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\defaulthyphenchar   [⟨*number*⟩ parameter]

When TEX reads the metrics file for a font in response to a \font command, it sets the font's \hyphenchar to \defaulthyphenchar. If the value of \defaulthyphenchar is not in the range 0–255 when you load a font, TEX won't hyphenate any words in that font unless you override the decision by setting the font's \hyphenchar later on. Plain TEX sets \defaulthyphenchar to 45, the ASCII code for '-'.

Example:

```
  \defaulthyphenchar = '-
     % Assume '-' is the hyphen, unless overridden.
  \defaulthyphenchar = -1
     % Don't hyphenate, unless overridden.
```