

Putting Hyphens into Unit Modifiers

From the University of Minnesota Style Manual

1. In most cases, use a hyphen between words or between abbreviations and words combined to form a unit modifier that precedes the word modified. This applies particularly to combinations in which one element is a present or past participle.

Minneapolis-St. Paul airport
thought-provoking argument
second-quarter sophomore
U.S.-flag ship
up-to-date information
(*but* information that is up to date)

2. Hyphenate compounds that include *well-* and *ill-* when they precede the noun. Do not hyphenate if the expression carries a modifier.

a well-known woman
(*but* a very well known woman)

3. Use hyphens where two or more hyphenated compounds have a common basic element that is omitted in one or more of the terms.

three- or four-member committee
seaweed- and barnacle-covered ships (*not* seaweed and
barnacle-covered ships)
a student-owned and -operated radio station

4. Do not use a hyphen in a two-word modifier if the first element is a comparative or superlative.

upper division courses
better paid worker
best liked films
higher income bracket

5. Do not use a hyphen to form a temporary compound if the meaning is clear and readability is not aided by adding one. Refrain from forming hyphenated compounds when the words are used in normal sequence.

chemical dependency program
interior design certificate
health care institution
world affairs center

6. Do not hyphenate -ly phrases.

severely injured patients
unusually accurate predictions

7. Do not use a hyphen in a unit modifier containing a foreign phrase.

a priori knowledge
bona fide original

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

grade A cultured buttermilk
section 2 beds of the prison

Hyphens Exercise

