

# USE HYPHENS WITHOUT CONFUSION

Numbers, ages, nouns, and dashes



## 1 NUMBERS

Hyphenate numbers from **twenty-one** to **ninety-nine**.



**twenty-one**



**forty-five**



**ninety-nine**



## 2 AGES



a **six-year-old** child



The child is **six years old**.



a **six-years-old** child



Use hyphens before a noun, not after it.

## 3 HYPHENATED NOUNS



**mother-in-law**

**mothers-in-law**



**runner-up**

**runners-up**



**a follow-up**

**follow up**  
tomorrow



Nouns may be hyphenated; verbs are often open.

## 4 HYPHEN OR DASH?



**Hyphen**  
joins words

**part-time** job



**En dash**  
shows ranges

**Monday–Friday**



**Em dash**  
adds a break

I opened the door—  
and stopped.

### COMMON ERRORS

two hour meeting ❌



**two-hour** meeting ✅

seven-years-old ❌



**seven years** old ✅

part - time ❌



I opened the door—  
and stopped.



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# HYPHEN RULES IN ENGLISH

Join related words clearly and correctly

 Words That Work Together

## 1 COMPOUND WORDS

**CLOSED**



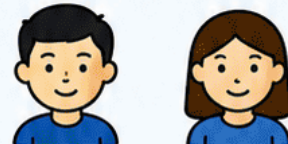
notebook

**OPEN**



post office

**HYPHENATED**



mother-in-law



Compound spellings are not always the same.

## 2 BEFORE A NOUN

a ten-minute break



a ten minute break



• a well-written report

• a full-time position



Hyphenate connected words before a noun.

## 3 NO HYPHEN AFTER -LY

a highly-skilled worker



a highly skilled worker



Adverbs ending in -ly do not need hyphens.

## 4 PREFIXES

Usually joined

- rewrite
- unhappy
- prepaid



Usually hyphenated

- self-control
- ex-manager
- anti-American



**re-sign**  
= sign again

vs

**resign**  
= leave a job



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