

EM DASH:

MEANING AND MAIN USES

 A strong pause that adds clarity and emphasis 

1 ADDING EXTRA INFORMATION



She visited her dream city—Rome.

- Adds an explanation or final detail

2 SHOWING AN INTERRUPTION



“I was about to explain—”

- Shows speech stopping suddenly

3 CREATING EMPHASIS



There was only one answer—**no**.

- Makes the ending stronger

4 REPLACING OTHER MARKS



Commas

The road, narrow and uneven,
was dangerous.



Parentheses

The road (narrow and uneven)
was dangerous.



Em dashes

The road—narrow and uneven—
was dangerous.



Em dashes make inserted information
more noticeable.



— USE THE EM DASH — CORRECTLY

— • Choose the right structure and avoid overuse • —

1 EM DASH OR COLON?

EM DASH	vs	COLON
		
Strong or surprising		Organized and expected
She needed one thing—time.		She needed one thing: time.



Both can introduce information, but their tone is different.

2 SPACING CONVENTIONS

- ✓ **American style** The result —although surprising— was correct.
- ✓ **Some British styles** The result — although surprising — was correct.
- ✗ **Avoid mixed spacing** The result —although surprising— was correct. ✗



Choose one spacing style and stay consistent.

3 COMMON OVERUSE



Too Many Dashes



The manager—who arrived late— entered—without speaking.



The manager, who arrived late, entered without speaking.



Not for Simple Lists



We bought bread—milk—eggs—and fruit.



We bought bread, milk, eggs, and fruit.



Use a Pair in the Middle



My sister—who lives abroad is visiting.



My sister—who lives abroad—is visiting.



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