



How to Teach Using Brackets, Dashes or Commas to Indicate Parenthesis in

"Children in years 5 and 6 should learn how to use brackets, dashes or commas to indicate parenthesis."

National curriculum statement

By the end of key stage 2, children should understand that additional words can be added to a sentence in order to add extra information or explain a subject further. These extra words are known as a parenthesis and can appear anywhere within the sentence. They are signalled with the use of brackets, dashes or commas. Brackets must always go around the extra information added (as a pair) and usually signal information that is off the topic or an afterthought. Information within the brackets can be removed from the sentence and the sentence will still make sense. For example, 'Mrs Smith (**the year 6 teacher**) was always early to work.' Brackets should be used when you want the information to stand out in the sentence. Dashes are used in the same way as brackets - in a pair - and add extra information to the sentence. They can be used in more informal pieces of writing, for example, '**Mrs Smith - and you won't be surprised to know this - was always early to work.**' Commas are another way of adding parenthesis to a sentence, however, should be used formally and when brackets are not suited to the writing. For example, '**Mrs Smith, who is extremely good at her job, is always early to work.**'

Key Vocabulary

brackets, dashes, commas, formal, informa

Common Misconceptions and Errors

In formal writing, the use of parentheses should be minimal. Where possible, re-write the sentence, using commas where necessary.

Ensure that punctuation is used correctly inside and outside the parenthesis, for example, if your parenthesis is concluding the sentence, the placement of the full stop.

Brackets and dashes should come as a pair, encasing the extra added information.

Bringing English to Life

Children can be provided with a range of simple sentences. Children can turn over a card, roll a dice, or move around a playing board, landing on either brackets, dashes or commas. Children can then generate sentences using parenthesis by expanding the original simple sentence. Another form of this activity could challenge children to select a piece of information using parenthesis and then build the sentence around it. For example, the child could select (even though it was Wednesday) as their parenthesis. They could then generate a sentence such as, 'Mrs Smith (even though it was Wednesday) put her bins out for collection.'

Example Questions to Develop Understanding

- When should brackets, dashes and commas be used?
- Which form of parenthesis suits formal writing the best?
- How can I add extra information to my sentence using dashes or brackets?
- Does my sentence still make sense without the parenthesis?

Teaching and Learning Points

- Check that children know what parenthesis is and that they understand it can be added using brackets, dashes or commas depending on its purpose.
- Practice the use of brackets, dashes and commas by providing simple sentences for children to expand with additional information. See if children are able to use all three types of parenthesis confidently.
- Check childrens' editing skills by providing sentences or a short paragraph in which parenthesis has been used incorrectly. Allow children time to edit the piece, correcting the punctuation and re-reading for sense.
- This task could be changed by providing children with a basic, simple paragraph and encouraging the use of parenthesis to rewrite the paragraph,