

chicago manual of style hyphenation examples

chicago manual of style hyphenation examples provide crucial guidance for writers aiming for clarity and consistency in their work. This comprehensive article delves into the intricacies of Chicago Manual of Style (CMOS) hyphenation rules, offering practical examples to illustrate complex concepts. We will explore when to hyphenate, when to avoid it, and the specific nuances for compound modifiers, prefixes, and compound numbers. Understanding these rules is essential for anyone producing polished, professional prose, whether for academic papers, novels, or business documents. Mastering Chicago hyphenation ensures your writing adheres to a widely respected standard, enhancing readability and credibility.

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Understanding the Purpose of Hyphenation

Hyphenation, as governed by the Chicago Manual of Style, serves a primary purpose: to enhance clarity and prevent ambiguity in written language. By connecting words or parts of words, hyphens signal to the reader that they should be interpreted as a single conceptual unit. This is particularly important in preventing misreading, especially when words could be parsed in multiple ways.

The CMOS approach to hyphenation is generally conservative, advocating for hyphenation only when it demonstrably aids comprehension or when a word is not commonly recognized as a single unit. This principle underpins many of the specific examples and rules that follow, guiding writers toward a more precise and understandable text. Ultimately, the goal is to create a seamless reading experience, free from jarring breaks in thought that unhyphenated compound terms might inadvertently cause.

Compound Modifiers: The Core of Chicago Hyphenation

One of the most frequent areas where hyphenation is required, according to the Chicago Manual of Style, is with compound modifiers. These are two or more words that function together as a single adjective to modify a noun. The key rule here is that when the compound modifier precedes the noun it modifies, it should typically be hyphenated. For instance, "a well-known author" uses "well-known" as a compound adjective modifying "author."

However, this rule has important exceptions and nuances. If the compound modifier appears after the noun, it is generally not hyphenated. For example, "The author is well known." Here, "well" modifies "known," and "known" acts as an adjective, with "well" functioning as an adverb describing the degree

of being known. The absence of the noun following the modifier eliminates the need for a hyphen to create a cohesive adjectival unit.

Another critical consideration is the nature of the first word in the compound. Adverbs ending in -ly are almost never hyphenated when they form part of a compound modifier because they inherently indicate their modifying role. So, we would write "a brightly lit room," not "a brightly-lit room." The adverb "brightly" clearly modifies "lit," and no hyphen is needed to clarify this relationship.

Examples of Compound Modifiers

To solidify understanding, let's examine several Chicago hyphenation examples involving compound modifiers:

- **Well-behaved children:** "Well-behaved" functions as a single adjective describing "children."
- **Fast-acting medication:** "Fast-acting" is hyphenated because it modifies "medication" as a unit.
- **State-of-the-art technology:** This common idiom requires hyphens to link the descriptive phrase.
- **Twenty-first century:** When used as an adjective before a noun, e.g., "a twenty-first-century building."
- **Long-term strategy:** "Long-term" acts as a compound adjective for "strategy."

Conversely, consider these instances where hyphens are not used:

- **The soup was piping hot.** "Piping" modifies "hot," and the phrase follows the noun "soup."
- **He was a deeply committed individual.** "Deeply" is an adverb ending in -ly, so no hyphen is used before "committed."
- **The policy was clearly defined.** Similar to the above, "clearly" is an adverb and does not require a hyphen.

Common Compound Modifier Phrases

Certain common phrases become established as compound modifiers and are consistently hyphenated. Understanding these recurring patterns can simplify the hyphenation process significantly. These are often words that, if left unhyphenated, could lead to momentary confusion or a different interpretation.

- **First-class service**
- **High-speed chase**
- **Up-to-date information**

- **Part-time employee**
- **Full-time job**

It is important to consult a dictionary or style guide for established terms. Many compound modifiers that were once hyphenated are now commonly written as single words (e.g., "baseball" instead of "base-ball") or remain as open compounds (e.g., "high school"). The CMOS prioritizes clarity, and when a compound is so familiar that it's readily understood as a single unit, the hyphen may be dropped.

Hyphenation with Prefixes and Suffixes

The rules for hyphenating words with prefixes and suffixes are generally more straightforward than those for compound modifiers. The Chicago Manual of Style advises against hyphenating most prefixes and suffixes when they are joined to a root word, especially if the resulting word is common and unambiguous.

For instance, prefixes like "un-," "re-," "pre-," "anti-," and "dis-" are typically incorporated directly into the word without a hyphen. Examples include "unhappy," "rewrite," "preview," "antidote," and "disagree." This creates a cleaner and more fluid visual presentation of the word.

When to Hyphenate Prefixes and Suffixes

There are, however, specific circumstances where hyphenation with prefixes and suffixes is necessary or recommended. These situations typically arise to prevent ambiguity, awkward pronunciation, or when the prefix is attached to a proper noun or a number.

- **To avoid confusion:** If omitting the hyphen could lead to misreading or a different word entirely, a hyphen may be used. For example, "re-cover" (to cover again) versus "recover" (to get well).
- **With proper nouns:** When a prefix is attached to a proper noun, it is usually hyphenated. Examples include "pro-American," "anti-Semite," and "post-Victorian."
- **With numbers:** Prefixes like "pre-" and "post-" are hyphenated when attached to numbers. For instance, "pre-1950" or "post-World War II."
- **When the prefix ends and the root word begins with the same vowel:** While not always strictly enforced, some style guides suggest hyphenation to avoid a double vowel, though CMOS often allows it to be run together if it sounds natural (e.g., "preeminent"). However, in cases where it's jarring, like "co-operate," hyphenation is common and accepted by CMOS.
- **With the suffix "-self":** Pronouns ending in "-self" or "-selves" are always hyphenated, as in "myself," "himself," "herself," "ourselves," "yourselves," and "themselves."

It is crucial to remember that these are guidelines, and context plays a significant role. When in doubt, consulting a reputable dictionary for the

standard spelling of a word is always the best course of action.

Compound Numbers and Fractions

The Chicago Manual of Style has clear directives regarding the hyphenation of compound numbers and fractions. These rules ensure consistency and readability, especially when dealing with numerical expressions.

For compound numbers from twenty-one to ninety-nine, hyphens are always used. This rule applies whether the number is used as a cardinal number or as part of a compound adjective. For example, "There were twenty-five attendees," and "He had a twenty-five-page report." This ensures that these numbers are treated as single units.

Fractions and Their Hyphenation

When fractions are used as adjectives before a noun, they are hyphenated. This applies to both written-out fractions and those expressed numerically. For instance, "a two-thirds majority" or "a 1/2 cup of flour." However, if the fraction appears after the noun, it is typically not hyphenated: "The recipe requires one half cup of flour."

The distinction lies in whether the fraction is acting as a modifier. If it's part of a compound adjective phrase modifying a subsequent noun, the hyphen is employed to link the components of the modifier. This mirrors the general rule for compound modifiers discussed earlier.

Specialized Hyphenation Cases

Beyond the general rules for compound modifiers and prefixes, the Chicago Manual of Style addresses several specialized scenarios that require careful attention to hyphenation. These often involve compound nouns, terms of relationship, and specific stylistic choices.

For example, while many compound nouns become single words over time (e.g., "keyboard"), others remain two words. Hyphenation is generally reserved for compound nouns that are formed to function as a single descriptive unit or are not yet fully established as single words. The decision often hinges on whether the unhyphenated form is clearly understood.

Suspensive Hyphenation

Suspensive hyphenation is a technique used to avoid repetition when multiple compound modifiers share a common element. In this case, a hyphen is used at the end of the first modifier, indicating that the common element is to be understood with each preceding modifier. For instance, "short- and long-term goals." This prevents writing "short-term and long-term goals," which is redundant.

This type of hyphenation is particularly useful in technical writing or lists where conciseness is paramount. It streamlines the text and maintains a logical flow, ensuring that the reader understands that both "short" and "long" modify "term goals."

Numbers in Ranges

When indicating a range, en dashes are typically used, not hyphens. However, if the range itself consists of numbers that are hyphenated as compound numbers (e.g., twenty-one to twenty-five), the hyphenation within the numbers themselves is retained. So, it would be "pages 21-25," but if written out, it would be "from twenty-one to twenty-five."

When to Avoid Hyphenation

While hyphenation is a valuable tool for clarity, it's equally important to know when to refrain from using hyphens. Overuse can lead to cluttered and awkward prose.

The most common situation where hyphens are omitted is when adverbs ending in -ly precede the adjective they modify. As previously mentioned, "happily married" is correct, not "happily-married." The adverb "happily" clearly modifies "married" without the need for a hyphen.

Another key reason to avoid hyphens is when a compound is so familiar and established that it is universally understood as a single unit. Dictionaries often list these compounds as single words (e.g., "download," "website," "bedroom"). If a compound is listed as one word in a reputable dictionary, it should not be hyphenated.

Furthermore, when a compound modifier follows the noun it modifies, it typically does not require a hyphen. For example, "The child was well-behaved" is correct, but in the sentence "The child behaved well," no hyphen is needed because "well" functions as an adverb modifying "behaved." The structure of the sentence dictates whether the compound needs to be treated as a single adjectival unit.

Common Pitfalls and Best Practices

Navigating the rules of hyphenation can be challenging, and several common pitfalls often trip up writers. One of the most frequent errors is inconsistency in applying the rules for compound modifiers, particularly the distinction between modifiers preceding and following a noun.

Another pitfall is the over-hyphenation of adverbs ending in -ly. Writers sometimes mistakenly apply hyphens to these constructions, believing they are creating stronger compound adjectives. However, the inherent nature of these adverbs usually makes a hyphen unnecessary and grammatically incorrect.

A best practice for avoiding errors is to treat hyphenation as a case-by-case decision, guided by clarity. When unsure, consider how the words function together and whether a hyphen would improve or detract from the readability of the sentence. Consulting a current edition of the Chicago Manual of Style or a reliable dictionary for specific words is always advisable.

Maintaining a style sheet can also be incredibly beneficial, especially for long-term projects or collaborative writing efforts. A style sheet allows you to record decisions made regarding hyphenation for specific terms, ensuring consistency throughout the document. This proactive approach minimizes ambiguity and adheres to professional writing standards.

FAQ

Q: When should I hyphenate a compound adjective according to the Chicago Manual of Style?

A: According to the Chicago Manual of Style, you should hyphenate a compound adjective when it precedes the noun it modifies and functions as a single unit to describe that noun. For example, "a thought-provoking article." If the compound modifier appears after the noun, it is generally not hyphenated, as in "The article was thought provoking."

Q: Are there exceptions to the rule of hyphenating compound adjectives before a noun?

A: Yes, there are exceptions. Adverbs ending in -ly are almost never hyphenated when they form part of a compound adjective. For instance, you would write "a brightly lit room," not "a brightly-lit room." Also, if the compound is so common that it is treated as a single word, the hyphen may be omitted.

Q: How does the Chicago Manual of Style handle hyphenation with prefixes like "re-" or "pre-"?

A: Generally, the Chicago Manual of Style advises against hyphenating most prefixes like "re-," "pre-," "un-," and "anti-" when they are joined to a root word to form a common word. Examples include "rewrite," "preview," "unhappy," and "antidote."

Q: When are prefixes typically hyphenated according to Chicago style?

A: Prefixes are typically hyphenated when they are attached to proper nouns (e.g., "pro-American"), when they are attached to numbers (e.g., "pre-1950"), or when the hyphen is necessary to avoid confusion or an awkward combination of letters, such as in "re-cover" (to cover again) versus "recover" (to get well).

Q: What are the rules for hyphenating compound numbers in Chicago style?

A: The Chicago Manual of Style requires hyphens for all compound numbers from twenty-one to ninety-nine, whether they are used as cardinal numbers or as part of compound adjectives. For example, "twenty-two" and "a thirty-five-mile hike."

Q: How should fractions be hyphenated according to the Chicago Manual of Style?

A: When fractions are used as adjectives before a noun, they should be hyphenated. For example, "a two-thirds majority" or "a 1/2 cup." If the

fraction appears after the noun, it is typically not hyphenated, such as "one half cup."

Q: What is "suspensive hyphenation," and when is it used in Chicago style?

A: Suspensive hyphenation is used to avoid repeating a common element in a series of compound modifiers. A hyphen is placed at the end of the first modifier to indicate that the common element applies to all preceding modifiers. An example is "short- and long-term goals."

Q: When should I avoid hyphenating words according to the Chicago Manual of Style?

A: You should avoid hyphenating words when an adverb ending in -ly modifies an adjective, when a compound word is so established that it is recognized as a single word (e.g., "website"), and generally when a compound modifier appears after the noun it modifies.

Q: Is there a difference in hyphenation for "cooperate" versus "co-operate" in Chicago style?

A: While CMOS often allows for compounds with "co-" to be written as one word (e.g., "coordinate"), "co-operate" is also widely accepted and frequently used, especially when it is thought to aid in pronunciation or clarity. The style guide leans toward merging when it's unambiguous, but "co-operate" remains common and acceptable.

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