

Using Dashes Correctly

The English language provides three sizes of the dash, each a graphic symbol used for a specific punctuation purpose.

A **hyphen** (-) is used to combine a compound modifier before a noun (five-year strategic plan) and to separate numbers (805-555-1212).

The **en-dash** (–) is the width of the typesetter’s “n” and is used to replace the word “through” (sizes 4–12).

The **em-dash** (—), so named because the dash is the width of the typesetter’s “m,” is used to alert the reader that the words following it are important. For example, the em-dash is often used to create a strong break within a sentence in lieu of commas, thus:

EXAMPLE The winners—six of whom came from France—credited their country’s health policy in their acceptance speech.

The em-dash can also be used to set off and emphasize the words that follow it.

EXAMPLE All entrants to the business plan competition were engineering majors—except for the winning team.

In some cases, the em-dash is used instead of a semicolon or a period to emphasize the following independent clause .

EXAMPLE This potential threat is not only happening behind closed doors—no one even knows to whom the doors belong.

Your task. Identify which dash is correct for each of the following. Some sentences may require more than one type of dash.

1. Candidates who received scores of 10 through 15 will be called back for an interview.
2. These networks, already an established cost management strategy, also help members comply.
3. Providers such as Vanguard and Fidelity already offer online assistance. Wells Fargo was forced to at least meet them.
4. Those interested in obtaining a quote should call 8005553477.
5. The key to accomplishing diversity is to seek diverse candidates, which may entail recruiting where more diverse candidates are likely to be found.
6. Some companies are using in network providers to keep a cap on cost increases.

7. Only two firms met or exceeded expectations, Charles Schwab and Fidelity, and those firms were also the most highly rated by consumers.
8. The double digit increases in drug costs have insurers seeking new ways to keep policies affordable; unfortunately, those increases result in higher deductibles.
9. Special low cost coverage is being offered for those aged 18 through 30.
10. The survey was released to HR professionals in late September, just weeks before enrollment season began in earnest.
11. One on one advice can be expensive, especially for participants with low existing balances.
12. For a variety of reasons, most of them legal, the retirement policies are full of jargon.