

**841** Use a hyphen after *quasi* when an adjective follows.

quasi-judicial	quasi-public
quasi-legislative	<b>BUT:</b> quasi corporation

**842** When *after* is used as a prefix, do not use a hyphen to set it off from the root word. When *after* is used as a preposition in a compound adjective, insert a hyphen.

aftereffect	aftershave	<b>BUT:</b> an after-dinner speech
afterlife	aftershock	an after-hours club
aftermath	afterthought	my after-tax income
afternoon	afterward	an after-theater snack

**843** When *in* is used as a prefix meaning “not,” do not use a hyphen to set it off from the root word. When *in* is used as a preposition in a compound adjective, insert a hyphen.

inactive	infallible	<b>BUT:</b> an in-depth analysis
inarticulate	insensitive	in-flight movies
incapable	insolvent	our in-house designers
indecisive	intolerable	an in-service program

**844** Although a hyphen is not ordinarily used to set off the prefix *mid*, a hyphen normally follows *mid* in expressions involving numbers or capitalized words.

during the mid-sixties **OR** the mid-60s (see ¶¶434, 439a)  
 sailing in the mid-Atlantic in mid-June (see ¶838)

**845** Many words beginning with the prefix *off* are written solid, but some are hyphenated.

offhand	offshore	<b>BUT:</b> off-color
offline	offspring	off-key
offset	offstage	off-season
offshoot	offtrack	off-white

**846** If the addition of the suffix *less* or *like* causes three *l*'s to occur in succession, insert a hyphen before the suffix. (See also ¶706, note.)

lifelike	businesslike	<b>BUT:</b> bell-like
faultless	bottomless	shell-less

## Compound Computer Terms

**847** The free spirits who coin most computer terms typically feel no obligation to follow the standard rules for the treatment of compound words. Consider the term *World Wide Web*. According to ¶820b, *worldwide* should be a solid word, but actual usage—in this case, *World Wide*—must always take precedence over rules. Indeed, the rules merely represent an attempt to impose some order and consistency on a language that cheerfully persists in disorder and inconsistency.

The problem is especially severe in the treatment of compound words in computer terminology, where changes occur so rapidly that it is impossible to establish a style that one can confidently expect to last for several years. What's more, at any given time a particular word may be in a state of unsettled transition and appear in several ways—hyphenated, spaced, and solid. The general tendency is for hyphenated forms to give way to either spaced or solid forms and for the spaced forms to give way to solid forms.

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## ¶847

Consider the word *e-mail*. Initially presented as *electronic mail*, the term evolved into *E-mail*, and conservative writers still write the word with a capital *E*. Writers on the cutting edge, who continually press for fewer hyphens and less capitalization, have already converted the term to *email*. Those currently occupying the middle ground treat the word as *e-mail*, but with the passage of time (two years? four years? six months?) *email* may become the standard form.

Dictionaries typically show the more conservative spellings, because they cannot keep pace with the changes rapidly taking place in the field. Where, then, do you turn for up-to-date guidance? The best places to look are (1) the magazines and dictionaries devoted to computer and Internet technology and (2) the manuals and style guides published by industry insiders. If you are writing for a knowledgeable audience of computer users, you can choose the emerging style for the treatment of compound words. If, on the other hand, you are writing for readers who are not immersed in the field, you may find it safer to stay with the more conservative treatment of these words, because such readers will more easily grasp, say, *file name* than *filename*.

The following paragraphs provide some guidelines on the current treatment of compound computer terms.

- a. In the following list, the two-word forms (shown first) are still more common, but the one-word forms are starting to take hold.

file name	<b>OR</b>	filename	screen saver	<b>OR</b>	screensaver
home page	<b>OR</b>	homepage	spell checker	<b>OR</b>	spellchecker
menu bar	<b>OR</b>	menubar	voice mail	<b>OR</b>	voicemail

- b. In the following list, the one-word forms (shown first) are more common, but the spaced or hyphenated forms are still being used.

barcode	<b>OR</b>	bar code	offline	<b>OR</b>	off-line
handheld	<b>OR</b>	hand-held	offscreen	<b>OR</b>	off-screen
hardwired	<b>OR</b>	hard-wired	online	<b>OR</b>	on-line
logoff (n.)	<b>OR</b>	log-off	onscreen	<b>OR</b>	on-screen
<b>BUT:</b> log off (v.)			touchpad	<b>OR</b>	touch pad
logon (n.)	<b>OR</b>	log-on	touchscreen	<b>OR</b>	touch screen
<b>BUT:</b> log on (v.)			wordwrap	<b>OR</b>	word wrap

- c. In the following list, the two-word forms (shown first) are more common, but the hyphenated forms (which follow the standard rules) are also being used.

dot matrix printers	<b>OR</b>	dot-matrix printers
local area networks	<b>OR</b>	local-area networks
wide area networks	<b>OR</b>	wide-area networks

- d. In the following list, the hyphenated forms (shown first) are more common, but the solid or spaced forms (if given) are now being used in materials aimed at industry insiders.

e-mail	<b>OR</b>	email	drop-down menu	<b>OR</b>	dropdown menu
pop-up window			pull-down menu	<b>OR</b>	pulldown menu
read-only memory			ink-jet printer	<b>OR</b>	inkjet printer
write-only files			random-access memory	<b>OR</b>	random access memory

- e. The following compound words are always solid except in a few special cases.

backup (n. & adj.)	lookup table	trackball
<b>BUT:</b> back up (v.)	<b>BUT:</b> look up (v.)	trackpad
desktop	newsgroup	uplink (v.)
downlink (v.)	newsreader	upload (v.)
download (v.)	<b>BUT:</b> news server	userid (derived from <i>user ID</i> )
keyword	palmtop	whois (derived from <i>who is</i> )
laptop	toolbar	workstation

- f. Compound words beginning with *Web* are usually two words.

Web site	Web server	<b>BUT:</b> Webmaster
Web page	Web browser	Webcasting
Web surfer	Web directory	Webzine

**NOTE:** The term *Web site* is starting to appear as one word (*Website*). Moreover, this word (as well as a few other *Web* compounds) is starting to lose the initial cap (*website*). However, for the sake of consistency, it is better to retain the capital *W* until a majority of these terms (such as the *World Wide Web* and *the Web*) lose their initial cap as well.

## Sometimes One Word, Sometimes Two Words

**848** A number of common words may be written either as one solid word or as two separate words, depending on the meaning. See individual entries listed alphabetically in ¶1101 (unless otherwise indicated) for the following words:

Almost—all most	Indirect—in direct
Already—all ready	Into—in to (see <i>In</i> )
Altogether—all together	Maybe—may be
Always—all ways	Nobody—no body
Anymore—any more	None—no one (see ¶1013)
Anyone—any one (see ¶1010, note)	Onto—on to (see <i>On</i> )
Anytime—any time	Someday—some day
Anyway—any way	Someone—some one (see ¶1010, note)
Awhile—a while	Sometime—sometimes—some time
Everyday—every day	Upon—up on (see <i>On</i> )
Everyone—every one (see ¶1010, note)	Whatever—what ever
Indifferent—in different	Whoever—who ever

- *Hyphens in spelled-out numbers:* see ¶¶427, 465.  
*Hyphens in spelled-out dates:* see ¶411.  
*Hyphens in spelled-out amounts of money:* see ¶420.  
*Hyphens in spelled-out fractions:* see ¶427.  
*Hyphens in numbers representing a continuous sequence:* see ¶¶459–460.