

BRACKETS

Brackets are far less popular than any other punctuation marks. Hence, it is very important for everyone to get familiar with its various functions to improve one's writing skill.

To start with, let's get to know these rules!

- Brackets for clarification

If an item in a text is unclear or confusing, additional information could be added using the brackets.

Example:

1. He shook his hands with [her daughter] Maddy.
2. The reporter will have a meeting with [CEO of a popular magazine] Mr. Ernie James.
3. The year we built our company [1989] made a long winding road to us.
4. Clair would never make a deal with [her colleague] Joy.

- Brackets for unknown words

If a foreign word is used in a sentence, a translation may be used in the brackets.

Example:

1. The boss usually says "kalo proi [good morning]".
2. I tried to talk to a Chinese guy but he kept on giving me these words "wǒ bù zhīdào [I don't know]".
3. The Filipino advertisement today had these words "mahal kita [I love you]" in my head the whole day.
4. The guy from Malaysia said "selamat malam [good evening]" to me last night.

- Brackets to add the missing word

When writing, some words are unconsciously omitted by the writers. Hence, adding the missing word can be done through the use of brackets.

Example:

1. I bought [a] small book from the national bookstore.
2. [A] lady with pink ribbon waved her hands to me.
3. She should give me [an] exact copy of her documents.
4. The company booked a meeting [with] their competitors.

- Brackets for emphasis

If a writer wants to emphasize an idea in a quote by italicizing the word, the readers should be informed by adding a bracket.

Example:

1. She shortly announced that this “dish would look *presentable* [emphasis added].”
2. The interviewer highlighted that “*all of us must be vigilant* whenever we plan our travels [emphasis added].”
3. The manager asked his employees if someone “took the box and *kept it hidden* [emphasis added].”
4. The traffic enforcer made a litany, “drive *carefully and look around* all the time [emphasis added].”

- Brackets to hide objectionable content

When words are deemed inappropriate, brackets are used to cut and hide them,

Example:

1. You should give me a [expletive] good reason.
2. Don't ever try to [expletive] go away.
3. His [expletive] reason could never get us out of this situation.
4. Mary shouted so loud that [expletive] scared her guests.

- Brackets as an alternate for parenthesis within a parenthesis

In rare cases, parenthesis can be within a parenthesis. To avoid confusion, brackets are used.

Example:

1. The guy is proposing to her (they love each other [for sure!]).
2. They have been staying here for quite some time (it was like 10 years ago [1995]).
3. He usually goes out with his colleagues (from his new company [BPO]).
4. He visited lots of universities [wrote research on linguistics [2017]].

EXERCISES

- Brackets for clarification

If an item in a text is unclear or confusing, additional information could be added using the brackets.

Underline the words that need to be enclosed with brackets.

1. The man took a sheet of paper a tissue from the ground.
2. John has never met with his boss Mr. Jones.
3. He is very excited to meet his fiancée Athea.
4. Two years ago 2017, I agreed to be deployed to Iraq.
5. Cella has a good talk with her husband Jeremy.
6. The witness said: “The man the criminal punched the victim on the face.”

- Brackets for unknown words

If a foreign word is used in a sentence, a translation may be used in the brackets. You may use your phone or tablet to search for translation.

Fill in the gap with a bracket and a translation to correct the sentence structure. You can make up any translation if you don't know the real one.

1. My Filipino employee always says “walang problema [____]” whenever I give her a job.
2. I visited Thailand last year and I could still remember the words I said to the shop keepers: “ Pai SaNaamBin Tharai Krab [____].”
3. The Chinese guy asked me this: “hua? Hua? [____].”
4. The Indonesian guests could not understand my English and only said: “Baik [____].”
5. The operator kept on repeating these lines: “Anata wa tōroku sa rete imasen [____].”
6. When my Russian friend asked me, I only said: “ya ne znayu [____].”

- Brackets for emphasis

If a writer wants to emphasize an idea by italicizing the word, the readers should be informed by adding a bracket.

Underline the words that need to be emphasized based on the given direction and add the brackets to the end of the sentence [emphasis added].

1. It is not recommended. (Emphasis on the negative statement)
2. She never stole my money. (Emphasis on the negative statement)
3. The captain made his announcement reminding the passengers to “carefully stow their luggage and put on their seat belt.” (Emphasis on the main announcement)
4. The clients firmly said that the company stole their investment. (Emphasis on the accused action)
5. The police whistled and ran after the criminal whose hands were tied. (Emphasis on how the police responded)
6. He commanded the officers and asked them to run as fast as they could. (Emphasis on the command [action])

- Brackets to hide objectionable content

When words are deemed inappropriate, brackets are used to cut and hide them,

Check through the sentences and find if there are expletives. If there are, hide them through brackets.

1. Please go through that door and stop making a problem.
2. Check your order. It has all the damn items.
3. Uttering expletives made him go to the counselor’s office.
4. It’s a f***** up idea.
5. Well, his reasons were damn right.
6. Ignorance is never an excuse.

- Brackets as an alternate for parenthesis within a parenthesis

In rare cases, a parenthesis can be within a parenthesis. To avoid confusion, brackets are used.

Indicate whether a bracket is needed and add it within the parenthesis.

1. The lady in red shocked everyone (she screamed to her boyfriend).
2. His company was built two decades ago (built during when the owner’s daughter gave birth year 2000).
3. He bought a lot of snacks (his presents to his grandchildren).
4. There are few cups on the table (one is green a gift from the neighbor).
5. My parents sent me to school (a music school).
6. He went to government offices (made an end-year assessment on local governance 2018).

ANSWER KEY

- Brackets for clarification

If an item in a text is unclear or confusing, additional information could be added using the brackets.

Underline the words that need to be enclosed with brackets.

ANSWER

1. The man took a sheet of paper [a tissue]from the ground.
2. John has never met with [his boss] Mr. Jones.
3. He is very excited to meet [his fiancée] Athea.
4. Two years ago [2017], I agreed to be deployed to Iraq.
5. Cella has a good talk with [her husband] Jeremy.
6. The witness said: “The man [the criminal] punched the victim on the face.”

- Brackets for unknown words

If a foreign word is used in a sentence, a translation may be used in the brackets. You may use your phone or tablet to search for translation. You can make up any translation if you don't know the real one.

Fill in the gap with a bracket and a translation to correct the sentence structure.

ANSWERS:

1. My Filipino employee always says “walang problema [no problem]” whenever I give her a job.
2. I visited Thailand last year and I could still remember the words I said to the shop keepers: “ Pai SaNaamBin Tharai Krab [How much is this?]”
3. The Chinese guy asked me this: “hua? Hua? [flower?]”.
4. The Indonesian guests could not understand my English and only said: “Baik [good]”.
5. The operator kept on repeating these lines: “Anata wa tōroku sa rete imasen [You are not registered].”
6. When my Russian friend asked me, I only said: “ya ne znayu [I don't know].”

- Brackets for emphasis

If a writer wants to emphasize an idea by italicizing the word, the readers should be informed by adding a bracket.

Underline the words that need to be emphasized based on the given direction and add the brackets to the end of the sentence [emphasis added].

ANSWERS

1. It is *not* recommended [emphasis added].
2. She *never* stole my money [emphasis added].
3. The captain made his announcement reminding the passengers to “*carefully stow their luggage and put on their seat belt* [emphasis added].”
4. The clients firmly said that the company *stole* their investment [emphasis added].
5. The police *whistled and ran after* the criminal whose hands were tied [emphasis added].
6. He commanded the officer and asked them to *run as fast as they could* [emphasis added].

- Brackets to hide objectionable content

When words are deemed inappropriate, brackets are used to cut and hide them,

Check through the sentences and find if there are expletives. If there are, hide them through brackets.

ANSWERS:

1. Please go through that door and stop making a problem. NONE
2. Check your order. It has all the [expletive] items.
3. Uttering expletives made him go to the counselor’s office. NONE
4. It’s a [expletive] up idea.
5. Well, his reasons were [expletive] right.
6. Ignorance is never an excuse. NONE

- Brackets as an alternate for parenthesis within a parenthesis

In rare cases, a parenthesis can be within a parenthesis. To avoid confusion, brackets are used.

Indicate whether a bracket is needed and add it within the parenthesis.

ANSWERS:

1. The lady in red shocked everyone (she screamed to her boyfriend). NONE
2. His company was built two decades ago (built during when the owner's daughter gave birth [year 2000]).
3. He bought a lot of snacks (his presents to his grandchildren). NONE
4. There are few cups on the table (one is green [a gift from the neighbor]).
5. My parents sent me to school (a music school). NONE
6. He went to government offices (made an end-year assessment on local governance [2018]).