

What to do today

IMPORTANT Parent or Carer – Read this page with your child and check that you are happy with what they have to do and any weblinks or use of internet.

1. Read the first part of the poem ‘Skimbleshanks’

- How easy is it to read? Underline any tricky vocabulary. Can you practise reading so that you can find the rhythm of the poem?

2. Listen to two performances of the poem.

- Play the first part of each of these performances. Follow the words as you do. What are some of the differences between the two performances? Which do you prefer? Why?

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pLEeHj6e_Y

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EKY5ag8qhIQ>

3. Practise parentheses

Use the *Revision Card* to remind yourself about commas, brackets and dashes for parentheses. Complete *Skimbleshanks Sentences 1, 2 and 3*. They get harder, so challenge yourself to keep going!

Try these Fun-Time Extras

- Try learning some of the first part of the poem off by heart.
- Make a picture of Skimbleshanks at his railway station.
- Find out and read some more of TS Eliot’s Cat Poems. You might like to search for Macavity or Old Deuteronomy.

Skimblehanks – Part 1

There's a whisper down the line at 11.39
When the Night Mail's ready to depart,
Saying "Skimble where is Skimble has he gone to hunt the thimble?
We must find him or the train can't start."
All the guards and all the porters and the stationmaster's daughters
They are searching high and low,
Saying "Skimble where is Skimble for unless he's very nimble
Then the Night Mail just can't go."
At 11.42 then the signal's nearly due
And the passengers are frantic to a man -
Then Skimble will appear and he'll saunter to the rear:
He's been busy in the luggage van!
He gives one flash of his glass-green eyes
And the signal goes "All Clear!"
And we're off at last for the northern part
Of the Northern Hemisphere!





You may say that by and large it is Skimble who's in charge
Of the Sleeping Car Express.
From the driver and the guards to the bagmen playing cards
He will supervise them all, more or less.
Down the corridor he paces and examines all the faces
Of the travellers in the First and the Third;
He establishes control by a regular patrol
And he'd know at once if anything occurred.
He will watch you without winking and he sees what you are thinking
And it's certain that he doesn't approve
Of hilarity and riot, so the folk are very quiet
When Skimble is about and on the move.
You can play no pranks with Skimbleshanks!
He's a Cat that cannot be ignored;
So nothing goes wrong on the Northern Mail
When Skimbleshanks is aboard.

By TS Eliot

Revision Card

Parenthesis

- Parenthesis is **extra information** added into a complete sentence.
- The original sentence makes sense without it.
- The extra information can be separated using **commas, brackets or dashes**.



Skimbleshanks is indispensable to the railway.

complete sentence

Skimbleshanks, **an ever reliable character**, is indispensable to the railway.

extra added information

Commas

Commas are used often – they do not draw much attention to the extra information and hardly break up the sentence at all.



Everyone looked for Skimbleshanks around the station.

complete sentence

Everyone looked for Skimbleshanks, **the cat of the railway train**, around the station.

extra added information

Brackets

Brackets are used to draw more attention to the additional information. The reader knows that they are being told something extra.



The eyes of Skimbleshanks are always watching.

complete sentence

The eyes of Skimbleshanks (**whose attention is complete**) are always watching.

extra added information

The writer might want to draw attention to important or funny extra information.

Skimbleshanks (**who likes a drop of whisky in his tea**) never stops watching.

Dashes

Dashes are commonly used in informal writing. They break up the sentence more than commas or brackets, and therefore draw attention to the extra information.



We started to behave when we saw old Skimbleshanks coming towards us!

complete sentence

We started to behave when we saw old Skimbleshanks **—that terror of the train—** coming towards us!

extra added information

Skimbleshanks Sentences 1

- *Add information to these sentences, using parenthesis.*
- *Put the extra information in the place marked with an arrow.*
- *Choose punctuation to make your addition clear.*
- *There are suggestions (underneath) of phrases to add.*
- *Be careful, because these suggestions are in the wrong order.*

1. The train ↑ was ready at 11.39.
2. Nobody knew where Skimbleshanks ↑ had gone.
3. Everybody ↑ searched hard for him.
4. The passengers ↑ grew frantic.
5. Skimble appeared and walked ↑ to the back of the train.

Suggested phrases

sauntering calmly

who were waiting inside the train

the cat of the railway train

which was full of passengers

even the stationmaster's daughters



Skimbleshanks Sentences 2

- *Add information to these sentences using parenthesis.*
- *You will have to decide where to put the extra information.*
- *Choose punctuation to make your addition clear.*
- *There are suggestions (underneath) of phrases to add. They are in the right order.*

1. Skimbleshanks gave a flash of his eyes to set the train going.
2. The driver watched for the signal then started the journey
3. The train was travelling to the north through the night
4. Everybody respects Skimbleshanks.
5. Skimbleshanks patrols the corridors

Suggested phrases

glass-green and bright

in order to be safe

to Scotland

drivers, guards and bagmen

establishing control as he goes



Unit 4 Day 1

Skimbleshanks Sentences 3

- *Add information to these sentences, using parenthesis.*
- *You will have to decide what extra information to add and where, in the sentence, to add it.*
- *Choose punctuation to make your addition clear.*

1. Skimbleshanks can see what you are thinking.
2. Everybody stays very quiet.
3. Pranks are not allowed.
4. Ignoring Skimbleshanks is not possible.
5. Nothing goes wrong on the Northern Mail.

Make up some sentences (including parenthesis) of your own about Skimbleshanks.

Possible Answers - Skimbleshanks Sentences 1 and 2

1. The train, **which was full of passengers**, was ready at 11.39.
2. Nobody knew where Skimbleshanks, **the cat of the railway train**, had gone.
3. Everybody – **even the stationmaster's daughters** - searched hard for him.
4. The passengers (**who were waiting inside the train**) grew frantic.
5. Skimble appeared and walked, **sauntering calmly**, to the back of the train.

1. Skimbleshanks gave a flash of his eyes, **glass-green and bright**, to set the train going.
2. The driver watched for the signal (**in order to be safe**) then started the journey
3. The train was travelling to the north through the night – **to Scotland**.
4. Everybody - **drivers, guards and bagmen** - respects Skimbleshanks.
5. Skimbleshanks, **establishing control as he goes**, patrols the corridors