



### • Colons •

Not to be confused with the semicolon, which functions similarly to the comma, the **colon** introduces information.

When a sentence is complete but you want to add more detailed information, a colon does the trick. But the thing to remember is that **a colon must follow a complete sentence**—if the sentence is incomplete, then a colon isn't necessary.

This position requires a candidate with expertise in many design skills: familiarity with Photoshop, training in web design, and knowledge of image composition.

This position requires a candidate who: is familiar with Photoshop, has training in web design, and knows basic image composition. (Extraneous colon!)

In this second example, that colon is unnecessary, because the sentence requires the listed information in order to be a whole sentence. It's better in this case to rewrite the sentence:

This position requires a candidate who is familiar with Photoshop, has training in web design, and knows basic image composition, among other design skills.

### • Dashes •

There are three different types of dash, each of which serves a different grammatical function:

**Hyphen ( - ): joins together words to function as single words**

For instance, if you want to describe something as being the color of a pumpkin, you can describe it as being “**pumpkin-colored**.”

It can also connect words that aren't physically connected on the page, like for instance, to say “**two- and three-year-old children**.” Here, the hyphen after “two” connects it to “-year-old” without them having to be physically right next to each other.

Finally, the hyphen can indicate a word that's been broken up due to print formatting, for instance if you have a page that looks something like this:

One of the worst hazards about walking around barefoot, alongside the possibility of getting burned, is broken glass.

The thing to remember about this type of hyphen use is that words should not be split randomly—they can only be split between syllables.

### **N-dash, or En-dash ( – ): indicates a range**

The N-dash is so named because it is the length of the letter N, and it is used mainly to separate numbers or dates to show a range. For instance: January 2014 – July 2015.

The N-dash can also be used as a connector in non-sentence language, such as:

1<sup>st</sup> President – George Washington

2<sup>nd</sup> President – John Adams

N-dashes are not, however, to be confused with the third type of dash:

### **M-dash, or Em-dash ( — ): separates parts of sentences**

The M-dash is the length of the letter M and is a very versatile punctuation mark. It separates different parts of sentences and can stand in for commas, semicolons, and colons:

The first image depicts whimsical fairies in harmonious reds, greens and blues, but the second only shows a dark forest of trees.

↳ The first image depicts whimsical fairies in harmonious reds, greens and blues—but the second only shows a dark forest of trees.

Final Fantasy is one of his favorite games; its art is vibrant, rich, and majestic.

↳ Final Fantasy is one of his favorite games—its art is vibrant, rich, and majestic.

All of my best friends share certain characteristics: kindness, tolerance, and the instinct to listen first and judge later.

↳ All of my best friends share certain characteristics—kindness, tolerance, and the instinct to listen first and judge later.

The M-dash doesn't adhere too closely to its own set of rules; rather, it's extremely versatile and the usage varies according to what sort of tone and mood the writer wishes to create.