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).
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—*tipple*. Apply this principle to the following words:

- dramatically
- happiness
- harbinger
- inextricable
- persecute
- perpendicular
- pretentious
- responsible
- sophistication
- tonsillectomy

Use your dictionary to check your results.
Spelling Made Simple: Avoid these pitfalls in syllabication:

1. Never divide one-syllable words.
   - CORRECT: wrong, right, which, breadth, spared
   - INCORRECT: wr-ong, ri-ght, wh-ich, bre-adth, spar-ed

2. Never divide a word after a single letter.
   - CORRECT: abroad, enough, alone, among, unite
   - INCORRECT: a-broad, e-nough, a-lone, a-mong, u-nite

3. Never divide on a syllable with a silent vowel.
   - CORRECT: passed, pained, people, helped, spelled, paired

4. Wherever possible, avoid divisions that demand two-letter syllables.
   - CORRECT: until, only, stricken, money, heaven
   - INCORRECT: un-til, on-ly, strick-en, mon-ey, heav-en

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

- buoyant ____________
- climbed ____________
- even ____________
- changing ____________
- country ____________
- losses ____________
- onus ____________
- criticism ____________
- amen ____________
- noisy ____________
- unite ____________
- running ____________
- often ____________
- passage ____________
- dwindling ____________
- idol ____________
- vaxed ____________
- sizzling ____________
- about ____________
- excessive ____________

**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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First Stage</th>
<th>Second Stage</th>
<th>Third Stage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>basket ball</td>
<td>basket-ball</td>
<td>basketball</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>class room</td>
<td>class-room</td>
<td>classroom</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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
   - iron-clad contract
   - out-of-date idea
   - salt-water fishing
   - much-needed vacation
   - better-trained worker
   - well-known writer
   - never-to-be-forgotten experience
   - most-favored-nation clause

2. Two or more words used as a single part of speech.
   - ne’er-do-well
   - hero-worship
   - dog-tired
   - life-history
   - cross-reference
   - go-between
   - forget-me-nots
   - goof-off
   - quiet-spoken
   - editor-in-chief

3. Two or more words when the last is a participle.
   - foul-smelling garbage
   - ready-made suit
   - interest-bearing note
   - fun-loving boy
   - hard-working girl
   - stem-wound watch
   - L-shaped living room
   - war-torn nations
   - worm-eaten apple
   - foreign-born citizen

4. Compounds in which the first element is self or ex (meaning “former”).
   - self-satisfied
   - ex-champion
   - self-assured
   - ex-president
   - self-reliance
   - ex-G.I.
   - self-hate
   - ex-wife
   - self-made
   - 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:
   a. Three identical consonants
      hall-lamp grass-seed shell-like
   b. Two identical vowels
      co-author pre-eminent re-echo pro-ally co-operate (note: also written cooperate)
   c. 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.