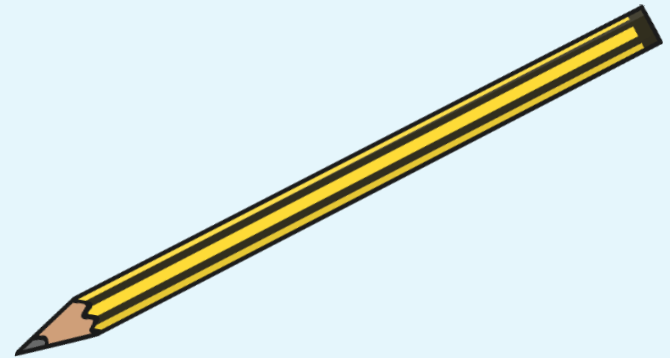# Using Brackets for Parenthesis

What is Parenthesis?

Parenthesis is a word, phrase or sentence that is put in writing as extra information or an afterthought. If you took the parenthesis away, the passage would still be complete without it.

Here are three examples of parenthesis. The first is just a word, the second is a phrase and the third is a complete sentence.

- The Narcissus (daffodil) is a spring plant with yellow petals.
- My brother (the one who lives in Australia) is coming to the wedding.
- Manchester United won the league today. (It was exciting.)

Where do I put the brackets?

Only put brackets around the parenthesis itself.

Check that your sentence still makes sense if you don't read the bit you have put in brackets.

Which sentence has the brackets in the right place?

a) Some people (don't like the rain) especially in England but I do.
b) Some people don't like the rain (especially in England but I do.)
c) Some people don't like the rain (especially in England) but I do.

Where do I put the brackets?

Which sentence has the brackets in the right place?

a) Some people (don't like the rain) especially in England but I do.

b) Some people don't like the rain (especially in England but I do.)

c) Some people don't like the rain (especially in England) but I do.

Sentence **'c'** has the brackets around the parenthesis (the extra bit of information). The sentence still makes sense without this piece of information.

A Complete Sentence

Sometimes, a parenthesis might be a complete sentence, not just a word or a phrase. When this happens, the capital letter and full stop are both put inside the brackets.

The passage of writing still needs to make sense if you take the parenthesis away.

E.g. Today we went on a trip to York. (I had never been to York before.)

Other Ways to Mark Parenthesis

In this session we have looked at using brackets for parenthesis but this is not the only way that parenthesis can be shown.

Commas
Commas can be used just like brackets for parenthesis, usually in less formal writing.

E.g. The newspaper, which is normally delivered at 9:30, did not come today.

Dashes
Dashes can be used like brackets but usually only in informal writing. They interrupt the sentence more than brackets or commas so use them carefully.

E.g. Tonight I'm going out – I never turn down a night out – to the cinema.

Review

- Use parenthesis to add extra information or insert an afterthought.
- Brackets are placed around the parenthesis.
- A sentence / passage must still make sense if the parenthesis is removed.