

# PARENTHESES AND BRACKETS

## Parentheses

Use parentheses to enclose supplemental material, minor digressions, and afterthoughts.

**Examples:**

- After taking her temperature, pulse, and blood pressure (routine vital signs), the nurse mad Becky as comfortable as possible.
- The weights James was first able to move (not lift, mind you) were measured in ounces.

Use parentheses to enclose letters or numbers labeling items in a series.

**Example:** Regulations stipulated that only the following equipment could be used on the survival mission: (1) a knife, (2) thirty feet of parachute line, (3) a book of matches, (4) two ponchos, (5) an E tool, and (6) a signal flare.

**Don't overuse parentheses.**

## Brackets

Use brackets to enclose any words or phrases that you have inserted into an otherwise word-for-word quotation.

**Example:** Audubon reports that “if there are not enough young to balance deaths, the end of the species [California condor] is inevitable.”

***Note:*** The Latin word sic in brackets indicates that an error in a quoted sentence appears in the original source.

**Example:** According to the review, Suzanne Farrell's performance was brilliant, “exceding [sic] the expectations of even her most loyal fans.”

**Do not overuse sic, since calling attention to others' mistakes can appear snobbish.**

Hacker, Diana. *The Bedford Handbook for Writers*. Boston: St. Martin's Press, 1991.