Hyphens are primarily used to establish clarity. The following circumstances typically require the use of a hyphen.

- Spelling out compound numbers
  Ex: *Lou ate sixty-seven jelly beans.*

- Distinguishing between two words with the same spelling.
  Ex: *Jon must recover (find) the stereo speakers. (v.) Jon must re-cover (repair) the stereo speakers.*

- Forming compound adjectives
  (combining two adjectives or an adverb and an adjective to describe a noun).
  Ex: *Michael has the autograph of a well-known actor.*

- Spelling out fractions
  Ex: *He painted two-thirds of the room.*

- Dividing a word at the end of a line
  Ex: *A huge dog came running toward him.*

- Connecting a series of numbers or dates
  Ex: *Read pages 9-30; they cover American history from 1920-29.*

- Connecting a prefix to a number or a capital letter
  Ex: *Michael’s political views prove that he is pro-American.*
  *Color television was introduced post-1950.*

- Connecting prefixes to words that begin with the same letter the prefix ends with
  Ex: *The paper failed to submit, so a re-entry was necessary.*
  *Shannon’s ideas for the project were co-opted by her classmates.*

- Connecting invented words or long phrases used as adjectives
  Ex: *Sue has a holier-than-thou attitude.*

- Using suspended compounds
  Ex: *The couple wanted a one- or two-year lease on the apartment.*

- Using "ex-" and "self-
  Ex: *Rita spoke to her ex-husband yesterday.*
  *Emily has a lot of self-pity.*