

## 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:

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\* 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.