

Hyphenation Guide

Adapted from *Chicago Manual of Style 17th Edition* Section 7.89

This guide is a small subset of the CMOS rules on hyphenation. Its purpose is to help writers with commonly encountered situations. Check your dictionary first. If it's not there, then apply these rules. When in doubt or for other situations, refer to CMOS or consult your editor.

By Parts of Speech

	Before Noun	After Noun
Adjective + Noun	He heard a low-level hum.	The hum he heard was very low level.
Adjective + Participle	She let out an ear-splitting screech. He asked an open-ended question.	Her screech was ear splitting. His question was open ended.
“ly” Adverb + Adjective or Participle	His thoroughly confused expression amused her.	His expression was thoroughly confused.
Other Adverbs + Adjective or Participle	The club needed well-read members. Adverbs can get tricky if the sentence or phrase is complex. Consult your editor in such cases.	The new club member was well read.
Noun + Adjective	User-friendly software is always best.	Choose software that is user friendly.
Phrase used as an Adjective	She loved up-to-date fashion. No one much liked stick-in-the-mud Jack.	Her clothes were always up to date. Jack was a real stick-in-the-mud. Dictionary says noun is hyphenated.



Editing 4 You

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By Category

	Before Noun	After Noun
Color	She wore a pale-blue dress.	Her dress was pale blue.
Money, no symbols	They shared the million-dollar lottery prize.	The lottery is now worth a million dollars.
Money, with symbols	The team will share a \$20 thousand bonus.	The bonus pool is \$20 thousand.
Number + Noun	It's a five-year project.	The project is estimated at five years.
Number + Abbreviation	He ran a 5 km race.	The race was 5 km long.
Ordinal number + Noun	It's a nineteenth-century building. The law firm has thirty-sixth-floor offices.	The building was built in the nineteenth century. The law office is on the thirty-sixth floor.
Number + "percent"	He got a 4 percent raise.	His raise was 4 percent. CMoS uses numerals with "percent." In fiction, it's OK to spell out the number if <100.
Number + Superlative	Jane's the second-best finisher in the race.	In the race, Jane finished second best.
Time	They'll take the ten-thirty train. But: They'll take the ten o'clock train. OR They'll take the 10:30 a.m. train.	Their train leaves at ten thirty.
Age	A fourteen-year-old college student is rare.	Chris is a fourteen-year-old. But: Most freshmen are eighteen years old.

Things that can be an Adjective or a Noun

	Adjective	Noun
Noun + Noun, 1st noun modifies 2nd	fairy-tale Some are a single word (shipbuilder). Check your dictionary.	fairy tale
Noun + Noun, 2 nouns are equal	singer-songwriter	singer-songwriter
Noun + Numeral (or Enumerator)	She has a type A personality.	The boss is definitely a type A.
Simple Fractions	one-half	one-half
Compounds formed with fractions	She scheduled a half-hour session.	The session lasted a half hour.

Compounds formed with Specific Words

	Adj, Adv, Verb	Noun
Many of these are in the dictionary, so consult it first. If not present, then follow these rules.		
Cross	cross-reference	cross reference
Self, no prefix or suffix	self-control	self-control
Self, w/prefix or suffix	selfless unselfconscious	
Vice	hyphenated if before a noun The vice-presidential office suite	If not in dictionary, hyphenated
Wide	If not in dictionary, hyphenated before or after a noun	