

Hyphenation

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Two words, hyphenated word, or one word?

If the accent is on the first syllable, a one-word form is likely to be correct, but check a good dictionary: *basketball*, *postman*, *jailbird*, *milestone*, *ponytail* (but *pony express*) *milkman* (but *milk shake*), *tugboat* (but *tug of war*), *underdog* (but *under-the-table*).

Some words are always hyphenated: *tête-à-tête*, *son-in-law*, *hand-me-down*, *matter-of-fact*, *robin's-egg blue*, *rock-and-roll* (but *rock 'n' roll*), *side-glance* (but *side effect*).

Some combinations remain separated, unless used in the adjective position: *skin test* (but *skin-test reaction*), *test tube* (but *test-tube baby*), *flea market* (but *flea-market sale*), *plate glass* (but *plate-glass window*). *Anyone* is one word, but *no one* is two words.

Two or more words used as an adjective

Hyphenate before the noun: *bluish-green dress*, *sleep-inducing drug*, *well-known poem*, *chocolate-covered nuts*. *One-*, *two-*, and *three-part harmony*.

Don't hyphenate such combinations after the noun: *her dress was bluish green*, *the drug was sleep inducing*, *the poem was well known*.

Don't hyphenate if the combinations are common units not likely to be misread: *a Red Cross nurse*, *Vice President Adams*, *New York lawyer*, *a middle school student* (but perhaps *a high-school student*).

Don't hyphenate after an *-ly* adverb: *a gently sloping terrace*, *a slightly worn tire*.

Hyphenate where necessary for clarity: *a fast-sailing ship*, *a fast sailing-ship*; *a toy-repair store*, *a toy repair-store*; *recreation*, *re-creation*; *recovered*, *re-covered*.

Numbers

Compound numbers from twenty-one to ninety-nine and fractions are hyphenated: *a two-thirds majority* (but *two thirds of the voters*). *Three hundred and twenty-seven*. *Nineteenth-century fashions*. *A four-year-old boy* (but *the boy is four years old*).

Prefixes and Suffixes

Most are written solid: *ante (anteroom)*, *anti*, *bi*, *bio*, *co*, *counter*, *extra*, *infra*, *inter*, *intra*, *macro*, *meta*, *micro*, *mid*, *mini*, *multi*, *non*, *over*, *post*, *pre*, *pro*, *pseudo*, *re*, *semi*, *sub*,

super, supra, trans, ultra, un, under. But hyphenate *co-op, co-opt,* and *anti-inflammatory* (wherever two *i*'s come together). *Webster II* likes *coworker*; and *Chicago Manual of Style* likes *co-worker*. Hyphenate *self-* words. Medical terms are bumped—*intrauterine, gastrointestinal*—but in lay text, may be hyphenated where vowels meet.