

Hyphens, Parentheses, Brackets, and Dashes

15v. Use a hyphen with compound numbers from twenty-one to ninety-nine.

Some words are always written with a hyphen. When you write out the numbers from twenty-one to ninety-nine, be sure to use a hyphen.

EXAMPLES This poem has twenty-eight lines. [The number *twenty-eight* is written with a hyphen.]

What will Claire do to celebrate the fact that she is turning eighty-two on Friday? [The age *eighty-two* is written with a hyphen.]

15w. Use a hyphen with the prefixes *ex-*, *self-*, *all-*, and *great-* and with the suffixes *-elect* and *-free*.

When most prefixes and suffixes are added to words, no hyphen is necessary between the word and the prefix or the suffix. Some prefixes and suffixes, such as the ones listed above, always need a hyphen.

EXAMPLES great-grandfather [The prefix *great-* always needs a hyphen.]

sugar-free [The suffix *-free* always needs a hyphen.]

fishing [The suffix *-ing* does not need a hyphen.]

unnecessary [The prefix *un-* does not need a hyphen.]

EXERCISE A Insert hyphens where they are needed in the following phrases.

Example 1. the president-elect of our club [The suffix *-elect* always needs a hyphen. The word *president-elect* needs a hyphen.]

1. an all purpose device [Does the prefix *all-* always need a hyphen?]
2. the ex mayor of the city
3. seventy six trombones
4. my great grandmother
5. only ninety five cents

15x. Use parentheses to enclose material that is added to a sentence but is not considered of major importance.

Parentheses are used to tell the reader that the information enclosed is not important but might be interesting or useful to know. Do not enclose important information in parentheses.

EXAMPLE Beethoven (1770–1827) was a German composer. [The dates in parentheses tell when Beethoven was born and when he died. These dates are in parentheses because they are not important to the point of the sentence. Instead, they add helpful, but not necessary, information. This is a very common use of parentheses.]

for **CHAPTER 15: PUNCTUATION** pages 338–42 *continued***15y.** Use brackets to enclose an explanation added to quoted or parenthetical material.

Brackets are used to add an explanation inside material in quotation marks or in material that is already inside parentheses.

EXAMPLES The witness said, “I saw him [Mr. Smith] at the store before the robbery.” [The information in brackets tells the reader who *him* is. The witness did not speak the words *Mr. Smith*. The writer added the information.]

For more information on polar bears, turn to the chart at the end of this chapter. (See page 21 for a chart [Figure 1] with more facts on polar bears.) [Figure 1 is in brackets because it has been added as a side note to information that is already in parentheses.]

15z. Use a dash to indicate an abrupt break in thought or speech.

Dashes, like parentheses, are used to set off extra information. Dashes are usually considered stronger or more forceful than parentheses. When you want the reader to notice the additional information, use dashes instead of parentheses.

EXAMPLE This is the best—I mean the very best—picture I’ve ever drawn! [The writer interrupts the sentence to add additional information. The writer wants the reader to notice the additional information.]

EXERCISE B The following sentences need parentheses, dashes, or brackets. Correct each sentence by inserting the punctuation mark named in front of each item number.

Example *brackets* 1. The coach said, “I’m happy to accept this award [the sportsmanship trophy] on behalf of the school.” [The writer added the words *the sportsmanship trophy* to the coach’s quotation, so brackets need to be around these words.]

dashes 6. Did you see that there it goes again huge owl? [Which words interrupt the sentence?]

parentheses 7. Mark Twain (his real name was Samuel Clemens 1835–1910) created the characters Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn. [Which dates have been added as a side note to information that is already in parentheses?]

brackets 8. An eyewitness said, “It the blue truck ran a red light.”

dashes 9. Elena’s mother she was born in Costa Rica is a newspaper photographer.

parentheses 10. Abraham Lincoln 1809–1865 was the sixteenth president of the United States.

parentheses 11. Jarrod’s sister second from the left in the picture lives in San Diego.

dashes 12. Underneath the porch was I’m not kidding the biggest rattlesnake I’ve ever seen!

parentheses 13. The movie was short less than one hour but seemed longer.

dashes 14. The next story we’ll be reading is please settle down by a well-known local writer.

parentheses 15. Use a pen black or blue ink only to complete the application.