

## COLONS, DASHES, HYPHENS, AND PARENTHESES

Key

1. A **colon (:)** is used at the end of a complete thought to introduce a list, an explanation, or a formal quotation. (Do not use a colon if the list or explanation is connected to the sentence without a complete stop.)

To repair this truck, we need the following parts: a radiator hose and a head gasket.

This amplifier is not worth repairing: the required replacement parts cost too much.

Lincoln's "Gettysburg Address" begins with these words: "Four score and seven years ago."

The three students who scored 100 were Josh, Belinda, and Sara. (No stop, so no colon needed.)

2. A **dash (--)** indicates a dramatic pause or special emphasis. Dashes are used to emphasize information that interrupts the flow of the sentence. A dash can also be used to highlight a special comment or shift in meaning at the end of a sentence. A dash is also found before a summarizing phrase or clause that follows a list. Study the following examples:

Three prominent citizens--Edwin Wilkes, Tom Smith, and Roberta Marsh--were elected to the board.

I knew the material perfectly--until test day.

Math, English, psychology, communications--I have a busy schedule this quarter.

3. A **hyphen (-)** is used to join two or more words together that are being used to describe a noun. It is also used in some compound words and with some prefixes (all-, ex-, self-) and suffixes. It is used with numbers and to divide a word between syllables at the end of a line. Study the following examples:

We were delayed by a slow-moving train. My impatient sister-in-law was really upset.

All twenty-one students in my math class appeared to be self-motivated.

Everyone was supposed to read pages 24-94 over the weekend.

4. **Parentheses ( )** are used to set off information that is useful (or helpful) but not essential to the meaning of the sentence. Study the following examples:

Chapter Four (pages 123-156) is one of the most difficult we will study this quarter.

I have seen many changes (most of them for the better) at Sinclair during the last ten years.

Note: As you read, notice when writers use colons, dashes, hyphens, and parentheses (as well as other marks of punctuation). If you do not understand why a writer is using one or the other of these, show the example to your instructor for an explanation. Good writers use punctuation to emphasize and clarify. They have reasons (beyond just being aware of rules) for punctuating the way they do just as they have reasons for using certain words and sentence structures.

A. Insert **colons** and **dashes** as needed in the following sentences. Do not change or add any other punctuation marks. All sentences will require at least one or the other to be added.

1. No <sup>^</sup>one and I mean no one <sup>^</sup> should be permitted to smoke in a restaurant.
2. Here's what I need at the store: milk, bananas, grapefruit, and ice cream.
3. Folk, blues, and Celtic: these are all types of music I really enjoy.
4. I can work with anyone in this department <sup>^</sup> except Sally.
5. Being a success in this class is easy: all it takes is the ability to think!  
*explanation*

B. Insert **hyphens** and **parentheses** as needed in the following sentences. Do not change or add any other punctuation marks. All sentences will require at least one or the other.

1. Seventy-two people have been invited to the wedding.
2. Yard work (not my favorite pastime) can be a time-consuming activity.
3. The president-elect of our company (the daughter of the former president) is an outstanding individual whom everyone respects and admires.
4. Marriage (such a wonderful institution) does not agree with me, a four-time loser in divorce court. I should have remained a happy-go-lucky bachelor.
5. Students (at least the ones who hope to pass the quiz) should read pages 150-225 before the next class.
6. The Civil War (1861-1865) caused great pain and suffering, especially among families who happened to have members (as unusual as this sounds) fighting on opposite sides.