

#1: The en and em of it



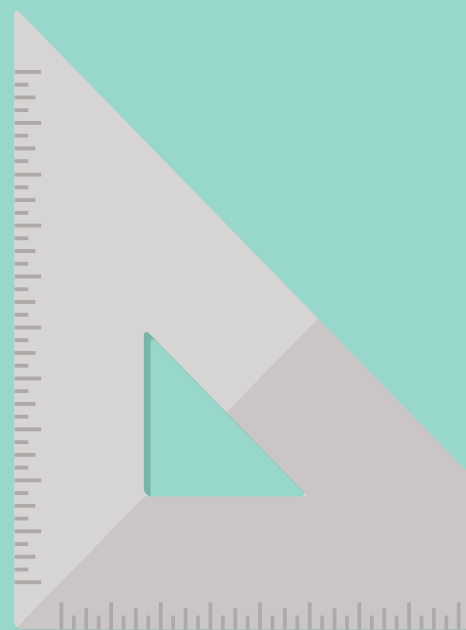
hyphen



en-dash



em-dash



We see them all the time, a – here, a — there, they're everywhere! But what exactly are en-dashes and em-dashes and how should they be used? It's quite simple really!

En-dash

An en-dash is roughly the width of the letter 'n' (hence its name) and is predominantly used as a substitute for "to". For example:

- The years 2001–2003
- July–October 2010
- 1993–99

Em-dash

This is not to be confused with the underappreciated em-dash. (You guessed it, it's the width of the letter 'm'!)

To dispel a few common misconceptions, an em-dash is **not** preceded or followed by a space, it is longer than both a hyphen and the en-dash, and it **can** sometimes be used to replace commas, semicolons, colons, and parentheses as well as to indicate added emphasis, an interruption, or an abrupt change of thought.

Here are some examples of how to use em-dashes correctly:

- Sometimes writing for money—rather than for art or pleasure—is really quite enjoyable.
- Please call my agent—Jessica Cohen—about hiring me.
- I wish you would—oh, never mind.
- Hunter strode into the room—was he mad?—and the family stopped and stared.
- My agreement with Fiona is clear—she teaches me French and I teach her German.

Posted by Ulrike Anderson,
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