

PARENTHESES, DASHES, & COLONS

Colons are used after a complete thought to introduce

- ▶ a list
These spell the South: Spanish moss, palmetto, swamp.
- ▶ a literary or long quotation that is not introduced with a verb
The book Moby Dick begins with an invitation: "Call me Ishmael."
- ▶ an explanation or illustration of the first clause (may be an independent clause, but does not have to be)
The IBM employee received a "golden handshake": he was paid to retire early.

Note: do NOT use a colon after a verb or a preposition.

Parentheses enclose words that interrupt a sentence; these words offer some clarification of the words directly in front of them by giving

- ▶ a definition
It is important to know where the cursor (the blinking underline) is when you are word processing.
- ▶ explanation
That archaeology professor is an expert on the Olmec (a pre-Columbian civilization) of Mexico.
- ▶ location
The team will play in Naples (Florida) this weekend.
- ▶ date
When I bought my computer (1986), the 3 ½" disk drive was not available.

Dashes (made by striking the hyphen key twice) also enclose words that interrupt a sentence; however, these words are used for comment or emphasis of the interrupting words rather than explanation.

- ▶ comment
He told us – I don't believe him – that he would tell the truth from now on.
- ▶ emphasis
My wallet – minus the cash – was found in a trash can.

Dashes are also used

- ▶ after a list in front of a sentence
Spanish moss, palmetto, swamp – these spell the South.
- ▶ around a list in the middle of a sentence
Three composers – Bach, Beethoven, and Brahms – represent the best in classical music.

At the appropriate spot, place either colons, dashes, or parentheses. (The punctuation already in the sentences is correct.)

1. Before you go anywhere, finish your chores the laundry, the dishes, and the vacuuming.
2. The Easter Bunny, Santa Claus, and the Tooth Fairy these were the idols of my youth.
3. The normal body temperature of a cat 101 to 102 is three degrees higher than that of its owner.
4. I suggest no, I insist that you stay for dinner.
5. A recent study revealed that people who are heavy coffee drinkers five or more cups a day suffer many more ill effects than those whose coffee intake is less.
6. He had all the signs of the flu hot and cold spells, a bad cough, and an ache throughout the entire body.
7. I did not go out with him a second time once was more than enough.
8. Yesterday at the Hamburger House my favorite place to eat, the guy who makes French fries asked me to go out with him.
9. There's the guy I'd know him anywhere who dumped trash on our front lawn.
10. One-fifth of our textbook pages 401-598 consists of footnotes and a bibliography.
11. Ellen's birthday December 27 falls so close to Christmas that she gets only one set of presents.
12. My little brother has three hobbies playing video games, racing his Hot Wheels cars all over the floor, and driving me crazy.
13. Hunting, fishing, and doing odd jobs around the house these are the activities I enjoy.
14. I'm advising you in fact, I'm telling you not to bother me again.
15. The following holiday plants are poisonous and should be kept away from children and pets holly, mistletoe, and poinsettias.
16. Fran had an excellent excuse for being late for work an early morning power failure that stopped her alarm clock.
17. He had many good qualities sincerity, honesty, and thoughtfulness yet he had few friends.