HYPHENS

- **Hyphens connect word groups if they are used as adjectives.** Note the difference in examples below: the second sentence in each pair uses a hyphenated word group as an adjective.

  Asher’s car is not **up to date**.
  Asher needs to get an **up-to-date** car.
  Jacob will be **nine years old** this year.
  Mother brought her **twelve-year-old** son to the community pool.
  Jacob’s father smacked him with a wooden spoon that was **three inches** long.
  Jacob’s father smacked him with a **three-inch** wooden spoon.

Some compound words—such as notebook and looking glass—do not require hyphens. When in doubt, check the dictionary!

- **If an adverb ending in –ly precedes the noun, you do NOT use a hyphen.**
  Mother and Father are a happily married couple.

- **Hyphens are used for two-word numbers from twenty-one through ninety-nine and between the numerator and the denominator of two-word fractions (one-half, two-fifths)**

- **Hyphens join prefixes all-, ex-, and self-, suffixes (–elect), and letters to a word.**
  Ever since Asher got a job at the mechanic’s shop, he has been self-supporting.
  Mother’s ex-husband professed his all-encompassing hatred for Mother’s new lover.
  The PTA president-elect made a strong impression on Mother.
  Jacob wore a neon-green T-shirt.

- **Prefixes such as anti-, non-, pro-, and co- do not normally require a hyphen unless you want to prevent misreading (co-op is not the same as coop) or a double or triple letter (anti-itch, bell-like).** When in doubt about whether to use a hyphen or not, consult the dictionary!
  Father always has to sit in the nonsmoking section of the restaurant.
  Asher got tired of Mother’s antifamily behavior and told her to leave the house.

- **Hyphens avoid ambiguity in certain words.**
  Playing baseball with his friends is Jacob’s favorite recreation.
  Mother’s latkes were praised for their strong re-creation of authentic deli cuisine.

- **Hyphenate the written form of fractions and of compound numbers from twenty-one to ninety-nine.**
  Asher bequeathed one-third of his baseball cards to Jacob. He felt that the first twenty-five cards, though, would be his own choice.

►Did you like the sample sentences? Get the whole story in Joshua Braff’s *The Unthinkable Thoughts of Jacob Green.*