

Parentheses/Dashes/Slashes/Underlines/ and Italics

This is the last in our trilogy of punctuation articles. Remember we are concerned only with academic writing, which is extremely formal. Personal writing is much more casual and you don't need to worry about these rules.

parentheses--encloses material that is of minor or secondary importance to the sentence, use vary sparingly

Ex: "Since I am from Florida, I bought a winter coat before coming to Louisville (someone told me that they often have snow)."

dashes--inserts a comment or highlights material, use only in moderation

ex: "Learning Greek in J-term-who wouldn't remember that experience-was a challenge."

a sudden change in tone

Ex: "Mother's suggestions were unsolicited-although helpful."

slashes--separates alternatives, try to circumvent

Ex: "We are going to the movies and/or to dinner."

Shy far away from the slash he/she when trying to avoid gender specific language. It is usually better to rewrite the sentence.

Ex: "A student needs to study for many hours in order for him/her to earn an A."

This construction is awkward. Usually the pronoun can be left out, or the sentence can be rewritten.

underlines and italics--used for emphasis, and/or words used as words

Ex: "What I want and what I need are two different things."

"The word *bourgeois* is often used derogatorily."