Dashes (–) (—)

Dashes are used to show a range or in place of parentheses to show that information has been inserted into a sentence. Dashes are only used in informal writing; in academic and business writing, use parentheses, commas, or colons instead. Do not put a space before or after a dash.

**EN dash (–)**

**Rule #1:**

Use an en dash (the shorter dash symbol or character in most word processing programs) to show a range of dates, numbers, or locations. In all uses of the en dash, you should be able to substitute the word *to* or *through* for the dash. NOTE: An en dash is slightly longer than a hyphen.

**Examples of Rule #1:**

- Please read pages 70–77 in your text.
- The San Diego–Las Vegas flight is on time.

**EM dash (—)**

**Rule #2:**

Use an em dash (the longer dash symbol or character in most word processing programs or two hyphens on a keyboard) to indicate an interruption or an abrupt change in thought or to insert supplemental information. If the interruption or insertion comes in the middle of a sentence, add a closing dash to signal the end of the interruption.

**Examples of Rule #2:**

- Last week—I think it was Wednesday—the manual was published and distributed.
- Faith, hope, and love—these virtues are very important to me.

**Rule #3:**

Use an em dash for emphasis in statements or examples.

**Example of Rule #3:**

- The only exception—and it is rare—is when an extreme emergency arises.

**Rule #4:**

Use an em dash to set off an entire phrase that has commas within it.

**Example of Rule #4:**

- A solid–colored top—such as the black sweater, the brown vest, or the red shirt—would probably look best with those pants.
Rule #5:

Use an em dash before the source of a quotation when the source is listed after the quotation.

Example of Rule #5:

"Proper words in proper places make the true definition of a style." —Jonathan Swift