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Spotting parenthesis

Parenthesis is extra information added to a sentence that already makes sense.

1 Learn



A sentence is like a train. Couple on a **golden carriage** of extra information, and the train still runs when you take it off again. The extra information is called **parenthesis**.



Uncouple the golden carriage: **Our dog loves the beach.** It still makes sense. ✓

Worked example: find the parenthesis

Mr Hughes, our head teacher, plays the drums.

1. Look for a **pair** of brackets **( )**, dashes **– –** or commas **, ,**. Here: two commas.
2. Read the sentence **without** the words between them: *Mr Hughes plays the drums.*
3. Does it still make sense? **Yes!** So our head teacher is the parenthesis.

Flip's tip: the parenthesis is the **extra** bit, never the main part. If the sentence stops making sense when you take the words out, you've picked the wrong words.

Warm up: underline the parenthesis in each sentence.

1. The cake (a chocolate one) was gone by lunchtime.
2. My sister – who is eight – loves frogs.

Grown-ups: read the sentences aloud twice: once with the extra words, once without. Your child is listening for whether the shorter sentence still makes sense. "Parenthesis" is said pa-REN-thuh-sis.

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2 Try it together

a child and a grown-up, about 10 minutes



Golden carriage hunt

You need: a non-fiction book, magazine or leaflet from home, and a pencil.

1. Hunt for **brackets**, **dashes** or a **pair of commas** in the middle of a sentence.
2. One of you reads the sentence **with** the extra words, the other **without** them. Still makes sense? You've found parenthesis!
3. Write the extra words in the table. What did they tell the reader?

	The extra words (parenthesis)	Which marks?	What it told us
1			
2			
3			

Grown-ups: not every pair of commas is parenthesis: commas in a list (eggs, milk, bread) are different. Your "read it without" test will show this, because a list stops making sense when you take a bit out.

3 Practise

A. Underline the parenthesis in each sentence.

1. Leo's bike (a present from Gran) has a very loud bell.
2. The lighthouse – painted red and white – stood on the cliff.
3. Mia, my best friend, lives next door to me.
4. Our class trip, which was to a farm, was brilliant.

B. Rewrite each sentence **without** its parenthesis.

1. Ava (who had forgotten her coat) shivered at the bus stop.

_____

2. The old oak tree – more than 200 years old – fell in the storm.

_____

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C. Is the part in **brackets** really parenthesis? Take it out and read what is left. Ring **Yes** or **No**.

1.	Sam (my cousin) is coming to tea.	Yes	No
2.	The cat (sat) on the warm mat.	Yes	No
3.	The film (a funny one) made us all laugh.	Yes	No
4.	We bought (some apples) and a melon.	Yes	No

D. Couple on a golden carriage. Write some extra information in the gap. Then write the whole sentence with your words in **brackets**.





Challenge

Leo reads: *Mum bought apples, pears, bananas and grapes.* He says, "**pears** is parenthesis, because it's between two commas." Is he right? Use the take-it-out test to explain.

I can... Tick when you can.

- [ ] spot the extra information (parenthesis) in a sentence
- [ ] take it out and check the sentence still makes sense
- [ ] add my own extra information in brackets