

## DASHES AND HYPHENS

Dashes are punctuation marks (put to different lengths) which have a range of different capabilities in writing. A few capabilities are discussed below

### SINGLE DASHES AS COMMAS

Single Dashes (or En Dashes) may act as commas. To use a dash is a matter of individual style.

EX:

I need to go to the water closet-also known as the toilet.

Buy fruits-vegetables-and-meat.

Abraham Lincoln-the U.S. President-was a supporter of equality.

### SINGLE DASHES SHOW SEQUENTIAL INFORMATION

Single Dashes (or En Dashes) are used to show sequential information.

EX:

1910-2010

### SINGLE DASHES AS HYPHENS

Single Dashes (when referred to as Hyphens) are used to join words and syllables and are used to form compound adjectives, adverbs, verbs (regular, phrasal, and prepositional) and combine words with prefixes.

EX:

self-cleaning oven

twenty-four dollars

snow-bounded citizens

co-operative venture

ex-wife

well-known books

Note: Fractions are often hyphenated when spelled out.

EX:

one-fourth

three-fourths

Suspended Hyphens (sometimes called hanging hyphens or end-point hyphen) are used when the second word of the hyphenate is removed (often for the purpose of naming more than one prefix to a hyphen).

EX:

Twentieth-Century Composer (Regular Hyphenation)

Twentieth- and Twenty-First- Century Composer (Suspended Hyphenation)

Should I capitalize the second word of a hyphenated set of words? Good question.

Some scholars are mixed on this point while others never answer it. Here are our rules:

a. If the hyphenate is combined with two proper nouns, then yes (e.g., as in a name).

EX:

Michael Harper-Collins

b. If the hyphenate uses two proper nouns to form an adjective, then yes.

EX:

Hispanic-American males

c. If the hyphenate begins a sentence, then capitalize only the first word.

EX:

Well-known actors often have reprising roles.

d. If the hyphenate appears in the middle of a sentence, then no (unless the words are proper nouns).

I think that twenty-eight dollars is enough.

e. If the hyphenate is part of a title or heading, then yes.

EX:

The Well-Tempered Clavier

f. If the hyphenate is the name of a company, business, institution, or other large entity, then yes.

EX:

Tri-City Magnet Schools

#### DOUBLE DASHES AS COMMAS

Double Dashes (or Em Dashes) are used typically to separate nonessential elements which *require additional emphasis or some form of exclamation or interruption*. Consider the double dash to give much more emphasis than a comma to a nonessential element.

Double Dashes may be separated: --

Or, Double Dashes may be combined: –

EX:

Jennifer—the hot-blooded mistress—is the best character in the film.

#### DOUBLE DASHES AS SEMICOLONS

Double Dashes (or Em Dashes) may be used in place of semicolons.

EX:

Jeff is a good friend—he helped me move into my new house.

#### DOUBLE DASHES AS COLONS

Double Dashes may act as colons. They may be used to direct readers to clauses with explanations or to explain something which precedes them.

EX:

John loves dogs--he is an avid dog show attendee.  
John collects different types of dogs—show dogs, pet dogs, etc.

### TRIPLE DASHES

Triple Dashes (or Horizontal Bars) are used infrequently to introduce quoted text, working similarly to an ellipsis mark (...).

EX:

She said, "--- stay at home and don't come to the opening at all"