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# Creating En Rules and Em Rules in Microsoft Word

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## Creating En Rules and Em Rules in Microsoft Word

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### **Creating En Rules and Em Rules in Microsoft Word**

En rules (–) and em rules (—), which are also called en dashes and em dashes, are used with considerable frequency in scholarly prose. Each type of rule can be used with a space on either side or without any spacing around it, depending on its purpose in a sentence. The functions of these dashes are various and sometimes overlap with the functions of hyphens, colons and commas. Accepted scholarly practice generally involves using either en rules or em rules, rather than both, in a single document, though there are exceptions – when, for instance, en rules are used for parenthetical clauses in the main text, but em rules are used in the index or bibliography. Using en rules and em rules correctly can be challenging at times, and not least among the challenges is the task of effectively formatting these dashes.

En rules and em rules are special characters in Word, and often problems and inconsistencies associated with the use of both kinds of dashes are caused by the fact that authors are unsure of how to produce these rules. Two methods can be accessed by clicking on the Insert tab in the main menu of Word and then clicking on the Symbol button at the far right. A box of recently used symbols will come up,

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dash and en dash are at the top of the special characters list, so you need only select the one you want and then click on the Insert button. This will insert the selected dash wherever you have left the cursor in your text, so do be sure to position the cursor correctly before using this method. You will also find the shortcut keys for both kinds of rules by following this path.

Word will automatically create en rules and em rules for you, however, if you key in the right information in the right order. To produce an en rule type the word that should precede the en rule, add a space after it, type a hyphen (or two: see below), another space, the word that should follow the en rule and then a space after it. When this last space is added, the program will change the spaced hyphen into a spaced en rule, but it will not do this if there are no spaces around the hyphen or in some cases when the program detects what it considers something odd about the sentence structure or punctuation, so if you do not want spaces around the en rule or the program is not cooperating, you will need to use the Insert function as above or the appropriate shortcut key.

To produce an em rule type the word that will precede the em rule, then type two hyphens in a row without any spaces, followed by the word that should follow the em rule and a final space. In this case, when the last space is added the double hyphens will be transformed into an em rule unless the program decides that something about the sentence is odd, in which case you will need to use the Insert function or the appropriate shortcut key. You will also need to use one of these methods if you want a spaced em rule because, if you add spaces around the double hyphens, Word will turn the hyphens into an en rule instead of an em rule.

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