



## Hyphens

Hyphens are primarily used to establish clarity. The following circumstances typically require the use of a hyphen.

- Spelling out compound numbers  
Ex: *Lou ate sixty-seven jelly beans.*
- Distinguishing between two words with the same spelling.  
Ex: *Jon must recover (find) the stereo speakers. (v.) Jon must re-cover (repair) the stereo speakers.*
- Forming compound adjectives  
(combining two adjectives or an adverb and an adjective to describe a noun).  
Ex: *Michael has the autograph of a well-known actor.*
- Spelling out fractions  
Ex: *He painted two-thirds of the room.*
- Dividing a word at the end of a line  
Ex: *A huge dog came running toward him.*
- Connecting a series of numbers or dates  
Ex: *Read pages 9-30; they cover American history from 1920-29.*
- Connecting a prefix to a number or a capital letter  
Ex: *Michael's political views prove that he is pro-American.*  
*Color television was introduced post-1950.*
- Connecting prefixes to words that begin with the same letter the prefix ends with  
Ex: *The paper failed to submit, so a re-entry was necessary.*  
*Shannon's ideas for the project were co-opted by her classmates.*
- Connecting invented words or long phrases used as adjectives  
Ex: *Sue has a holier-than-thou attitude.*
- Using suspended compounds  
Ex: *The couple wanted a one- or two-year lease on the apartment.*
- Using "ex-" and "self-"  
Ex: *Rita spoke to her ex-husband yesterday.*  
*Emily has a lot of self-pity.*

Information adapted from McKernan, John. *The Writer's Handbook*. 2nd ed. New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1979. Print.