Making Compound Words

Most compound words don't need hyphens. However, a small dash, called a hyphen, can be used between words that work together as a single idea to make a compound word.

For example:

up-to-date information
a time-consuming task

When to Use a Hyphen

Use a hyphen to join two or more words as a single adjective **before** a noun.

a well-loved toy
a chocolate-covered peanut

However, if the compound modifier comes after the noun, then no hyphen is used.

The toy is well loved.
The peanuts were chocolate covered.

When to Use a Hyphen

Use a hyphen with compound numbers.

sixty-four
a six-page document

Use a hyphen to avoid confusion
or awkward combinations of letters.

re-sign the documents (not resign from a job)
shell-like (not shelllike, with three letter l's)