



Uni-edit English Writing Tip: How to use hyphens correctly (Part A)

英文寫作秘訣：如何正確使用連字號 (Part A)

難度：進階級

征文的編輯們在編修英文論文時，常常需要糾正連字號的用法。能夠正確使用連字號代表作者的英文程度極佳，能透過這種標點符號的使用，讓寫作的細節更加清楚易懂。

連字號是一條短橫槓，能幫助讀者清楚區辨出文中哪一個是被修飾的字，常見於各種形式的英文學術寫作中。

一般人寫作時常會誤用連字號，這可能是因為它在口語上並沒有對應的符號，只有寫作時才會用到。妥善使用連字號能讓讀者在閱讀時更加流暢，避免語意不清的問題。

下面我們來看看一些常見的用法以及錯誤：

創造複合字

正確: the well-known actor (知名演員)

錯誤: the well known actor

在這個例子中，well-known 是個複合字，用來形容 actor。在這邊連字號表示 well 這個字只對 known 有效，而不會擴及 actor。也就是說，這個詞的意思不是一個「健康 (well)而且為人所知(known)」的演員，而是「知名」(well-known)的演員。

正確: the out-of-date curriculum (過時的課程)

正確: short-term solution (暫時的解決方案)

讓修飾的關係變清楚

正確: He is a small-business man. (他是某家小型企業的老闆。)

錯誤: He is a small business man. (他是個個子很小的生意人。)

在以上的例子中，使用連字號可以讓讀者明瞭「小」的是企業的規模，而不是老闆的個子。

正確: A light-green suitcase is pale in color. (淺綠色的行李箱屬於淡色系。)

這邊描述的是行李箱的顏色。

正確: A light green suitcase is not heavy. (輕的綠色行李箱重量不重。)

這邊則是描述行李箱重量不重，且顏色是綠色。

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Level of difficulty: Advanced

Editors at Uni-edit often need to correct the use of hyphens during English editing of manuscripts. Correct use of hyphens shows the author's advanced command of English and helps to make detailed descriptions clear.

The hyphen, which is a very short horizontal line that looks like this '-', is very helpful to disambiguate modified words, which will make your writing clearer. Hyphens are used often in all academic writing in English.

Hyphens cause writers more trouble than any other form of punctuation, except perhaps commas. This may be because the hyphen has no analogue in speech; it is punctuation created purely by the needs of print. The point of the hyphen is to avoid ambiguity for the reader.

Let's look at some common uses and misuses:

Create a compound word using a hyphen

Correct: the well-known actor

Incorrect: the well known actor

In this example, 'well-known' is a compound word that modifies 'actor'. The hyphen indicates that the 'well' applies to only the 'known' and does not apply to the 'actor'. That is, it is the actor is not both well and known.

Correct: the out-of-date curriculum

Correct: short-term solution

Make the modification clear using a hyphen

Correct: He is a small-businessman.

Incorrect: He is a small businessman.

Above, to indicate that it is the business that is small, and not the man who is small, we need the hyphen. Below is another example, where both situations are correct but have different meanings.

Correct: A light-green suitcase is pale in color.

Here the suitcase's color is described.

Correct: A light green suitcase is not heavy.

Here the suitcase is both light in weight and is green.

END OF TIP