

1 Here's the Idea

A **hyphen** (-) connects words, word elements, or the parts of a compound word. A **dash** (—) sets off an abrupt change of thought or an explanation. An **ellipsis** (. . .) shows that a word, phrase, line, or paragraph has been omitted.

Hyphens

► **Use a hyphen to divide a word at the end of a line.**

In casual speech, confidence artists are often called **scammers** and grifters.

Rules for Hyphenating at the End of a Line

Hyphenating Rule	Incorrect	Correct
Divide a word only between syllables.	gua- ranteed	guar- anteed
Make sure that at least two letters of the hyphenated word fall on each line.	nondair- y	non- dairy
Divide an already-hyphenated word at the hyphen.	self-satis- fied	self- satisfied
Do not divide a one-syllable word.	kni- ves	knives

► **Use a hyphen in compound numbers from twenty-one to ninety-nine and with fractions.**

sixty-two years **three-fourths** of a cup

► **Use a hyphen in certain compound nouns.**

self-restraint **brother-in-law** **vice-president**

► **Hyphenate a compound adjective when it comes before the noun it modifies.**

He was a **well-informed** candidate.

In general, do not hyphenate a compound adjective when it follows the noun it modifies.

During the debate, the candidate seemed **well informed**.

- ▶ Use a hyphen with the prefixes *ex-*, *self-*, *quasi-*, and *all-* and with the suffix *-elect*.

ex-officer self-made all-around president-elect

- ▶ Use a hyphen to avoid confusion or to avoid repeating a vowel or consonant. When in doubt, check a dictionary.

recreate (as opposed to *recreate*) anti-itch shell-like

STUDENT MODEL

A **self-confident** trickster duped the Junior Class. **Mayor-elect** Kim is heading an **all-out** effort to catch the con artist who talked the juniors into an **unsound** investment. With **childlike** gullibility, the class officers handed three thousand dollars to the trickster, who had promised a **tenfold** increase in only two months. Unfortunately, the company that manufactures **anti-intruder** devices never existed.

Hyphen needed to set off prefix or suffix

No hyphen needed

Hyphen needed to avoid repeating a vowel

Dashes

- ▶ Use a dash to signal an abrupt change or an idea that breaks into the thought of a sentence.

Victims of scams often do not report the crime—
embarrassment hurts more than financial loss.

- ▶ Use dashes to set off explanatory, supplementary, or parenthetical material in sentences. Note that parentheses and commas may be used for the same purpose.

Certain traits in the victim—**greed, neediness, gullibility**—make the con artist's job easier.

PROFESSIONAL MODEL

Since we aren't always at home, the Fourth [Amendment] applies not only to houses but to such places as business offices, cars, hotel rooms, and—**far-fetched though it sounds**—even to telephone booths. . . .

In most cases, the law requires that searches and seizures be made only with a warrant—**a legal document that permits such action**.

—Bernice Kohn, *The Spirit and the Letter*

Some computers or word-processing programs have the dash—also known as the em dash—as a character. If you can't find this character, type two hyphens (--).

For guidelines on using commas, dashes, and parentheses to set off explanatory material, see p. 263.

Ellipses

▶ **Use an ellipsis (also called ellipsis points) to show that one or more words have been omitted within a quoted sentence.**

An ellipsis consists of three periods preceded and followed by spaces (. . . , not ...).

“The judge raised her gavel and . . . demanded order.”

▶ **Use a period and three ellipsis points to show the following types of omissions within quoted material:**

1. omission of the last part of a sentence
2. omission of the first part of the following sentence
3. omission of an entire sentence or more
4. omission of an entire paragraph or more

LITERARY MODEL

When the magician's engagement closed there was but one person who did not believe in mesmerism and I was the one. All the others were converted but I was to remain an implacable and unpersuadable disbeliever in mesmerism and hypnotism. . . .

—Mark Twain, *The Autobiography of Mark Twain*

Ellipsis: words omitted from middle of sentence

Period and ellipsis: words omitted from last part of sentence

▶ **In fiction or informal writing, three ellipsis points may also be used to indicate that an idea or a character's voice trails off.**

Notice such a use of ellipsis points in the following cartoon.