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.*