

THE HYPHEN: DIVIDER AND COMBINER

CORE LIST

acquaint	immediate	privilege
acquaintance	immediately	probably
category	incident	professor
comparative	incidentally	profession
conscience	intelligent	psychology
conscientious	loneliness	recommend
conscious	lonely	repetition
controversy	necessary	succeed
controversial	noticeable	success
describe	perform	useful
description	performance	useless
exaggerate	possess	using
experience	possession	
explanation	prejudice	

The hyphen [a short line (-)]* may be used *to divide* words or *to combine* them. Because exceptions modify a considerable number of the “rules” affecting the use of hyphens, only those rule generally applicable have been included here. When you are uncertain, your dictionary will resolve your doubts.

DIVIDER

As a divider the hyphen is used chiefly to break a word into syllables—especially at the end of a line. For the sake of neatness and of clarity you should try, wherever possible, to avoid such division. Occasionally, however, you may find it advantageous to syllabify rather than leave on line obviously shorter than those preceding or following. Thus, the following rules will help you to divide and conquer your problems of syllabication. You will find such knowledge especially useful for net and accurate typing.

Divide syllables according to pronunciation:

quar-tet	mid-get	pro-ceed
tire-some	hack-ney	pat-ent
mid-dle	ab-surd	
pro-mote	our-selves	

When words exceed two syllables, continue where possible to divide according to pronunciation, but strive to maintain a meaningful syllable. For example, depart-ment is better than **department**; hyper-bole is better than hy-perbole; sarsa-parilla is better than sar-sa-pa-ril-la. Try your skill at dividing the following:

* Distinguish between the hyphen (a short line) and the dash (a long mark used only in punctuation).

- dramatization _____
- happiness _____
- harbinger _____
- inextricable _____
- persecute _____
- perpendicular _____
- pretentious _____
- responsible _____
- sophistication _____
- tonsillectomy _____

Use your dictionary to check your results.

When two consonants stand together between two vowels, divide between the consonants. For example, in the word *tipple*, the vowels *i* and *e* encompass the consonants *pp*; consequently, the syllabic division occurs between the consonants—*tip-ple*. Apply this principle to the following words:

- passion _____
- sarcasm _____
- mountain _____
- million _____
- Indian _____
- running _____
- structure _____
- important _____
- pasture _____
- tripping _____

Spelling Made Simple: Avoid these pitfall in syllabication:

1. Never divide one-syllable words.

CORRECT	INCORRECT
wrong	wr-ong
right	ri-ght
which	wh-ich
breadth	bre-adth
spared	spar-ed

2. Never divide a word after a single letter.

CORRECT	INCORRECT
abroad	a-broad
enough	e-nough
alone	a-lone
among	a-mong
unite	u-nite

3. Never divide on a syllable with a silent vowel.

CORRECT	INCORRECT
passed	pass-ed
pained	pain-ed
people	peo-ple
helped	help-ed
spelled	spell-ed
paired	pair-ed

4. Wherever possible, avoid divisions that demand two-letter syllables.

CORRECT	INCORRECT
until	un-til
only	on-ly
stricken	strick-en
money	mon-ey
heaven	heav-en

Syllabify among the following words only those able to be divided if they appear at the end of a line:

buoyant	_____	criticism	_____	dwindling	_____
climbed	_____	amen	_____	idol	_____
even	_____	noisy	_____	vexed	_____
changing	_____	unite	_____	sizzling	_____
country	_____	running	_____	about	_____
losses	_____	often	_____	excessive	_____
onus	_____	passage	_____		

COMBINER

As a combiner the hyphen fuses parts into a new whole, expresses a unit idea. When words first become associated, they are generally written separately. Later the hyphen—a half-way mark—is used to join them. When the combination becomes thoroughly familiar, the tendency is to omit the hyphen and to write the word as a solid unit:

First Stage
basket ball
class room

Second Stage
basket-ball
class-room

Third Stage
basketball
classroom

down town	down-town	downtown
up town	up-town	uptown
proof reader	proof-reader	proofreader
book keeper	book-keeper	bookkeeper
dress maker	dress-maker	dressmaker
tax payer	tax-payer	taxpayer
school boy	school-boy	schoolboy
working man	working-man	workingman

Because the hyphen is a transitional mark, however, its use varies. Authorities disagree about which compounds ought to be written solid, which separate, and which hyphenated. The suggestions given below will apply to a majority of circumstances, but the best principle seems to be: When in doubt consult the current edition of a good dictionary.

Hyphenate:

1. Two or more words used as a single adjective and preceding their noun.

first-rate man	better-trained worker
iron-clad contract	well-known writer
out-of-date idea	never-to-be-forgotten experience
salt-water fishing	most-favored-nation clause
much-needed vacation	

2. Two or more words used as a single part of speech.

ne'er-do-well	go-between
hero-worship	forget-me-nots
dog-tired	goof-off
life-history	quiet-spoken
cross-reference	editor-in-chief

3. Two or more words when the last is a participle.

foul-smelling garbage	stem-wound watch
ready-made suit	L-shaped living room
interest-bearing note	war-torn nations
fun-loving boy	worm-eaten apple
hard-working girl	foreign-born citizen

4. Compounds in which the first element is *self* or *ex* (meaning “former”).

self-satisfied	ex-G.I.
ex-champion	self-hate
self-assured	ex-wife
ex-president	self-made
self-reliance	ex-student

5. Compound numbers, compound fractions, and fractions used as adjectives.
twenty-one years (compound number)
twenty-one twenty-fifths (compound fraction)
two-thirds majority (fraction used as adjective)
6. Words that would otherwise bring together:
- Three identical consonants
hall-lamp grass-seed shell-like
 - Two identical vowels
co-author pre-eminent re-echo pro-ally co-operate (note: also written cooperate)
 - A lower-case letter and a capital letter
un-American pre-Christian anti-Semitism U-boat pro-British

EXERCISE

Place the hyphen between the word requiring hyphenation.

1. His anti vivisection alienated the single minded fanatics.
2. The mop up over, the victorious leader of the opposition pledged that his government would adopt a pro United States middle road government.
3. Connecticut will turn darkness into daylight on the most heavily traveled section of its new turnpike in the hope of cutting night time accidents.
4. An all night session left the legislators weary, knee deep in unfinished business, and still lacking the two thirds majority to defeat the bill against filibustering.
5. All cargo transport planes offer dependable on time deliveries to eighty six countries and territories on all six continents. By lighter packing, lower insurance rates, less transshipment, they compete with other shipping media.