] tail?”

Curly Brackets

Curly brackets are not really used in formal writing.

They are used in maths to delimit sets {apples, oranges, pears, bananas}.

They are used in computer programming languages for scope.

Some people use them in informal text in place of other bracket form.

Punctuation #1

We have to be careful with punctuation.

Complete sentences in brackets have the full stop inside the brackets.

Unless it's in the middle of the sentence, then no full stop is required.

- The exam was two hours. (It was barely enough time.)
- Our English exam (that is my favourite subject) was three hours long.

Phrases at the end of the sentence do not have a full stop inside the brackets.

- After the exam, we ordered a curry (nice and spicy).

Punctuation #2

Commas usually go outside the brackets.

➤ On Monday (I hate Mondays), we had a chemistry test.

If the question mark and/or exclamation marks belong to the comment in brackets, they go inside the brackets. Otherwise, they are outside.

➤ On Monday (I hate Mondays!), we had a chemistry test.

➤ On Monday (who doesn't hate Mondays?), we had a physics test.