

Hyphens, Dashes, Parentheses: Overview

Hyphens, dashes, and parentheses are just a few tools that can help give your writing more diversity, allowing you to convey the subtlety. Although you may not use them regularly or have noticed these devices before, they are common in most writing. When used too often, these tools have a tendency to make your writing sloppy.

Hyphen

The hyphen can profoundly alter how a sentence is interpreted. For the most part, a hyphen will either create compound words (two words linked to create a single modifier: twentieth-century, bubble-boy, etc.), or cut word in half when it occurs at the end of a line.

*This project focusses on **cross-species** disease transmission. (In this case, the hyphens are used to clarify what kind of disease transmission).*

Dashes

Dashes create emphasis. Use dashes when you want someone to pay attention to an insertion or an idea set apart from the main sentence. Dashes and parentheses work the same way in that — between the dashes — you can use whatever sentence construction you like, as long as the material obeys the basic grammatical rules.

The first stampede attracted legendary cowboys – including Poncho Villas bandits – in pursuit of \$20,000 in prizes and world titles.

Former American cowpuncher, Guy Weadick – promoter of wild west style shows in Canada— developed an annual frontier celebration that became the Calgary Stampede.

Parentheses

Parentheses are used to add additional information without garnering focus. Usually, the material in the parentheses is de-emphasized, creating a side note. The information is not always essential to the meaning of the sentence. Parentheses can enclose reference material: numerals, page numbers, or lists.

The car's parts (carburetor, spark plugs, and hoses) needed to be fixed.

The grammar surrounding parentheses is fairly straightforward. Essentially, a parenthetical note, when inserted into a sentence, acts as an intruder. If the intruder were to be taken out of the sentence, the meaning should not change.

Periods and **commas** should occur outside of the parentheses unless they're part of the parenthetical whole.

The U.S. Patent Office (inaugurated in 1838) has granted more patents for mouse traps than any other invention.

The only exception would be if the parentheses hold the position of a sentence. (For example, this would be an example of parentheses acting as a sentence.)

Practice

Use the chart below to practice your hyphen, dash, and parenthesis expertise. Rewrite the sentences on a separate page.

Example Sentences:

1. Activists argue that animals are hurt in the Calgary Stampede.
2. City council voted to restrict housing developments in the SW.
3. A south LRT line could replace bus routes.
4. A vaccine for malaria could reduce deaths.
5. Research suggests that Canadians are consuming excessive sodium
6. Having given it all she could, she still had to run from the men.

<u>Hyphens</u>	<u>Dashes</u>	<u>Parentheses</u>
Animal-rights	—growing each year—	(particularly rodeo stock)
newly-proposed	—An expensive proposal —	(mostly single family homes)
pre-existing	— a mosquito transmitted disease—	(proposed by Calgary Transit)
grown-breaking	—reported by the New York Times—	(common in several African and South American countries)
pre-existing		(through their diets)
seven-tenths (of)	—referenced in the Britannica—	