



WRITING CENTER

(614) 688-4291 • www.cstw.osu.edu

Parentheses and Dashes

Parentheses ()

Purpose:

- Provide extra/nonessential information.
- Separate material (a word, phrase, or sentence) from the main part of the sentence.
- **De-emphasize** the importance of the material in the parentheses.

Example: Tragically, Clay Aiken (a talented singer) did not win *American Idol*.

Punctuation:

- When parenthetical information is part of the main sentence, the sentence punctuation goes **outside** the parenthesis.

Example: Many viewers complain about the excessive praise of a particular *American Idol* judge (Paula Abdul).

- When the punctuation belongs to the parenthetical information itself, the punctuation goes **inside** the parenthesis.

Example: Singers are often criticized for being “pitchy.” (A pitchy singer typically gives a poor vocal performance.)

Dashes –

Purpose:

- Similar to the function of parentheses, except dashes **emphasize** information.
- Join a phrase to the end of a sentence to add an example, illustration, or contradiction.

Example: *American Idol* is hosted by the most humorous man on earth – Ryan Seacrest.

- Insert an idea into the middle of a sentence to add an example, illustration, or contradiction.
 - The idea must be enclosed by dashes and could be lifted out of the sentence without affecting its overall sense.

Example: Channel 19 – considered by many as the home of trashy television – airs *American Idol* on Tuesday nights.