

Dashes and Hyphens

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The proper use of dashes and hyphens gives your printed materials a polished and professional look. Each has its own unique writing application. Dashes are used to separate words or phrases. Hyphens are used to connect words or parts of words. Writers, designers and print buyers should know how to recognize and use them correctly.

How to Use Them

EM dashes (—) are equal in length to the width of the capital letter "M." This width is also relative to the font that is being employed. Hence, an EM dash in a condensed type face will be shorter than an EM dash in an expanded font. Use an EM dash when you want to separate two different thoughts within the

same sentence. E.g., She was a hopeless romantic—ever since she saw *Gone with the Wind* at the age of 17.

EN dashes (–) are equal in length to the width of the capital letter "N." Their physical width is also relative to the font being used. Use an EN dash to indicate a duration, such as dates, times or academic grades. Think of an EN dash as a substitute for the word "through." E.g., Festival events will

run from July 30–August 7. The store is open on alternate Sundays from 1–9 p.m. High school grades 10–12 will be given final exams next week.

Hyphens (-) are used to connect unrelated words and create a new meaning. E.g., Toner-based systems cannot compete with fine offset printing. Three-year-olds should be limited to a small amount of milk and cookies. Hyphens are also connectors when a word is divided at the end of a line. Always divide words between two syllables.

Where to Find Them

Type "alt 0 151" on your PC keyboard for an EM dash. Type "option + shift + hyphen" on your MAC keyboard.

Type "alt 0 150" on your PC keyboard for an EN dash. Type "option + hyphen" on your MAC keyboard.

Hyphens have their own key on both PCs and MACs. It is the key to the right of the number zero (0).



Style guides such as the *Chicago Manual of Style* or the *AP Style Guide* are excellent sources for punctuation guidance. Both are available in print or by subscription on-line. After perfecting your manuscript and layout, call us!

We can make your print marketing shine!

269-329-0022 • 800-968-4726 • www.howardprinting.com
Kalamazoo, Michigan