

Dash

A dash is a punctuation mark that is similar in appearance to a hyphen or minus sign but longer. It indicates added emphasis, a pause or break, a missing letter or word, or an afterthought. They are informally used in place of colons, commas and brackets.

Two types of Dash:

1. En-dash (–)
2. Em-dash (—)

The En Dash

- Use a dash indicating a span of dates, time, or numbers. It may replace “and” or “to.”

Example:

1. The teacher told us to review units 11–18 for the test.
2. We regularly hold meetings every Tuesday, 4p.m.–7p.m.
3. The Zhou dynasty (1046–256 BC) supplanted the Shang, and introduced the concept of the Mandate of Heaven to justify their rule.
4. This toy is not suitable for ages 3–5.

However, when the expressions “from” and “between” are used in a sentence, do not use an en-dash.

The festival runs from July 3rd to July 8th.

A massive riot in the city occurred between 1987 and 1991.

- Use the en dash to report scores or results

Example:

1. The class voted 2–3 to uphold the decision.
2. Paradise has only played one other game to date, losing 7–1 to the Strikers of C.B.S.
3. . . . Feildians Green Sleeves, grab a 1–0 lead, . . .
4. The final vote tally Thursday was 231–199, with six Democrats voting against the bill and three Republicans voting for it

- Use the en dash to show relationships and connections

Example:

1. We have a good mother–daughter relationship.
2. Cheyne–Stokes respiration is an abnormal pattern of breathing . . .
3. The Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth became divided among Catholics, Protestants, Orthodox, Jews and a small Muslim population.
4. I found a website where you can book cheaper Vancouver–Ontario flights.

- Compound adjectives

The en dash is often used in place of a hyphen when one or both elements is itself an open compound or a hyphenated compound

Example:

1. A nursing home–home care policy (a policy about the nursing home and home care).
2. This article is biased against non–English-native teachers.
3. The pre–Civil War years, or the “antebellum years” were among the most chaotic in American history . . .

The Em Dash

1. Use an Em Dash or a pair of Em Dashes in place of commas for better readability and emphasis.

Example:

1. The food—which was delicious—reminded me of home.
2. I called Mr. Murray—my son’s swimming coach—at school yesterday.
3. Four of us—Nina, Selena, Shawn, and I—went to the beach last week.
4. The question words—who, what, when, where, why, and how—are often very confusing to foreign language learners

2. Use an Em dash in place of parentheses.

Example:

1. Three alkali metals—sodium, potassium, and lithium—are the usual substituents.
2. When an en dash is unavailable in a particular character encoding environment—as in the ASCII character set—there are some conventional substitutions.
3. Please call my secretary—Alice Kim—on Monday.
4. While I was shopping—window shopping, actually—I ran into an old schoolmate.

3. Use an Em Dash in place of a colon.

Example:

1. Red and white—these are the colors of the Japanese flag.
2. There’s only one rule in this house—respect others.
3. I love all kinds of music except—rao.
4. Reports, photocopies, groceries, cleaning—there’s so much to do but little time!

4. Use an Em Dash to indicate interruption or to signal abrupt change

Example:

1. I have something to tell you—no, never mind.
2. “You’re kidding—”
3. “It was amazing! We even saw—

4. Okay, I'll do it—or you do it.

5. Use an Em Dash to indicate missing portions (multiple em dashes)

Example:

1. It was alleged that K—— threatened her.
2. She hesitated for a moment. Then, he shouted, "Do it or I'll ——".
3. I heard my 7-year old saying the f—— word.
4. The offender, ——, was a notorious juvenile delinquent.

6. Use an Em Dash to set off words and phrases or after an independent clause

Example:

1. A penny saved is a penny earned. — Benjamin Franklin (attribution, inline quote)
2. Spring is passing.
The birds cry, and the fishes fill
With tears on their eyes.
—Matsuo Basho
(attribution, block quote)
3. —Ah Jake! Ms. Johnson exclaimed. How you've grown to such a fine lad!
(Quotation mark-like use)
4. The pre-Civil War years (1820–1860, or the “antebellum years”) were among the most chaotic in American history—a time of significant changes that took place as the United States came of age. (after an independent clause)

EXERCISES

A dash is a punctuation mark that is similar in appearance to a hyphen or minus sign but longer. It indicates added emphasis, a pause or break, a missing letter or word, or an afterthought. They are informally used in place of colons, commas and brackets.

The En Dash

1. Use a dash indicating a span of dates, time, or numbers. It may replace “and” or “to.” However, when the expressions “from” and “between” are used in a sentence, do not use an en-dash.

Use dashes where they are needed in the following sentences.

1. For the quiz, study pages 55 68.
2. The shop is open on Sundays, 10:30a.m. 3:30p.m.
3. Napoleon conquered most of Italy in the name of the French Revolution in 1797 99.
4. The Qing dynasty (1644 1911) was the last imperial dynasty in China.
5. There will be 50 70 people at the party.

2. Use the en dash to report scores or results

Use dashes where they are needed in the following sentences.

1. Ben beat Charles 49 47 in the final election.
2. The Green team grabs a 2 1 lead versus the Red team.
3. The result shows that group A got a higher total score than that of group B, 116 93.
4. The Mariners won the game versus Rockets at 23 15.
5. The members voted 5 2 to uphold the decision.
6. At 11:55p.m., the Democratic party won the election at 1,400 2,562.

3. Use the en dash to show relationships and connections

Use dashes where they are needed in the following sentences.

1. There has been an issue concerning the US China trade war.
2. Man woman relationship has become blurred in this scenario.
3. The train from Tokyo Osaka takes about two hours.
4. The massive invasions of the Korean Peninsula during the Goguryeo Sui War failed disastrously . . .
5. I've got a Bangkok Dubai London flight tomorrow.

4. Compound adjectives

The en dash is often used in place of a hyphen when one or both elements is itself an open compound or a hyphenated compound

Should you put a hyphen or an en dash between the underlined compound words?

Write A for hyphen and B for en dash

1. Pulitzer Prize winning novel. _____
2. The pre World War II era. _____
3. A pro-LGBT anti-LGBT debate. _____
4. I like a Mata Hari esque female figure. _____

5. I'd like a sugar free soda. _____
6. The school home connection. _____

The Em Dash

7. Use an Em Dash or a pair of Em Dashes in place of commas for better readability and emphasis.

Replace the commas with an em dash and rewrite the sentences.

1. The drink, lemon soda, reminds me of home.
2. I called Ms. Madison, my daughter's homeroom teacher, about her Math homework.
3. Only two of us in the group, Michael and I, passed the test.
4. I thank everyone for the effort they have put into realizing this project, you're all indeed exceptional.
5. Let's plan the next four steps, we will brainstorm ideas, delegate the tasks, run the program, and evaluate the entire project's experimental result.
6. It's that time of year again, New Year's Day.

8. Use an Em dash in place of parentheses.

Replace the colons with an em dash and rewrite the sentences.

1. Have you met Ashley Norris (the best friend I've ever had)?
-

2. I wish you could visit Vietnam (my other country) and second home.
-

3. I told him I've never been to this place (I'm lying, though) and he believed it.
-

4. Mary, the town's mayor (who is also a lawyer) is a family friend.
-

5. The day after tomorrow (my last day of work, yay!) is almost here.
-

6. I met Kate (the new girl in school) last week at the school welcome party.
-

9. Use an Em Dash in place of a colon.

Replace the colons with an em dash and rewrite the sentences.

1. Cars, homes, businesses: they were destroyed everywhere in the tsunami.
-

2. _____ We stopped in three cities: Newcastle, Sydney, and Canberra.
-

3. _____ Red, white and blue: these are the colors of the US flag.
-

4. _____
I only want you to remember one thing: I will always be here for you.

5. _____
Three things that are constant in life: Change, Choice, and Principles.

6. _____
English, science, math, social studies: they're all boring subjects to me.

10. Use an Em Dash to indicate interruption or to signal abrupt change

Use an Em Dash to indicate missing portions (multiple em dashes)

Write A if the use of Em Dash indicates an interruption/abrupt change, and write B if it indicates a missing portion.

1. The captives were forbidden to mention _____'s name. _____
2. I—I—I didn't mean to do it. _____
3. Mr. Miller said, "This is it! We finally found the treasure! But, wait—." _____
4. "See you on the other side, M——!" _____
5. Oh, no—seriously? What have you— _____
6. I can't read this old manuscript very well. I think it says, _____

"To my beloved_____, I have _____ home and all of you.
Will you and H____n_____ ever forgive me?"

11. Use an Em Dash to set off words and phrases or after an independent clause

Use em dashes where they are needed in the following sentences.

1. "Furthermore, a scientific conclusion is based on the past, i.e., previous studies that lead to conclusions."
(after an independent clause)

2. _____ Ned always loved playing soccer. I often go with him to the stadium to watch the games.

So do I! I love playing and watching soccer games.

Oh, you do. We can go watch a game together sometime.

That's a great idea! (dialogue)

3. "Those who dare to fail miserably can achieve greatly." _____ John F. Kennedy (inline quote, attribution)

4. He gave us bags of fruits all of which were bought from a poor farmer to show support for local agriculture.
(after an independent clause)

5. Mastering the art of *wabi-sabi* is hard because what sets it apart from other forms of art is the focus on imperfection that is, beauty in imperfection. (after an independent clause)

6. "You must be the change you wish to see in the world." Gandhi (inline quote, attribution)

Answer Key

1. Use dashes where they are needed in the following sentences.

1. For the quiz, study pages 55–68.
2. The shop is open on Sundays, 10:30a.m.–3:30p.m.
3. Napoleon conquered most of Italy in the name of the French Revolution in 1797–99.
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3. Use dashes where they are needed in the following sentences.

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7. Man–woman relationship has become blurred in this scenario.
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6. I’ve got a Bangkok–Dubai–London flight tomorrow.

4. Should you put a hyphen or an en dash between the underlined compound words?

Write A for hyphen and B for en dash

- | | |
|--|--------------|
| 7. Pulitzer <u>Prize winning</u> novel. | <u> B </u> |
| 8. The <u>pre World</u> War II era. | <u> B </u> |
| 9. A <u>pro-LGBT anti-LGBT</u> debate. | <u> B </u> |
| 10. I like a Mata <u>Hari esque</u> female figure. | <u> A </u> |
| 11. I’d like a <u>sugar free</u> soda. | <u> A </u> |
| 12. The <u>school home</u> connection. | <u> B </u> |

The Em Dash

1. Replace the commas with an en dash and rewrite the sentences.

1. The drink—lemon soda—reminds me of home.
2. I called my Ms. Madison—my daughter’s homeroom teacher—about her Math homework.
3. Only two of us in the group—Michael and I—passed the test.
4. I thank everyone for the effort they have put into realizing this project— you’re all indeed exceptional.
5. Let’s plan the next four steps—we will brainstorm ideas, delegate the tasks, run the program, and
evaluate the entire project’s experimental result.
6. It’s that time of year again—New Year’s Day.

2. Replace the colons with an em dash and rewrite the sentences.

1. Have you met Ashley Norris—the best friend I've ever had?
2. I wish you could visit Vietnam—my other country—and second home.
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4. Mary, the town's mayor—who is also a lawyer—is a family friend.
5. The day after tomorrow—my last day of work, yay!—is almost here.
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3. Red, white and blue—these are the colors of the US flag.
4. I only want you to remember one thing—I will always be here for you.
5. Three things that are constant in life—Change, Choice, and Principles.
6. English, science, math, social studies—they're all boring subjects to me.

4. Write A if the use of Em Dash indicates an interruption/abrupt change, and write B if it indicates a missing portion.

1. The captives were forbidden to mention ——'s name. B
2. I—I—I didn't mean to do it. A
3. Mr. Miller said, "This is it! We finally found the treasure! But, wait—. A
4. "See you on the other side, M——!" B
5. Oh, no—seriously? What have you— A
6. I can't read this old manuscript very well. I think it says, B
 "To my beloved——, I have —— home and all of you.
 Will you and H——n—— ever forgive me?"

5. Use dashes where they are needed in the following sentences.

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 (after an independent clause)
2. —Ned always loved playing soccer. I often go with him to the stadium to watch the games.
 —So do I! I love playing and watching soccer games.
 —Oh, you do. We can go watch a game together sometime.
 —That's a great idea! (dialogue)
3. "Those who dare to fail miserably can achieve greatly." —John F. Kennedy
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5. Mastering the art of *wabi-sabi* is difficult even for the most skillful artist; What sets it apart from other forms of art is its focus on imperfection—that is, beauty in imperfection. (after an independent clause)
6. "You must be the change you wish to see in the word." —Gandhi (inline quote, attribution)

