

THE LONG HYPHEN

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Have Word Ways readers noticed a new type of punctuation character which has been appearing recently in Time magazine -- the long hyphen?

Many words are spelled with ordinary hyphens, listed in various dictionaries with ordinary hyphens, and spelled by Time magazine with ordinary hyphens. The following examples from the March 7, 1977 issue can all be found (with hyphens) in Webster's Third Edition: acre-feet, blue-eyed, break-in, clear-cut, far-flung, gilt-edged, hand-lettered, high-stepping, long-term, self-criticism, small-time, well-meaning. Other terms used by Time magazine aren't yet found in dictionaries; usually these are formed by stringing together various words and/or numbers, connecting them with ordinary hyphens. Some examples from the same issue of Time: 100-year-old, 10,000-acre, budget-balancing, Detroit-based, DNA-borne, drought-stricken, ex-railroader, freer-thinking, hydroelectric-hungry, neurologist-turned-politician, peak-to-peak, plutonium-enrichment, quarter-mile-long, song-and-dance, three-continent, water-guzzling.

However, something less conventional has been creeping into Time magazine recently -- the long hyphen. (I don't know whether it has a technical name or not, but this is what I call it.) The long hyphen is used by Time where a prefix or suffix is applied to a multiword term or an already hyphenated term, or where one such term is attached to some other word. I went through the March 7, 1977 issue to search out all the examples of terms using long hyphens. Here are eleven of them, quoted in context:

- ... it's pro-Sun Belt and anti-Snow Belt ...
- ... ex-Agriculture Secretary Earl Butz has already adjusted quite nicely ...
- ... what does an ex-sex symbol do? ...
- ... ex-Transportation Secretary William Coleman will practice law in the capital ...
- ... the French-West German Roland antiaircraft missile ...
- ... the New York City-born Galante ... possesses truly impressive criminal credentials ...
- ... an oil well-drilling firm in Dallas ...
- ... the doctors picked Puerto Rican-born Jose Serrano ...
- ... saturated-fat-laden beef ...
- ... sponsored by the Socialist-Christian Democrat coalition ...

Can readers cite examples from other magazines, newspapers or books?