



DeYoung Consulting Services

Helping People Learn up to Their Potential

For those of you who didn't return to grammar class when school started earlier this month, here's a quick punctuation lesson on hyphens.

A hyphen is a punctuation mark, but it's most commonly used for compound words and dividing words at the end of lines. This month, I'll focus on using the hyphen to punctuate sentences and divide words. I'll save compound words for another lesson.

Sometimes in written communication it's necessary to hyphenate a word at the end of the line. When this happens, keep these few rules in mind.

- Divide words according to pronunciation. For example, *com-puter* instead of *comp-uter*.
- Don't hyphenate words that have a one-letter syllable, such as *about*, *unit*, or *among*.
- Don't divide words with a silent vowel. This applies to words ending in *-ed* such as *jumped* or *phoned*
- Hyphenate compound words between the two words, as in this example: *The bathtub is over-flowing*. *Overflow-ing* should be avoided.
- Don't hyphenate words with four or fewer letters.
- Don't divide sums of money, proper nouns, units of time, or initials in a name.

Hyphens are also used to show the structure or spelling of a word. Here's a sample to demonstrate: *"My name is Stacy. That's spelled S-T-A-C-Y."*

In dialogue, hyphens show hesitation or stuttering: *"I-I-I don't want to want to bungee jump off the cliff," Bill stammered.*

Before you find yourself stammering during your next training session, give me a call. I'm always happy to consult with clients on their curriculum and training needs.

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