

Hyphens: to hyphenate or not to hyphenate?

What's the difference between a slow-moving van, a slow moving van, and a slowly moving van?

Hyphenate compound adjective BEFORE the noun it describes.

My two-year-old niece is adorable.

If a 40-foot-tall tree falls in the forest, does it make a sound?

DO NOT hyphenate a compound adjective AFTER the noun.

My niece is two years old.

The tree that fell was 40 feet tall.

SVHS currently has a paper-only recycling program. "Paper-only" explains what type of recycling we do. However, if *the recycling program is for paper only*, no apostrophe is needed because the words in question come AFTER the noun.

ALWAYS hyphenate multi-word verb phrases before AND after the noun.

the mind-blowing experience/the experience was mind-blowing

the cutting-edge technology/the technology was cutting-edge

take a web-based course/take a course that is web-based

Hyphenate a prefix before a proper noun or number.

Post-1960s, Un-American, Pre-Martian invasion

Hyphenate a prefix when the last letter of the prefix is the same as the first letter of the root word.

Pro-octopus, Anti-igloo, Re-educate, (cooperate is an exception)

Only hyphenate the prefix "re-" if not hyphenating it will create a different word (and confusion).

You re-press those wrinkled pants, but you repress your childhood.

Please re-sort the mail before you go on your vacation to the resort.

Can you re-cover the armchair you recovered from the fire?

Other words: recreate, resign, resent, remark, reserve, etc.

Hyphenate a single letter from the root word.

x-ray, D-list, t-shirt

If you write out numbers (either in MLA style or in a check made out to me), hyphenate 21-99 (except multiples of 10) and fractions.

thirty-three, fifty-five hundred, eighty-two thousand, one-half, four-fifths.

Hyphenate ALL uses of the prefixes ex-, self-, all-, semi- and the suffix -elect.

Mr. Kelliher doesn't know about my five ex-husbands.

I don't like driving next to a semi-truck.

The Wizard of Oz is all-knowing. Pay no attention to the man behind the curtain.

Hyphenate the words when they create a multi-word noun.

My niece is pretty smart for a three-year-old.

Your parents would freak if you were dating a 20-year-old.

Do not hyphenate an adverb that ends in -ly.

Cancel the previously scheduled meeting.

Hand wash the delicately crocheted lace.

DO hyphenate an adverb that does NOT end in -ly with the adjective.

well-worn

Don't neglect suspended hyphens.

Instead of: This class is full of 17-year-olds and 18-year-olds.

Less repetitive: This class is full of 17- and 18-year-olds.