

## **Parentheses**

### **APSU Writing Center Handout**

**Parenthesis** (with an i) is singular. It refers to one curved mark: (

**Parentheses** (with an e) is plural. It refers to both curved marks together: ( )

#### **Parentheses ( )**

Parentheses are used to include supplementary information in a sentence.

This information may clarify, explain, define, or add context.

#### **Parentheses are commonly used for:**

Adding extra information

Creating narrative citations

Defining acronyms

Referring to tables or figures

Identifying items in a list

Adding brief commentary

#### **Things to Consider**

##### **1. The Sentence Must Still Make Sense**

If you remove the material inside the parentheses, the sentence should still be grammatically correct and complete.

##### **2. Comma Placement**

If a comma is needed, it goes after the closing parenthesis, not before it.

- **Example:** The meeting was delayed (due to weather), but everyone stayed.

### 3. Capitalization and Punctuation

If the text inside parentheses:

- **is not a complete sentence**, the punctuation goes outside the parentheses, and the first word is not capitalized.
- **is a complete sentence**, the punctuation goes inside, and the first word is capitalized.

#### Should Punctuation Go Inside or Outside?

##### Outside

When the information inside the parentheses is not a complete sentence, place the punctuation outside.

- **Example:** We all can use more reading materials (magazines and newspapers).
- **Example:** Our daughter has light brown eyes (they are round and soulful) and wavy hair.

##### Inside

When the material inside the parentheses is a complete sentence, place the punctuation inside.

- **Example:** We need your advice (Come the moment you get this message.) as soon as possible.
- **Example:** At my door, my boss (Isn't that something?) was asking for my help.

#### APA & MLA Citations

In both APA and MLA format, the period comes after the parenthetical citation.

- **APA Example:** (Jones, 2011, p. 131).
- **MLA Example:** (Jones 131).

When using a block quote in APA or MLA format, the period comes before the in-text citation.

## **Parentheses Examples**

### **1. Add Extra Information**

**Example:** Marilyn Monroe (born Norma Jeane Mortenson) was as iconic as her life was tragic.

**Example:** Amelia Earhart (1897-1937) was a famous aviatrix in the 20th century.

### **2. Create a Narrative Citation**

**Example:** Cooper (1993) attempted to disprove evolution in her article, "Ain't No Ape."

**Example:** Hussain and Thomas (2020) insisted that "those involved in the power plant should consider its effects on the environment" (p. 235).

### **3. Define Acronyms**

**Example:** There was political pushback during the initial proposal of NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement).

**Example:** Douglas (1988) was a strong believer in the personal learning community (PLC).

### **4. Identify Items in a List or Series**

**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?

**Example:** The University of Arendal offers courses in (a) English, (b) biology, (c) theater, and (d) baking.

## **5. Add Personal Commentary**

**Example:** The newly elected CEO said that things will be different this time. (Isn't that what they all say?)

**Example:** We saw a small, red bird (a cardinal?) in the tree.

## References

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