

# The Hyphen

When do we use a hyphen? This can be a complicated question, even for professional writers. Consider the following:

- Compound words. These words are more a matter of spelling than punctuation. Consult the dictionary to determine how to treat a compound word. If the compound word is not in the dictionary, treat it as two words.

*water-repellent, waterproof, water table*

- Use a hyphen to connect two or more words functioning together as an adjective before a noun.

*newspaper-wrapped fish, well-known candidate*

- Hyphenate the written form of fractions and of compound numbers from twenty-one to ninety-nine.

*one-fourth, sixty-seven*

- Use a hyphen with the prefixes *all-*, *ex-*, and *self-* and with the suffix *-elect*.

*self-help, President-elect*

- A hyphen is used in some words to avoid ambiguity or to separate awkward double or triple letters.

*re-creation vs. recreation, anti-intellectual, cross-stitch*

- If a word must be divided by the end of a line, divide it correctly. Divide words between syllables; never divide a one-syllable word. When dividing a compound word at the end of a line, either make the

break between the words that form the compound or put the whole word on the next line.

- To divide long e-mail and Internet addresses (URLs), do not use a hyphen. Break an email address after the @ symbol or before a period. Break a URL after a colon, a slash, or a double slash or before a period or other punctuation mark.