

USING THE HYPHEN

“If you take hyphens seriously, you will surely go mad” (Oxford Guide, quoted in Eats, Shoots and Leaves)

1. Use a hyphen to join two or more words serving as a single adjective before a noun:

a one-way street
chocolate-covered peanuts
well-known author

However, when compound modifiers come after a noun, they are not hyphenated:

The peanuts were chocolate covered.
The author was well known.

2. Use a hyphen with compound numbers:

forty-six
sixty-three
Our much-loved grandmother was sixty-three years old.

3. Use a hyphen to avoid confusion or an awkward combination of letters:

re-sign a petition (but resign from a job)
semi-independent (but semiconscious)
shell-like (but childlike)

4. Use a hyphen with the prefixes *ex-* (meaning *former*), *self-*, *all-*; with the suffix *-elect*; between a prefix and a capitalized word; and with figures or letters:

ex-husband
self-assured
mid-September
all-inclusive
President-elect
anti-American
T-shirt
pre-war
mid-1980s
mass-produced
self-conscious.