6. Compounding Rules
(See also Chapter 7 “Compounding Examples”)

6.1. A compound word is a union of two or more words, either with or without a hyphen. It conveys a unit idea that is not as clearly or quickly conveyed by the component words in unconnected succession. The hyphen is a mark of punctuation that not only unites but also separates the component words; it facilitates understanding, aids readability, and ensures correct pronunciation. When compound words must be divided at the end of a line, such division should be made leaving prefixes and combining forms of more than one syllable intact.

6.2. In applying the rules in this chapter and in using the list of examples in the following chapter, “Compounding Examples,” the fluid nature of our language should be kept in mind. Word forms constantly undergo modification. Although it is often the case that hyphenated compound words eventually lose their hyphen, many of them start out unhyphenated.

6.3. The rules, therefore, are somewhat flexible. Exceptions must necessarily be allowed. Current language trends continue to point to closing up certain words which, through either frequent use or widespread dissemination through modern media exposure, have become fixed in the reader’s mind as units of thought. The tendency to merge two short words continues to be a natural progression toward better communication.

General rules

6.4. In general, omit the hyphen when words appear in regular order and the omission causes no ambiguity in sense or sound.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>banking hours</th>
<th>eye opener</th>
<th>real estate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>blood pressure</td>
<td>fellow citizen</td>
<td>rock candy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>book value</td>
<td>living costs</td>
<td>training ship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>census taker</td>
<td>palm oil</td>
<td>violin teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>day laborer</td>
<td>patent right</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6.5. Words are usually combined to express a literal or nonliteral (figurative) unit idea that would not be as clearly expressed in unconnected succession.

- afterglow
- bookkeeping
- cupboard
- forget-me-not
- gentleman
- newsprint
- right-of-way
- whitewash

6.6. A derivative of a compound retains the solid or hyphenated form of the original compound unless otherwise indicated.

- coldbloodedness
- outlawry
- Y-shaped
- footnoting
- praiseworthiness
- railroader
- ill-advisedly

6.7. A hyphen is used to avoid doubling a vowel or tripling a consonant, except after the short prefixes co, de, pre, pro, and re, which are generally printed solid. (See also rules 6.29 and 6.32.)

- cooperation
- semi-independent
- shell-like
- deemphasis
- brass-smith
- hull-less
- preexisiting
- Inverness-shire
- but
- anti-inflation
- thimble-eye
- co-occupant
- micro-organism
- ultra-atomic
- cross section

Solid compounds

6.8. Print solid two nouns that form a third when the compound has only one primary accent, especially when the prefixed noun consists of only one syllable or when one of the elements loses its original accent.

- airship
- cupboard
- footnote
- bathroom
- dressmaker
- locksmith
- bookseller
- fishmonger
- workman

6.9. Print solid a noun consisting of a short verb and an adverb as its second element, except when the use of the solid form would interfere with comprehension.

- blowout
- builddown
- flareback
- breakdown
- cooldown
- giveaway
- hangover
- runoff
- but
- holdup
- setup
- cut-in
- makeready
- showdown
- phase-in
- markoff
- throwaway
- run-in
- pickup
- tradeoff
- sit-in
6.10. Compounds beginning with the following nouns are usually printed solid.

- book
- eye
- horse
- house

6.11. Compounds ending in the following are usually printed solid, especially when the prefixed word consists of one syllable.

- berry
- bird
- blossom
- board
- boat
- book
- borne
- bound
- box
- boy
- brained
- bug
- bush
- cam
- craft
- field
- fish
- flower
- fly
- girl
- grower
- headed
- hearted
- holder
- hopper
- house
- keeper

- keeping
- land
- light
- like
- line
- load
- maid
- maker
- making
- man
- master
- mate
- mill
- mistress
- monger
- over
- owner
- person
- picker
- picking
- piece
- plane
- power
- proof
- roach
6.12. Print solid *any, every, no, and some* when combined with *body, thing,* and *where.* When *one* is the second element, print as two words if meaning a single or particular person or thing. To avoid mispronunciation, print *no one* as two words at all times.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>anybody</th>
<th>everywhere</th>
<th>somebody</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>anything</td>
<td>everyone</td>
<td>something</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>anywhere</td>
<td>nobody</td>
<td>somewhere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>anyone</td>
<td>nothing</td>
<td>someone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>everybody</td>
<td>nowhere</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>everything</td>
<td>no one</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*but* any one of us may stay; every one of the pilots is responsible; every body was accounted for.

6.13. Print compound personal pronouns as one word.

- herself
- himself
- itself
- myself
- oneself
- ourselves
- themselves
- yourself
- yourselves

6.14. Print as one word compass directions consisting of two points, but use a hyphen after the first point when three points are combined.

- northeast
- southwest
- north-northeast
- south-southwest

*also* north-south alignment

### Unit modifiers

6.15. Print a hyphen between words, or abbreviations and words, combined to form a unit modifier immediately preceding the word modified, except as indicated in rule 6.16 and elsewhere throughout this chapter. This applies particularly to combinations in which one element is a present or past participle.

- agreed-upon standards
- Baltimore-Washington road
- collective-bargaining talks
- contested-election case
- contract-bar rule
- cost-of-living increase
- drought-stricken area
- English-speaking nation
- fire-tested material
- Federal-State-local cooperation
- German-English descent
- guided-missile program
- hearing-impaired class
- high-speed line
- large-scale project
- law-abiding citizen
- long-term loan
- line-item veto
6.16. Where meaning is clear and readability is not aided, it is not necessary to use a hyphen to form a temporary or made compound. Restraint should be exercised in forming unnecessary combinations of words used in normal sequence.

atomic energy power
bituminous coal industry
civil rights case
civil service examination
durable goods industry
flood control study
free enterprise system
ground water levels
high school student
elementary school grade
income tax form
interstate commerce law
land bank loan
land use program
life insurance company
mutual security funds

long-term-payment loan
low-cost housing
lump-sum payment
most-favored-nation clause
multiple-purpose uses
no-par-value stock
one-on-one situation
part-time personnel
rust-resistant covering
service-connected disability
state-of-the-art technology
supply-side economics
tool-and-die maker
up-or-down vote

U.S.-owned property; U.S.-flagship
1-inch diameter; 2-inch-diameter pipe
a 4-percent increase, the 10-percent rise

but
4 percent citric acid
4 percent interest. (Note the absence of an article: a, an, or the. The word of is understood here.)

atomic energy power
bituminous coal industry
civil rights case
civil service examination
durable goods industry
flood control study
free enterprise system
ground water levels
high school student
elementary school grade
income tax form
interstate commerce law
land bank loan
land use program
life insurance company
mutual security funds

but no-hyphen rule (readability aided); not no hyphen rule

6.17. Print without a hyphen a compound predicate (either adjective or noun) whose second element is a present participle.

The duties were price fixing.
The effects were far reaching.
The shale was oil bearing.
The area is used for beet raising.
6.18. Print without a hyphen a compound predicate adjective the second element of which is a past participle. Omit the hyphen in a predicate modifier of comparative or superlative degree.

The area is drought stricken. This material is fire tested.
The paper is fine grained. The cars are higher priced.
Moderately fine grained wood. The reporters are better informed.

6.19. Print without a hyphen a two-word modifier the first element of which is a comparative or superlative.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Better drained soil</th>
<th>But</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Best liked books</td>
<td>Upper crust society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher level decision</td>
<td>Lower case, upper case type</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highest priced apartment</td>
<td>Upper classman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Larger sized dress</td>
<td>Best seller (noun)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better paying job</td>
<td>Lighter than air craft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower income group</td>
<td>Higher than market price</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.20. Do not use a hyphen in a two-word unit modifier the first element of which is an adverb ending in *ly*, nor use hyphens in a three-word unit modifier the first two elements of which are adverbs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Eagerly awaited moment</th>
<th>But</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wholly owned subsidiary</td>
<td>Ever-normal granary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unusually well preserved specimen</td>
<td>Ever rising flood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very well defined usage</td>
<td>Still-new car</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Longer than usual lunch period</td>
<td>Still lingering doubt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not too distant future</td>
<td>Well-known lawyer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most often heard phrase</td>
<td>Well-kept secret</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.21. Proper nouns used as unit modifiers, either in their basic or derived form, retain their original form; but the hyphen is printed when combining forms.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Latin American countries</th>
<th>Seventh-day Adventists</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>North Carolina roads</td>
<td>But</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Mexican-American</td>
<td>Minneapolis-St. Paul region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South American trade</td>
<td>North American-South American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish-American pride</td>
<td>Sphere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winston-Salem festival</td>
<td>French-English descent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African-American program</td>
<td>Washington-Wilkes-Barre route</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anglo-Saxon period</td>
<td>Or Washington/Wilkes-Barre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Franco-Prussian War</td>
<td>Route</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6.22. Do not confuse a modifier with the word it modifies.

elderly clothesman well-trained schoolteacher
old-clothes man elementary school teacher
competent shoemaker preschool children (kindergarten)
wooden-shoe maker pre-school children (before school)
field canning factory re-zoned wastesite
tomato-canning factory hazardous-waste site
brave servicemen
service men and women but
light blue hat (weight) common stockholder
light-blue hat (color) stock ownership
average taxpayer small businessman
income-tax payer working men and women
American flagship (military) steam powerplant site
American-flagship meat packinghouse owner

6.23. Where two or more hyphenated compounds have a common basic element but this element is omitted in all but the last term, the hyphens are retained.

2- to 3- and 4- to 5-ton trucks
2- by 4-inch boards, but boards 2 to 6 inches wide
8-, 10-, and 16-foot boards
6.4-, 3.1-, and 2-percent pay raises
moss- and ivy-covered walls, not moss and ivy-covered walls
long- and short-term money rates, not long and short-term money rates

but twofold or threefold, not two or threefold

goat, sheep, and calf skins, not goat, sheep, and calfskins
intras-tate and intracity, not intra-state and -city
American owned and managed companies
preoperative and postoperative examination

6.24. Do not use a hyphen in a unit modifier consisting of a foreign phrase.

ante bellum days ex officio member per diem employee
bona fide transaction per capita tax prima facie evidence

6.25. Do not print a hyphen in a unit modifier containing a letter or a numeral as its second element.

abstract B pages class II railroad point 4 program
article 3 provisions grade A milk ward D beds
6.26. Do not use a hyphen in a unit modifier enclosed in quotation marks unless it is normally a hyphenated term, but quotation marks are not to be used in lieu of a hyphen.

“blue sky” law  but  “good neighbor” policy  right-to-work law  “tie-in” sale  line-item veto

6.27. Print combination color terms as separate words, but use a hyphen when such color terms are unit modifiers.

bluish green  bluish-green feathers
dark green  iron-gray sink
orange red  silver-gray body

6.28. Do not use a hyphen between independent adjectives preceding a noun.

big gray cat  a fine old southern gentleman

Prefixes, suffixes, and combining forms

6.29. Print solid combining forms and prefixes, except as indicated elsewhere.

afterbirth  infrared  peripatetic
Anglomania  interview  planoconvex
antedate  intraspinal  polynodal
antislavery  introvert  postscript
biweekly  isometric  preexist
bylaw  macroanalysis  proconsul
circumnavigation  mesothorax  pseudoscholastic
cisalpine  metagenesis  reenact
cooprate  microphone  retrospect
contraposition  misstate  semiofficial
countercase  monogram  stepfather
deenergize  multicolor  subsecretary
demitasse  neophyte  supermarket
excommunicate  nonneutral  thermocouple
extracurricular  offset  transonic
foretell  outbake  transship
heroicomic  overactive  tricolor
hypersensitive  panoenic  ultraviolet
hypocacid  paracentric  unnecessary
inbound  particoated  underflow
6.30. Print solid combining forms and suffixes, except as indicated elsewhere.

- portable
- coverage
- operate
- plebiscite
- twentyfold
- spoonful
- kilogram
- geography
- manhood
- selfish
- pumpkin
- meatless
- outlet
- wavelike
- procurement
- innermost
- partnership
- lonesome
- homestead
- northward

6.31. Print solid words ending in *like*, but use a hyphen to avoid tripling a consonant or when the first element is a proper name.

- lifelike
- girllike
- Scotland-like
- lilylike
- bell-like
- McArtor-like

6.32. Use a hyphen or hyphens to prevent mispronunciation, to ensure a definite accent on each element of the compound, or to avoid ambiguity.

- anti-hog-cholera serum
- re-cover (cover again)
- co-occurrence
- re-creation (create again)
- co-op
- re-lay (lay again)
- mid-decade
- re-sorting (sort again)
- multi-ply (several plies)
- re-treat (treat again)
- non-civil-service position
- un-ionized
- non-tumor-bearing tissue
- un-uniformity
- pre-midcourse review
- pre-position (before)
- pro-choice
- pro-life
- but
- rereferred
- rereviewed

6.33. Use a hyphen to join duplicated prefixes.

- re-redirect
- sub-subcommittee
- super-superlative

6.34. Print with a hyphen the prefixes *ex*, *self*, and *quasi*.

- ex-governor
- quasi-argument
- ex-serviceman
- quasi-corporation
- ex-son-in-law
- quasi-young
- ex-vice-president
- self-control
- but
- self-educated
- selfsame
- quasi-academic
- selfhood
6.35. Unless usage demands otherwise, use a hyphen to join a prefix or combining form to a capitalized word. (The hyphen is retained in words of this class set in caps.)

- anti-American
- pro-British
- un-American
- non-Government
- neo-Nazi
- post-World War II

*or* post-Second World War

**Numerical compounds**

6.36. Print a hyphen between the elements of compound numbers from twenty-one to ninety-nine and in adjective compounds with a numerical first element.

- twenty-one
- twenty-first
- 6-footer
- 6-foot-11-inch man
- 24-inch ruler
- 3-week vacation
- 8-hour day
- 10-minute delay
- 20th-century progress
- 3-to-1 ratio
- 5-to-4 vote
- .22-caliber cartridge
- 2-cent-per-pound tax
- four-in-hand tie

*but*

- three-and-twenty
- two-sided question
- multimillion-dollar fund
- 10-dollar-per-car tax
- thirty- (30-) day period
- one hundred twenty-one
- 100-odd
- foursome
- threescore
- foursquare
- $20 million airfield
- second grade children

6.37. Print without a hyphen a modifier consisting of a possessive noun preceded by a numeral. (See also rule 8.14.)

- 1 month’s layoff
- 1 week’s pay
- 2 hours’ work

*but* a 1-minute delay
6.38. Print a hyphen between the elements of a fraction, but omit it between the numerator and the denominator when the hyphen appears in either or in both.

- one-thousandth
- two-thirds
- two one-thousandths
- twenty-three thirtieths
- twenty-one thirty-seconds
- three-fourths of an inch

6.39. A unit modifier following and reading back to the word or words modified takes a hyphen and is printed in the singular.

- motor, alternating-current, 3-phase, 60-cycle, 115-volt
- glass jars: 5-gallon, 2-gallon, 1-quart
- belts: 2-inch, 1¼-inch, ½-inch, ¼-inch

**Civil and military titles**

6.40. Do not hyphenate a civil or military title denoting a single office, but print a double title with a hyphen.

- ambassador at large
- assistant attorney general
- commander in chief
- comptroller general
- Congressman at Large
- major general
- notary public
- secretary general
- secretary-treasurer
- sergeant at arms
- treasurer-manager
- under secretary
- vice president
- **but under-secretaryship**
- **but vice-presidency**

6.41. The adjectives *elect* and *designate*, as the last element of a title, require a hyphen.

- President-elect (Federal)
- Vice-President-elect (Federal)
- Secretary of Housing and Urban Development-designate
- ambassador-designate
- minister-designate
**Scientific and technical terms**

6.42. Do not print a hyphen in scientific terms (names of chemicals, diseases, animals, insects, plants) used as unit modifiers if no hyphen appears in their original form.

- carbon monoxide poisoning
- guinea pig raising
- hog cholera serum
- methyl bromide solution
- stem rust control
- equivalent uranium content
- whooping cough remedy
- *but*
- Russian-olive plantings
- Douglas-fir tree

6.43. Chemical elements used in combination with figures use a hyphen, except with superior figures.

- Freon-12
- polonium-210
- uranium-235
- *Sr*\(^{90}\)
- *U*\(^{235}\)
- *U*\(^{234}\)

6.44. Note use of hyphens and closeup punctuation in chemical formulas.

- 9-nitroanthra(1,9,4,10)bis(1)oxathiazone-2,7-bisdioxide
- Cr-Ni-Mo
- 2,4-D

6.45. Print a hyphen between the elements of technical or contrived compound units of measurement.

- candela-hour
- light-year
- work-year
- crop-year
- passenger-mile
- *but* kilowatthour
- horsepower-hour
- staff-hour

**Improvised compounds**

6.46. Print with a hyphen the elements of an improvised compound.

- blue-pencil (v.)
- 18-year-old (n., u.m.)
- know-it-all (n.)
- know-how (n.)
- lick-the-finger-and-test-the-wind (economics)
- make-believe (n., u.m.)
- one-man-one-vote principle
- roll-on/roll-off ship
- George “Pay-As-You-Go” Miller
- stick-in-the-mud (n.)
- let-George-do-it attitude
- how-to-be-beautiful course
- hard-and-fast rule
- penny-wise and pound-foolish policy
- first-come-first-served basis
- *but* a basis of first come, first served
6.47. Use hyphens in a prepositional-phrase compound noun consisting of three or more words.

- cat-o’-nine-tails
- government-in-exile
- grant-in-aid
- jack-in-the-box
- man-of-war
- mother-in-law
- mother-of-pearl
- patent-in-fee
- heir at law
- next of kin
- officer in charge

6.48. When the corresponding noun form is printed as separate words, the verb form is always hyphenated.

- cold-shoulder
- blue-pencil
- cross-brace

6.49. Print a hyphen in a compound formed of repetitive or conflicting terms and in a compound naming the same thing under two aspects.

- boogie-woogie
- comedy-ballet
- dead-alive
- devil-devil
- even-stephen
- farce-melodrama
- fiddle-faddle
- hanky-panky
- murder-suicide
- nitty-gritty
- pitter-patter
- razzle-dazzle
- walkie-talkie
- willy-nilly
- young-old
- bowwow
- dillydally
- hubbub
- nitwit
- riffraff

6.50. Use a hyphen in a nonliteral compound expression containing an apostrophe in its first element.

- asses’-eyes
- ass’s-foot
- bull’s-eye
- cat’s-paw
- crow’s-nest

6.51. Use a hyphen to join a single capital letter to a noun or a participle.

- H-bomb
- I-beam
- T-shaped
- U-boat
- C-chip
- C-section
- V-necked
- S-iron
- T-square
- X-ed out
- x ray
- x raying
- S turns

6.52. Print idiomatic phrases without hyphens.

- come by
- insofar as
- inasmuch as
- Monday week
- nowadays