

Hyphen

A hyphen is a small horizontal line, such as given in these brackets (-), which is used between parts of a compound name or word, or between syllables of words at the end of a [sentence](#) or line. Hyphens serve to remove confusion from sentences, and to combine multiple words to form a single meaning. For instance, in the sentence, “Lord Emsworth belonged to the people-like-to-be-left-alone-to-amuse-themselves-when-they-come-to-a-place school of hosts.” (*Something Fresh* by P.G. Wodehouse) The use of hyphens has combined all of these words into a single word for these sorts of people.

Characteristics of Hyphen

If a compound [adjective](#) comes before the noun, they are hyphenated – such as,

“A blue-colored shirt”

If a compound adjective comes after the noun, there is no hyphen – such as,

“My shirt is blue colored.”

The hyphen is omitted with such compound adjectives as “the sales tax reform resolution,” as well as adjectives preceded by adverbs that end in “-ly” – such as,

“An oddly presented speech”

Common Use of Hyphen

I am searching for a cat-friendly.

A well-known singer is performing.

The shopkeeper erected a 10-foot-high

She bought it during a blue-light

Examples of Hyphens in Literature

Example #1: *Taylor’s Weekend Gardening Guide to Garden Paths* (by Gordon Hayward)

“Along the front of the wall she created a ten-foot-wide sloping garden, which met the final twenty feet of lawn that ran out to the sidewalk.”

In this example, the author has employed a compound word with three words, “ten-foot-wide,” using hyphens to join them.

Example #2: *The chronicles of Narnia* (by C.S. Lewis)

“This story is about something that happened to them when they were sent away from London during the war because of the air-raids ... He himself was a very old man with shaggy white hair which grew over most of his face as well as on his head, and they liked him almost at once; but on the first evening when he came out to meet them at the front door he was so odd-looking that Lucy (who was the youngest) was a little afraid of him ... “

There are two hyphens in this excerpt. The first one is “air-raid,” and the second one is “odd-looking.” Hyphens join these words to remove ambiguity in their use.

Example #3: *Ode to nightingale* (by John Keats)

“One minute past, and Lethe-wards had sunk:
‘Tis not through envy of thy happy lot,
But being too happy in thine happiness, —
That thou, light-winged Dryad of the trees
O, for a draught of vintage! that hath been
Cool’d a long age in the deep-delved earth...
And purple-stained mouth;
That I might drink, and leave the world unseen,
And leaden-eyed despairs ...”

Keats has skillfully made use of hyphens in this poem, to form compound words.

Example #4: *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* (by J.K. Rowling)

“All Harry’s spellbooks, his wand, robes, cauldron, and top-of-the-line Nimbus Two Thousand broomstick had been locked in a cupboard under the stairs by Uncle Vernon the instant Harry had come home... Aunt Petunia was horse-faced and bony; Dudley was blond, pink, and porky. Harry, on the other hand, was small and skinny, with brilliant green eyes and jet-black hair that was always untidy. He wore round glasses, and on his forehead was a thin, lightning-shaped scar.”

In this passage, the hyphenated words include “top-of-the-line,” “horse-faced,” and “lightning-shaped,” each serving as a compound adjective.

Example #5: *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (by S.T. Coleridge)

“The Wedding-Guest he beat his breast,
Yet he cannot choose but hear;
And thus spake on that ancient man,
The bright-eyed Mariner.

And now there came both mist and snow,
And it grew wondrous cold:
And ice, mast-high, came floating by,
As green as emerald.”

Here, the poet has used hyphens three times, between the compound words “wedding-Guest,” “bright-eyed,” and “mast-high.”

Function of Hyphen

The main function of hyphens is to separate words into parts, or to combine separate words into a single word to clarify meanings. Hyphens serve to remove ambiguities from sentences. Despite its decreased use, the

hyphen remains a norm in compound-modifier structures with some prefixes. Moreover, hyphenation is usually used in justified texts to avoid unnecessary spacing such as in newspaper columns.