



PUNCTUATION—HYPHEN, EN & EM DASH, SLASH, BRACKETS AND BRACES

In any writing you do, you need to keep the reader in mind. To make your message easy to understand, use the hyphen, en and em dash, the slash, brackets and braces to help perfect and emphasise what you mean.

Name and Symbol	What it does
<p>1. Hyphen [-]</p> <p>The hyphen is the only symbol on the computer keyboard.</p> <p>The hyphen can be found on the same key as the underscore (_) and to the right of the zero key</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The hyphen is a shorter mark than the dash; there is no space either before or after the hyphen [e.g. blue-green] The hyphen joins words (and parts of words) together; it makes one word of two (or more). Essentially, the hyphen is replacing the word <i>and</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use a hyphen where you are creating a combined meaning [e.g. user-friendly; well-known; short-lived; fishing-dependent; modern-day] Use a hyphen to fix a prefix [e.g. non; co; micro; anti; hyper] to a whole word [eg. economic] to make a complex word [e.g. micro-economic] A hyphen is used with some double surnames [e.g. Warrington-Smith] A hyphen is used with some place names (states; territories; regions; cities; train stations and airports) [e.g. Bosnia-Herzegovina; Bà Rja-Vũng Tàu Province; Vittoria-Gasteiz; Tokyo-Narita International Airport, etc.] Use a hyphen to avoid the confusion of a sequence of the same letters [e.g. deemphasize de-emphasise]. However, most of the time people feel quite comfortable with two 'es' and two 'os' [e.g. reengineer; coordinate] Use a hyphen to tell the ages of people and things (years, months or periods of time) [e.g. a three-year-old child; a three-year-old] <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *NB. Don't use a hyphen if the period of time is written in plural form [e.g. The tree is two hundred years old] Use a hyphen when a prefix is added to a numeral, acronym or neologism (new word or expression) or to a foreign or technical word [e.g. pre-2000; post-OSS; prob-solutely (a definite maybe); enfant-poeme (a youthful reciter of poems); 3-phase control] or to clarify meaning of the word being used [e.g. whether you mean re-cover, or recover] Use a hyphen for specialised scientific notations [e.g. representing single bonds in a chemical formula: (CH₃)₂-CH-CH₂-CH (NH₂)-OH; between the spelled-out name of a chemical element and the mass number of the specific isotope: carbon-14; between sequences of amino acids: Asp-His-Lys] Use a hyphen when all the modifiers in a series end in the same term [e.g. first order, second order, third order can be written as: first-, second-, and third-order ...] Use a hyphen when you have a line-break mid-word [e.g. Criteria address-ed include...]. Remember to insert the hyphen at the syllable break, not just anywhere you feel like [e.g. boo-klet X; book-let ✓] <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *NB. With word processors and their ability to move whole words, this has become less common. However, it is still a necessary feature of anything that is handwritten To hyphenate or not generally varies from country to country; Australian and British English use of the hyphen is more common than in North American English

Name and Symbol	What it does
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Also, over time, some hyphenated words become one, some remain hyphenated and some stay separate. If in doubt: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consult a current dictionary (Australian; British; North American) Consult your style guide (APA, Harvard, Chicago, Vancouver, MLA, etc.) Learn how are they used in your discipline/profession? (Consult readings in your discipline) Whether you choose to hyphenate or not, you should aim for consistency across the whole of your text
<p>2. En Dash [–]</p> <p>To create an en dash</p> <p>1. On a PC: Hold the Control key and type the minus sign (the one on the numeric keypad to the right; this shortcut will not work with the one at the top of the keyboard).</p> <p>2. On a Mac: hold the Option key and type the minus sign (on the same key as the underscore (_) and to the right of the zero key).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The en dash (–) is slightly longer than the hyphen (-) but not as long as the em dash (—) Use an en dash when expressing a ‘<i>from ... to ...</i>’ relationship: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> to connect inclusive dates, numbers and time [e.g. February 22–May 17; pp. 23–35; 9.00am–11.00am] when showing a span or length of time, distance and other types of ranges [e.g. 1866–2016; 100–200kms; 4kHz–8 kHz] If you use the words ‘<i>from</i>’ or ‘<i>between</i>’ to introduce a range of time or distance (or other ranges), do not use the en dash [e.g. Julia Gillard was Australia’s Prime Minister from 2010 to 2013; During the Han Dynasty, between 206 B.C. and A.D. 220, commerce, agriculture and handicrafts were well established] Use the en dash to report scores or results of contests [e.g. In the 2015 NRL Grand Final, the North Queensland Cowboys beat the Brisbane Broncos 17–16] Use the en dash between words to show conflict, connection or direction [e.g. The Labor–Greens discord; The Cairns–Kuranda rail link; The Bruce Highway is a major highway running north–south, connecting Brisbane to Far North Queensland] There are no spaces between the word or number and the en–dash
<p>3. Em Dash [—]</p> <p>1. On a PC: hold down the ALT key and type 0151 on the numeric keypad (only the numbers on the right-hand keypad do this, not the numbers above the letters)</p> <p>2. On a Mac: hold Shift + Option and the minus key</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The em dash is discouraged in formal and academic writing—use parentheses, commas, semi-colons and colons instead; however, if you do use the em dash, use them sparingly—no more than two in any one sentence The em dash creates a break in the structure of a sentence: a stronger break than that of a comma, a less formal break than that of a colon and round brackets (parentheses) When substituted for the comma: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a pair of em dashes can enhance readability by allowing you to introduce a word, phrase or clause that expands on, explains or further defines information [e.g. the platypus—<i>Ornithorhynchus anatinus</i>—is a uniquely Australian species] When substituted for the round brackets (parentheses): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> it draws attention to the information you are adding [e.g. In writing a brief statement about the topic—the thesis statement or thesis argument—you are offering the reader a way to understand the topic] in contrast, if you want to emphasise the information in a more

Name and Symbol	What it does
	<p>subtle way, use round brackets (parentheses) [e.g. In writing a brief statement about the topic (the thesis statement or thesis argument), you are offering the reader a way to understand the topic]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When substituted for the colon <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - it emphasises the conclusion of a sentence [e.g. when writing essays consider—your purpose, evidence, your position, and the structure of the essay.] NB. only a single dash is used • There should be no spaces either before or after an em dash • When de-identifying a person’s name from text (for legal reasons), use a 3 em dash [e.g. Mr— — responded...]
<p>4. Slash [/]</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Also known as the virgule, and sometimes called the forward slash or slant bar (mainly by computer users), the slash does not have a large role in formal and academic writing; however— • The slash can be used: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – to avoid gender choice problems [e.g. he/she; him/her; his/her] – to represent <i>per</i> [e.g. \$48/hr; speed is limited to 110 km/h] – as shorthand for <i>and</i> [e.g. There is the option to enrol in a joint degree such as BA/BSc] – to indicate <i>or</i>: where you can make a choice between the words the slash is separating [e.g. use the yes/no option to indicate preference] – Poetry: the slash, with one space either side, indicates a line break in quoted poetry [e.g. ‘Yesterday, upon the stair, / I met a man who wasn’t there / He wasn’t there again today / I wish, I wish he’d go away... ’] NB. for readability purposes, use with a maximum of four lines only – to mean the same thing as the Latin <i>cum</i>, meaning ‘with’ [e.g. ‘engineer cum operations manager’ can be written as ‘engineer/operations manager’]. <p>NB. The use of cum (or /) doesn’t just mean the engineer does two jobs rather, it implies the engineer was hired for one role and took-on the responsibilities of the second</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - some abbreviations are formed with the slash [e.g. c/o (care of); N/A (not applicable); w/ (with); w/o (without); b/c (because); *w/c (week commencing); *w/e (week ending) *Not commonly used] – in fractions (to separate the numerator from the denominator) [e.g. 2/3]
<p>5. Round Brackets / Parentheses [()]</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Round Brackets / Parentheses are an alternative to the enclosing commas or dashes to provide the reader with useful material to the reader. In other words, although not essential, the reader would benefit from having the additional information <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the non-essential material could be a word, a phrase or a sentence • Round Brackets are the most scientific of the marks and tend to be used for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - names [e.g. two eucalypt species (<i>E. seiberi</i> and <i>E. fastigiata</i>)] - titles - definition [e.g. Tourism (the commercial organisation and operation of holidays and visits to places of interest)] - numbers [e.g. Of the 852 listed individual languages of Papua

Name and Symbol	What it does
	<p>New Guinea 840 are living (839 are indigenous)]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - translation [e.g. honestedat (honesty)] - alternative [e.g. consumers (Heterotrophs)] - technical symbols [e.g. Diameter Sign (∅)] - cross-referencing [e.g. see Figure 1] - a list within a sentence [e.g. the roof framing elements (barge board, ceiling joist, collar tie, fascia board, hanging beam, hip rafter truss, etc.)] <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You use round brackets in mathematical expressions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - to separate numbers for clarity [e.g. (1), (2), (3)] - to indicate multiplication [e.g. 3(6) means to multiple 3 by 6] - to group numbers together in mathematical problems [eg. (3 x 75) + 14 – (6 x 5)] - to confirm a spelled-out number [e.g. fifty-five (55)] • You use round brackets to introduce an abbreviation (including unfamiliar abbreviations of measurement [e.g. revolutions per minute (rpm)]) • You use round brackets around i.e (id est, approximately meaning ‘that is’) and e.g (exempli gratia or ‘for example’) [illustrated manuscripts (e.g. the Book of Kells)...] • You use abbreviations to clarify or explain something [e.g. The first Indigenous All Stars verses the NRL All Stars took place on February 13 2010 (exactly two years after the Australian Government’s apology to the Stolen Generations)] • You use round brackets to enclose the acronym of the spelled-out word [e.g. The World Health Organisation (WHO)] <p>NB. In academic writing, the first time you introduce an acronym, you must first spell the word or phrase in full, immediately followed by the initiating letters (inside round brackets). Thereafter, the acronym can be used. By abbreviating lengthy or complex, frequently repeated terms, readability is enhanced</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At the end of a sentence, the period follows the closing parenthesis. • A complete sentence within parentheses has its own punctuation • Please write with clarity in mind: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - avoid using round brackets within round brackets • For in-text citation (please consult your referencing style guide)
<p>6. Square Brackets / Brackets [[]]</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In academic writing, square brackets allow you to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – add something to a quote (a comment, explanation, information or a word that is necessary to help the reader better understand – or emphasise what has been quoted [e.g. According to the 2016 Index of Economic Freedom (The Wall Street Journal, 2016), four of the five top ranking free economies [Hong Kong (1), Singapore (2), New Zealand (3), Australia (5)] are in the Asia–Pacific region] – somehow change the quotation (by adding capitalisation or a pronoun) in order to make the quoted material grammatically correct [e.g. According to According to the 2016 Index of Economic Freedom (The Wall Street Journal, 2016, para. 1), ‘[their] high market openness facilitates trade and investment’] • For guidance on whether you use square brackets to indicate ellipted material, please refer to your referencing style guide • In writing, sometimes you see square brackets to enclose the Latin word <i>sic</i>, meaning ‘so’ or ‘thus’. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It is an editing term used to identify an error (grammatical,

Name and Symbol	What it does
	<p>spelling, or statement of fact) in the source material. In other words, you would be quoting from the author– reproducing the material exactly how it appears in the original– but by inserting [sic] you’re letting the reader know there’s been a mistake [e.g. ‘Charged with affry [sic], the defendant entered a plea of not guilty’.]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In academic writing, avoid using [sic]. Quotations in academic texts are kept to a minimum and are used only when the words carry special significance and you do not want the author’s intent to be misinterpreted; by quoting an error, you are placing yourself in a superior position to the author you are quoting
<p>7. Brace Brackets [{ }]</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most academic writers may never use Brace Brackets, but for some, they fulfill specific functions: Brace Brackets are used in mathematics, to enclose members of an unordered set [e.g. $E = \{1, 2, 3, 4, \dots\}$] Brace brackets are used in many computer programming languages (please refer to the conventions in your field) Brace Brackets are also used in linguistics to model a description of the morphemes of a language [e.g. / - d /-> $\left. \begin{array}{l} -1d / t, d-- \\ -t / [- Voiced]-- \end{array} \right\}$]
<p>8. Angle Brackets [< >]</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Angle brackets are frequently used in technical contexts [i.e. computer programming] You use angle brackets to enclose email addresses, Uniform Resource Identifiers (URLs) [e.g. <name@email.com>, <http://>]

Useful links

Style guides:

APA Style: <http://www.apastyle.org/search.aspx?query=Punctuation>

Harvard Style Manual: <http://writingcenter.fas.harvard.edu/pages/tips-grammar-punctuation-and-style>

MLA Style: <http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/GramPunct.html>

The Chicago Manual of Style:

<http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/ganda/data/fag/topics/Punctuation.html>

Other Punctuation Guides:

The University of Western Australia: <http://guides.is.uwa.edu.au/>

Curtin University: <http://libguides.library.curtin.edu.au/c.php?g=202308&p=1332771>

The University of Auckland: <http://www.library.auckland.ac.nz/subject-guides/med/setref-vancouver.htm#additional>

Other links:

Purdue Online Writing Lab: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/2/>

Name and Symbol	What it does
The Punctuation Guide:	http://www.thepunctuationguide.com/apostrophe.html#possessives
The Writer's Handbook:	https://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/index.html
Pearson Education Online Handbook:	http://wps.ablongman.com/long_longman_ohb_1/27/7023/1797996.cw/index.html

References

- Chalker, S., & Weiner, E. (1994). *The Oxford dictionary of English grammar*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press Inc.
- Lauchman, R. (2010). *Punctuation at work: Simple principles for achieving clarity and good style*. New York, NY: American Management Association.
- Penn, J. (n.d.). The punctuation guide. Retrieved from <http://www.thepunctuationguide.com/index.html>
- Punctuation. (2015). In Cambridge University Press (Ed.), *Cambridge dictionaries online*. Retrieved from <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/>
- Strunk, W., & White, E.B. (1999). *The elements of style* (4th ed.). New York: NY: Longman.
- Teaching and Learning Support (TaLS). (n.d.). *Punctuating with apostrophes*. Retrieved from https://www.une.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0007/13111/WC_Punctuating-with-apostrophes.pdf
- Tredinnick, M. (2008). *The little green grammar book*. Sydney, Australia: University of New South Wales Press Ltd.
- Truss, L. (2003). *Eats, shoots & leaves: The zero tolerance approach to punctuation*. London, England: Profile books Ltd.