The dash

- The dash is punctuation. It is usually used to set off a nonessential element:
  - Our new goal—retention—changes the way we approach our mission.
  - Our new goal (retention) changes the way we approach our mission.
  - Our new goal, retention, changes the way we approach our mission.

- The dash is more dramatic—it draws the reader’s eye to the element.
- The parenthetical is more low-key (it acts more as a whispered aside).

The dash

- There are three styles of dashes:
  - the broken dash (left over from typewriter days) —
  - the em dash (1/m) —
  - the en dash (1/n) —

- Use one style of dash consistently throughout the document.

- You may put a space before and after the dash or not.
  - The new version — 4.1 — is flawed.
  - The new version—4.1—is flawed.
  - Just be consistent throughout the document.
The hyphen
- The hyphen is a *spelling* tool. Never use it as punctuation.
  - president-elect
  - low-cost health insurance
  - mother-in-law
  - ex-husband
  - self-interest
  - two-year-old child
  - ninety-three

The hyphen
- Traditionally, the hyphen is also used to show ranges of numbers.
  - The cost should be $25-$40.
  - But this trend is changing, and you will often see the *en* dash used to show ranges.
  - The cost should be $25–$40.
  - Either is correct, as long as you use the same style consistently throughout your document.

Phrasal adjectives
- A phrasal adjective is a group of words that act as a single word to modify the noun that *follows* them.
- Hyphens connect the modifying words.
  - The bell sounds at five-minute intervals.

Phrasal adjectives
- The purpose of a phrasal adjective is to guide the reader smoothly through the sentence.

Phrasal adjectives
- Sometimes the distinction is a fine one:
  - Please provide a two-day notice before painting the conference room.
    - “A two-day notice” uses a phrasal adjective.
  - Please provide two days’ notice before painting.
    - “Two days’ notice” is the possessive form of the phrase “a notice of two days.”
Parentheses

- Like the dash, the parenthetical may be used for to set off a **nonessential element** in a sentence.
  - Our new goal (retention) changes the way we approach our mission.

- The parenthetical is also used for internal citations, as in the MLA example below.
  - One author explained, "We write to taste life twice, in the moment and in retrospection" (Nin 16).

The quotation mark

- In American English, periods and commas **always** go inside the quotation mark.
  - Our new supervisor suggests we rename the project “Operation FastBuild.”
  - If we call it “FastBuild,” we may not live up to the name!

- In American English, colons and semicolons always go outside the quotation mark.
  - The team is uncertain of the purpose behind the name “FastBuild”; is it an incentive to push production?
  - This is what I think of “FastBuild”: it will not cause us to produce any faster.

- In American English, question marks and exclamation points may go inside or outside the quotation mark depending on the part of the sentence to which they logically attach.
  - Shall we agree to call the project “FastBuild’’?
  - The new supervisor asked Jon, “Do you like our new project name?’’

- In American English, quoted language within quoted language uses single quotation marks.
  - I heard the new supervisor ask Rita, “Don’t you think ‘FastBuild’ should be our new project name?”
Brackets

- Brackets show that you have changed something in the quoted language you integrate into your sentence.

Original: “A writer doesn’t solve problems. He allows them to emerge.”
Quoted: As one writer put it, writers don’t “solve problems. [They] allow[ ] them to emerge” (Dürrenmatt 452).

The ellipsis

- The ellipsis is used when you are quoting; it shows that you have left something out.

Original: “All that we are is the result of what we have thought. The mind is everything. What we think, we become.”
Quoted: Buddha said, “All that we are is the result of what we have thought. ... What we think, we become.”

Pesky Punctuation 3

- Dash
- Hyphen
- Phrasal Adjective
- Parentheses
- Quotation Marks
- Brackets
- Ellipsis