

# Hyphens and Brackets: Top Tips

## Hyphens (clarify meaning in words)

Examples:

- Man eating lion seen prowling the woods. (A man eating a lion!)
- Man-eating lion seen prowling the woods. (A lion)

Hyphens link words, where no link originally existed: daughter-in-law, life-like, happy-go-lucky

Hyphens create compound words: burn-out, crack-down, ex-husband, semi-skimmed

Hyphens create compound numbers: Twenty-one, three-quarters, a ten-pound note

## Round brackets ( )

Round brackets (or parentheses) are used to include relevant (but not essential) information.

Example: James Dean (1931-1955) died tragically in a car crash.

Round brackets are also used to enclose details of your source for Harvard referencing. See your module handbook or the Uniskills Guide to Harvard Referencing for guidance.

## Square brackets [ ]

These are used to include your own words within a quote to make the meaning clear.

Example: Only [Miss] Smith agreed with the decision.

Example: It is important to get students in the 'right mood to think [by] gaining their attention' (Cowley, 2004:8).

If there is an error or an unconventional spelling in a direct quote you are using, write [sic] after it. Sic is Latin for 'thus' and is a way of showing that the error is not yours.

Example: 'The children did not receive [sic] any rewards for this' (Green, 2002:19). (Receive is misspelt.)

## Braces { } < >

Brace brackets {these} or angle brackets <these> should only be used in specialist texts (maths, tabulations etc.).