

Dashes

USE THE DASH (--)

You can create a dash (--) by typing two hyphens with no space in between (--). A dash is used to

1. Set off material that needs emphasis.
2. Help clarify an idea.
3. Separate a list from an independent clause at the beginning or end of a sentence.

SETTING OFF MATERIAL THAT NEEDS EMPHASIS

George Bush became the first incumbent vice president -- since 1836 -- to win election to the presidency.

The phrase *since 1836* is being emphasized.

HELPING TO CLARIFY AN IDEA

In 1989, President Bush responded effectively to the upheaval in Eastern Europe – by offering economic aid to Hungary, Poland, and Czechoslovakia and by lending his support to the reunification of Germany.

NOTE: The more formal colon can replace the dash.

SEPARATING A LIST FROM AN INDEPENDENT CLAUSE

The strengthening of the Western alliance, the Persian Gulf War, and the signing of several arms reduction treaties with the Soviet Union -- these were the great successes of President Bush's foreign policy.

NOTE: A dash can come before or after an independent clause.

Sample Quiz questions:

1. Paying attention to the correct use of dashes, choose the best written item.
 - a. Yosemite, Mount Rainier, and Grand Canyon these are three -- of my favorite national parks.
 - b. Yosemite, Mount Rainier, and Grand Canyon -- these are three -- of my favorite national parks.
 - c. Yosemite, Mount Rainier, and Grand Canyon -- these are three of my favorite national parks.

Answer: c. Yosemite, Mount Rainier, and Grand Canyon -- these are three of my favorite national parks.

2. Paying attention to the correct use of dashes, choose the best written item.

- a. William Shakespeare, John Keats, William Butler Yeats -- these are my favorite poets.
- b. William Shakespeare -- John Keats -- William Butler Yeats -- these are my favorite poets.
- c. William Shakespeare, John Keats, William Butler Yeats these are my favorite -- poets.

Answer: a. William Shakespeare, John Keats, William Butler Yeats -- these are my favorite poets.