# Hyphens, Dashes and Brackets

- Understand when to use hyphens, dashes and brackets
- Understand ellipsis

### Hyphens

Hyphens are used to join words. You should use a hyphen:

- When two or more words are made into an adjective: e.g. *state-of-the-art* design, the *friendly-looking* dog.
- When new words are made up, for example in science fiction or humorous writing: e.g. the astronaut *laser-blasted* his way across the planet.
- When an age is made into a noun, e.g. We have a two-year-old; Two-year-old trees.
- When writing compound numbers from 21 to 99: e.g. twenty-one, ninety-nine.
- When writing double-barrelled names: e.g. Claire Houston-Brown.

#### Key Point

Hyphens join words together.



### Dashes

**Dashes** should not be confused with hyphens. You should use dashes:

- 1. When indicating a period between two points in time: e.g. 3.15-4.15, 1919-2014.
- 2. When words and phrases are dropped into sentences and are not part of the main subject.

#### Example

Fred – along with his cat, Poppy – was a frequent visitor. -

3. When adding emphasis by replacing commas.

#### Example

He knew what to do, because he was experienced.

He knew what to do – because he was experienced.

The dashes show that the words between them could be removed and the sentence would still make sense.

#### Tip

You can use dashes to add emphasis.

4. To show a change of thought.

#### Example

He wanted to do the right thing - but what was that?

### Brackets

**Brackets (parentheses)** are used to add in an aside, to add extra information, or to clarify a point. They can be used instead of commas around dropped-in clauses. This creates greater separation between the main message of the sentence and the extra information and makes the extra information seem a bit more important.

#### Example

David, because of his interest in photography, bought a new camera.

David (because of his interest in photography) bought a new camera.

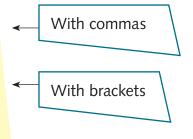
## Ellipsis

An **ellipsis** (...) is the use of three dots to signify the intentional missing out of a word or idea. It is often used to create tension.



#### Tip

If the extra information in brackets goes at the end of the sentence, then the full stop goes after the brackets.







#### Quick Test

- 1. Hyphens join words together. True or false?
- 2. Hyphens can be used instead of commas on some occasions. True or false?
- 3. Dashes join words together. True or false?
- **4.** Dashes can be used instead of commas on some occasions. True or false?
- **5.** Brackets can be used instead of commas on some occasions. True or false?

#### Key Words

- Dash
- Emphasis
- Brackets
- Parenthesis
- Ellipsis