Hyphens and Dashes
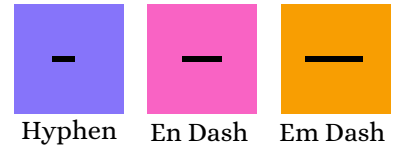
Hyphens and dashes can be used to **enhance academic writing, clarify**, and **add style** to papers. It is important to distinguish these different kinds of punctuation and the situations to use them.

Hyphen   En Dash   Em Dash

Hyphens

Hyphens (-) are used to join two words to indicate a combined meaning. Hyphens can be found to the right of "0" on a Mac and HP keyboards. The following are instances and examples of hyphen usage:

- **Compound Words**: Use a hyphen to join two or more words used to describe a noun as a single adjective .
  - Example: "A study examined the sleeping patterns of first-year undergraduate students." First-year is hyphenated to serve as an adjective describing the noun, (i.e. student).
- **Compound Numbers**: Use a hyphen to join numbers when used as an adjective, not when used as a noun.
  - "Two-thirds majority voted for the amendment." Numbers here are hyphenated because it is used as an adjective.
- **Clarification**: Use a hyphen to clarify the meaning of words and phrases.
  - "She was ready to re-sign." Re-sign is hyphenated to clarify someone is signing something again, rather than resigning from a position.
- **Prefixes and Suffixes**: Use hyphens to add prefixes and suffixes.
  - "The game happened in mid-January." "Mid" is a prefix applied to "January."
  - "The interviewer then asked president-elect Barack Obama about the economy." "Elect" is a suffix applied to "president."

En Dashes vs. Em Dashes

En Dash (–)	Em Dash (—)
- Short dash, length of a capital "N" - Used to show range Keyboard Shortcuts: Mac: Option + Hyphen Windows PC: ALT + 0150	- Long dash, length of a capital "M" - Used for emphasis and pauses Keyboard Shortcuts: Mac: Option + Shift + Hyphen Windows PC: ALT + 0151

Hyphens and Dashes (continued)

En Dashes

En dashes (–) are used to show a range. The following are instances and examples of en dash usage:

- **Joining Numbers**: Use an en dash to connect numbers, times, years, etc.
  - "Read from pages 1–10."
  - "The study surveyed users from 2000–2010."
  - "The writing center is open from 9:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m.
- **Joining Dates**: Use an en dash to join date and month ranges.
  - "The writing center is open from Monday–Friday."
  - "The semester is from August–December."

Em Dashes

Em dashes (—) are typically used for stylistic emphasis. The following are instances and examples of em dash usage:

- **Changes or Breaks**: Use an em dash to indicate a change in direction when writing or a break in a thought/discussion.
  - "'I thought that was the right thing to do,' Anna said. 'That was—before I found out what really happened.'
  - "When I am writing, I tend to use stylistic pauses—such as what I am doing now—to indicate a change or break in thought."
- **Comma or Parentheses**: Use an em dash to bracket off thoughts while emphasizing parenthetical material.
  - "UNC Charlotte—founded in 1946—was officially integrated into the University of North Carolina school system in 1965."
- **Definition**: Use an em dash to introduce a definition of a word, phrase, or concept.
  - "Kimberlé Crenshaw coined the term *intersectionality*—referring to the different connections, or intersections, of an individual's identity that contribute to their unique perspectives—in her 1989 essay 'Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Anti-discrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics.'"
- **Examples**: Use an em dash to introduce an example or explanation of material.
  - "She enjoys several different outdoor sports—namely, snowboarding, rock climbing, and archery."
- **Epigraphs and Quotes**: Use an em dash to cite the work of an author that is not included in the main text, such as epigraphs or blurbs.
  - "'That which does not kill us makes us stronger.' —Friedrich Nietzsche"