Dashes and Hyphens

Generally, dashes separate and hyphens join. A hyphen is the shortest of the horizontal punctuation lines; dashes are longer, traditionally represented by the en dash and the em dash.

Below are the three forms that the AJP uses:

Hyphen: - (to join words)

En dash: – (to show page or date spans, or distinctions like ‘subject–predicate’)

Em dash: — (to isolate clauses and fragments)

AJP Style *requires* en dashes (*not* hyphens or em dashes) to be used for page spans.

When inserting an aside in a sentence, em dashes (—) are used as a pair to bracket an independent clause, or at the end of a sentence to introduce a sentence fragment. Do not put spaces before and after the em dashes, and avoid using more than one set of em dashes in any given sentence.

She smiled faintly, then—to my great surprise—pulled out a knife.

I took no notice when she reached into her bag—until she pulled out a knife.

Unspaced en dashes are used to link separate and independent or contrasted items (unlike the hyphenation involved in, e.g., ‘evidence-based medicine’, ‘twentieth-century philosophy’:

hand–eye co-ordination, subject–predicate distinction, analytic–synthetic

However, where a linguistic entity is complex (i.e., more than one word long) a spaced em dash is required:

The New South Wales — Victoria border . . .

Hyphens are used to join compound nouns and adjectives, e.g.:

anti-apartheid	*two-year-old*

Hyphenate compounds including words such as ‘all’, ‘self' and ‘half’, e.g.:

self-knowledge	*half-hearted efforts*	*all-knowing*	*all-seeing*

Hyphenate compound adjectives (including measurements) used before a noun, e.g.:

a one-metre rule	*a long-lost friend*	*a first-year student*	*a well-known example*

Hyphens are usually dropped when a phrase moves from attributive to predicative position.

This example is well known.

This well-respected doctor was not well respected in her own home.

A so-called twentieth-century philosopher might well have had his opinions shaped prior to the twentieth century.

These common-sense philosophers rarely exhibited common sense.

Do not use a hyphen after adverbs ending in ‘ly’:

A well-respected doctor BUT *An exceptionally well respected doctor.*