

# [ Using Brackets ]

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## What are brackets?

Brackets are **symbols used to alter a word or phrase within a quotation**. They are especially helpful when you need to change something in a quote to make it fit more seamlessly into your sentence.

## Why do I need to know this?

Being able to use information from outside sources is essential for creating a good piece of analytical writing, and creating a good piece of writing is an extremely important **life skill** that you will use long after you graduate. Integrating quotations seamlessly allows your writing to flow more easily, and makes your sentences (and you) sound more **mature and educated**.

## When should I use brackets?

Brackets can be used to change a word or phrase within a sentence. You can use brackets to change do three things:

1. To change a **pronoun**
2. To change the **tense** of a verb
3. To add a word or phrase to **clarify**

Brackets cannot be used to change the meaning of a quote so that it fits into your paper. Always remember: your claim should fit your evidence, not the other way around.

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**Here are some examples** of quotations and sentences that use brackets to integrate the quotes. Each sentence will add another bracket from the last. While most sentences shouldn't need this many brackets, this example shows how one quote can benefit from many alterations.

The quote being used here is: *"I always have to pick up my brother!" Kathy complained.*"

- **Changing a pronoun**

In paragraph two, Kathy states that she "always" has "to pick up [her] brother."

- **Changing the tense of a verb**

In paragraph two, Kathy states that she "always [has] to pick up [her] brother."

- **Adding a word or phrase for clarification**

In paragraph two, Kathy states that she "always [has] to pick up [her] brother [from school]."

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**Try it out!** Below are two sentences from writers who tried to use brackets in a quotation within their own writing. After reading the sentences, try to fix the errors each writer made and explain why they misused the brackets. Once you're done, see if you can create a better version of a sentence using the quotation and brackets.

The quotation being used here is: *"In my mind, the storm had destroyed not only our home, but our family."*

1. In the text, the narrator says the "storm had [destroys] not only our home but [our] family.
2. In the final sentence of chapter four, the narrator says "in my mind, the storm [hurricane] had destroyed not only our home, but [my] family."

How would you edit these sentences? Can you come up with your own example of the proper use of brackets?