

Hyphens



The Hyphen



A hyphen is a punctuation mark that looks like a little horizontal line.

This is a hyphen. → -

Hyphens join together words or parts of words.

E.g. small-scale, re-formed.

Hyphens are very useful as they can help to clarify the meaning of a word or phrase and avoid ambiguity in writing. Look at the example below:

Paula decided to **resign** from her job.

Steve **re-signed** his contract.



The Hyphen

Creating a Compound Adjective

Hyphens can be used to link two separate words into a compound adjective before a noun.

The terrier padded across the room on its **bear-like** paws.



Georgina hung her **hot-pink** coat on the hook.



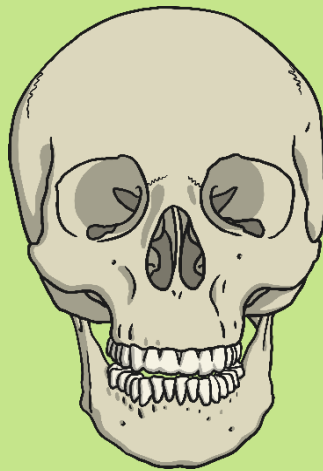


The Hyphen

Joining two nouns

Hyphens can be used to join together two nouns of equal importance to create a new noun or adjective.

Dan hung up a **skeleton-head** garland on Halloween.
(This creates an adjective.)



The **student-teacher** taught the children about hyphens.
(This creates a new noun.)





The Hyphen

Avoiding Awkward Letters or Sound Combinations

Hyphens can be used to avoid combining letters and sounds which could be awkward to say or write without a hyphen.

The children seemed incapable of **co-operating** with each other.



The policeman called for help to **de-escalate** the situation.



Hyphens are often used in this way to join prefixes to words when the prefix ends and the word starts with a vowel.

The Hyphen



Clarifying a Word Meaning

Hyphens can be used to ensure that the meaning of a word is clear. In these examples the words could mean different things without the hyphens.

Bill requested that the email be **re-sent**.



Dad decided to **re-press** his shirt as it was still creased.



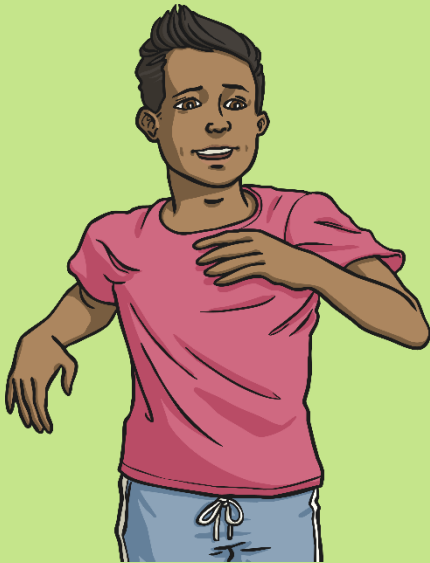
The Hyphen

In Numbers

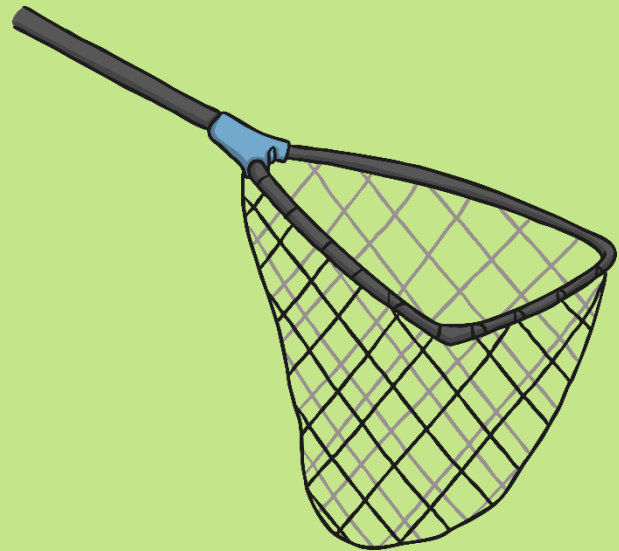
Hyphens should be used to join the tens and units in written numbers 21 – 99.



Sam came first in the marathon in which one hundred and **twenty-seven** people raced.



There are **thirty-two** known species of fish in our school pond.





The Hyphen

Splitting a Word

Hyphens can be used to indicate that a word is not finished at the end of a line of writing.

Fiona thought that the new James Bond film was **stupendous-ly** enjoyable.



The waiters were asked to provide some light **entertainment** after the meal.



Make sure the word is split in a sensible place if using a hyphen this way.



The Hyphen

Create Informal Words/Phrases

Hyphens can be used in informal phrases to link words which go together to create a unit of meaning.

The song became a bit of a **free-for-all** with everyone singing at once.



The man is an **out-and-out** thief.



Avoiding Ambiguity



Hyphens can be used to avoid ambiguity in sentences. That means they help to make the meaning of the sentence clear.

Read
these two
sentences.

There was a man eating shark in the bay.

There was a man-eating shark in the bay.

Why is the first
sentence ambiguous?

How does the hyphen in the second
sentence help to make the meaning clear?

Complete the Avoiding Ambiguity Activity Sheet.



The Hyphen

Read the story about Lucy with your partner.

Lucy

I can identify where and why hyphens are used in a text.

Read the story below and highlight all the examples of hyphens you can find.
Make notes about why you think the hyphens have been used.

Lucy

I knew the moment I opened my eyes that it was going to be a bad day. Somehow, I could just feel it. I rolled over and looked at the clock: eight twenty-five, far too early to be awake on a Saturday! I threw back my hot-pink duvet and sat up; yawning widely I reached for my mobile. I wondered if Jade had got the message I resent yesterday but there was no reply from her so I figured she hadn't, either that or she hadn't had a chance to text back. I padded across to my wardrobe and pulled out a pair of black jeans, but where was my new top? Jessie! I bet she had pinched it already. My mood darkened instantly. I stomped down to breakfast and found my family in a croissant and jam free-for-all. Nothing new there. Why were they not able to co-operate nicely like a normal family? Even Rover the dog, who was splattered with jam, was prowling around on his bear-like paws as he always does, jumping up to catch any crumbs that were flung his way. "Hey!" I called, struggling to be heard above the racket. "HEY!" The noise de-escalated and everyone turned to regard me. "Oh, good morning dear," my mum replied. "Sleep well?"

"Not especially," I grumbled. "Jessie, where's my new skeleton-head top?" Jessie grinned at me through sticky teeth. She was stupendously good at winding me up.

"Haven't seen it," she answered in a sweet singsong voice. My sister was an out-and-out liar and I was determined to not let her get the better of me! However, before I could reply the answerphone tone on my phone rang out. An answerphone message? I hadn't even heard it ring. I didn't recognise the number which had called but I re-pressed the message icon and put the phone to my ear to listen.

"Lucy, it's Mr Farrow," the voice on the other end of the phone declared. Mr Farrow? Why is our new student-teacher calling me over the weekend? "Lucy it's almost half past eight and your science exam starts in fifteen minutes. Where are you?"

My heart thumped. "Mum... what day is it?" I asked tentatively, beginning to realise that perhaps it wasn't Saturday after all...



SPaG Hyphens

Can you highlight all of the hyphens in the text (-)?

Can you annotate the text to indicate why you think a hyphen has been used in that way?



The Hyphen

Did you spot all the hyphens? Let's check!

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Did you work out that hyphens are used to clarify the meaning of the word?

Did you notice that words containing hyphens have no spaces?

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Answers



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