

Parenthetical Expression

Parenthetical expressions are words, phrases, or clauses that writers use to add extra information to a sentence. Parenthetical expressions are also referred to as nonessential since they are not needed to understand the basic meaning of a sentence. Think of them as interrupters, asides, and add-ons to a sentence.

When nonessential information is added parenthetically to a sentence, it is usually separated from the main sentence by commas or other punctuation. In fact there are three types of punctuation that can separate parenthetical expressions:

commas ,,
round brackets (.....)
long dashes —.....—

Look at these examples of parenthetical expressions:

- Some foods, sugar for example, are not good for us.
- Timothy, who lives near Stonehenge, goes to church regularly.
- Tara, although she comes from a hot climate, hates hot weather.
- Anthony, however, decided not to go.
- The planet closest to the sun (i.e. Mercury) has the most extreme temperature variations.
- The 70th anniversary of the D-Day landings (6 June 1944) was attended by many world leaders.
- The cheetah—the world's fastest land animal—is native to Africa.

- If they didn't understand you—a qualified teacher—how will they ever understand me?
- Of course, it is always necessary to proofread your essays.
- It is, of course, always necessary to proofread your essays.
- It is always necessary to proofread your essays, of course.

Note that in all the above cases, where the parenthetical is in the middle of the sentence, there must be a PAIR of punctuation marks—an opening mark and a closing mark. However, when a parenthetical is at the beginning or end of a sentence, we can use a single comma or a single dash. It is NOT possible to use a single bracket.

Few types of parenthetical expressions

a) Participle/adjective clauses or phrases.

Examples:

- The president, (while) speaking in an interview with BBC, said that this conflict might cost the country dearly.
- The child, frightened by the sight, came running home.
- Frightened by the sight, the child came running home.) ✗
- The child came running home, frightened by the sight.
- Eggs, when boiled, become hard.

• When boiled, eggs become hard. Eggs become hard when boiled.) ✗

✗ (Tired from the long walk, the hikers looked for somewhere to take rest.)

- The hikers, tired from the long walk, looked for somewhere to take rest.

- Marshall held onto the ball, his fingers squeezing it tightly.
- Her voice floating over the crowd, Maria awed everyone with her natural singing ability.
- Maria, her voice floating over the crowd, awed everyone with her natural singing ability.

b) Appositive: In this case, the parenthetical is an appositive, a noun or noun phrase placed in opposition to another such construction that defines or modifies the first. **Example:**

- If you, **a professional proofreader**, had trouble, how hard will it be for me?
- Mr. David, the new manager, will preside over the meeting.
- England, the defending champion, will play 3 ODIs against Bangladesh.

c) Aside: An aside is a statement that is subordinated to the sentence, often denoting an ingratiating or apologetic attitude. It might also be placed within parentheses to more clearly identify it as a trivial comment or between two dashes to signal its sudden and unexpected impact.

Example:

- Her friend, **I hesitate to say**, has betrayed her.
- This crisis, **I think**, won't go away anytime soon. (I think this crisis won't go away anytime soon.)
- I understand you have the qualifications, but, **I'm sorry to say**, we can't give you the job.
- How much do you earn, **if you don't mind me asking?**

d) Conjunctive adverbs:

Conjunctive adverbs are words that are used to connect ideas. They include, but are not limited to, besides, consequently, finally,

furthermore, for example/instance, however, in addition, in fact, as a matter of fact, instead, moreover, nevertheless, next, now, on the other hand, still, and thus.

Examples:

- The women, however, ate a bit later.
- Nevertheless, the men still ate at exactly five o'clock.

e) Contrasting expressions

Contrasting expressions are parenthetical expressions that tell the reader that you are referring to one thing and not another.

Examples:

- It is him, not his brother, who did it.
- He studies computer science, not philosophy.

f) More examples of parenthetical expressions

- You can take a taxi, or a bike, if you prefer it.
- He lives in sylhet, in Boteswar, to be precise.
- We are, in a manner of speaking, actors so often disguising ourselves to give false impressions.
- You must come and, if possible, bring your family with you.

The following two types of modifiers usually come at the end of sentences:

g) Resumptive modifier: A resumptive modifier includes within its additional detail repetition of an adjective from the sentence.

Example:

- She was exhausted, **more exhausted than she had ever been before.**
- He is punctual, **so punctual that** he has never been late in his five years' career.
- Their invention is astonishing, **astonishing in that** it is the simplest, and at the same time, most efficient.

h) Summative modifier: A summative modifier is one that summarizes an idea expressed in the sentence and then adds information about it.

Example:

- We headed toward the summit, **a goal we had anticipated accomplishing all week.**
- They learnt to skim and scan, **a technique that comes in useful in reading tests.**

Note: you can use parenthetical expressions in many different ways not mentioned here.