



The Dash as Punctuation: Substitutions

The dash is longer than a hyphen. When typing a dash, use either two hyphens or the character called an em dash. The dash may be used to signal a substitution for parentheses or as a substitute for the phrases like “it is” or “they are.” When used as a substitute, the words after the dash become more important.

Example 1: There is someone we should elect president; it is Olivia!

With a dash as a substitution: There is someone we should elect president—Olivia!

Note that there are no spaces around the dash.

Example 2: I believe (and I say this in all honesty) you should be a writer.

I believe—and I say this in all honesty—you should be a writer.

Rewrite each sentence using dashes as substitutions.

1. Let's agree on the next steps; they are make a plan, divide the work, and complete the assignment.
2. The Beatles (the most famous rock band in history) were from England.
3. I know who is at the door; it is the mailman.
4. Mary, Queen of Scots (who was also a French queen) was cousin to Elizabeth I of England.
5. Tomorrow (my last day of school) is almost here.
6. She knew who she would pick on her team and they were Ralph, Juan and Lucy.



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1. Let’s agree on the next steps; they are make a plan, divide the work, and complete the assignment.

Let’s agree on the next steps—make a plan, divide the work, and complete the assignment.

2. The Beatles (the most famous rock band in history) were from England.

The Beatles—the most famous rock band in history—were from England.

3. I know who is at the door; it is the mailman.

I know who is at the door—the mailman.

4. Mary, Queen of Scots (who was also a French queen) was cousin to Elizabeth I of England.

Mary, Queen of Scots—who was also a French queen—was cousin to Elizabeth I of England.

5. Tomorrow (my last day of school) is almost here.

Tomorrow—my last day of school—is almost here.

6. She knew who she would pick on her team and they were Ralph, Juan and Lucy.

She knew who she would pick on her team—Ralph, Juan and Lucy.