

Writing Guide: The Hyphen and the Dash

Hyphen

Use a hyphen (-) to join words that work together as one concept.

- **Between two or more words functioning as one adjective before a noun.**
 - Ex.: She is a hard-working executive.
 - Ex.: Professor Langella has a three-year-old daughter.
 - Ex.: The lawyer's in-your-face attitude angered the members of the jury.
- **With written forms of fractions and the numbers 21 through 99.**
 - Ex.: Approximately two-thirds of the students passed the test.
 - Ex.: Fifty-one percent of American marriages end in divorce.
- **With prefixes such as “self-” and “ex-” and suffixes such as “-elect.”**
 - Ex.: He's happy that he decided to become self-employed.
 - Ex.: Her ex-husband lives in Denver now.
 - Ex.: The mayor-elect will be sworn in later this month.

Dash

- **Use a dash (—) as an informal or dramatic replacement of a comma, colon, or semicolon.**
 - Ex.: He bought his ticket, packed his bags, and paid the cab driver—but he missed the boat.
 - Ex.: Don't ride with Hank—he's a terrible driver.
 - Ex.: I don't understand grammar—help!
- **Use dashes to set off an internal list in a sentence.**
 - Ex.: Photos of Ed's favorite jazz artists—John Coltrane, Miles Davis, and Thelonious Monk—adorned the walls.