

# 1 Here's the Idea

**Parentheses ( )** enclose supplemental information in a sentence or text. **Brackets [ ]** enclose explanatory information within quoted text or within text that is enclosed in parentheses.

## Parentheses

► **Use parentheses to set off supplemental or explanatory material that is added to a sentence or text.**

Cases involving libel (pronounced LIE-bul) are rare in the age of tabloid journalism.

Here are some guidelines for punctuating parenthetical information.

| Punctuating Parenthetical Material  |   |
|---|---|
| Rules   | Example   |
| If parenthetical material occurs within a sentence, do not capitalize the first word or put a period at the end. You may, however, put a question mark or exclamation point at the end. | Though the number of cases involving libel has fallen (see chart), the number of other kinds has risen. She sued me for libel (can you believe it?) and requested an immediate hearing. |
| Never put punctuation before the opening parenthesis. If punctuation is called for, put it after the closing parenthesis.   | Sylvester Stallone (popularly called Sly), who grew up to be the muscular star of the Rocky movies, was a scrawny kid.  |
| If a parenthetical sentence stands by itself, punctuate and capitalize the sentence as you normally would.  | She sued me for libel and requested an immediate hearing. (Can you believe this?)   |

► **Use parentheses to enclose figures or letters that introduce items in a list within a sentence and to set off numerical information such as area codes.**

A person can harm the reputation of another person by three means: (1) libel, (2) slander, and (3) defamation of character.

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## Brackets

- ▶ **Use brackets to enclose an explanation or comment added to quoted material.**

She said, “This law [prohibiting the ridicule of vegetables] proves that libel cases are getting out of hand.”

- ▶ **Use brackets as parentheses inside parentheses.**

Many free-speech advocates spoke out against veggie libel laws (laws against defaming food products [see insert]).