



**DeYoung Consulting Services**

*Helping People Learn up to Their Potential*

If there's one spelling issue that can frustrate any writer, it's compound words. Sometimes they're hyphenated; sometimes compound words are two separate words; and, sometimes two individual words are combined into one word.

Often compound words begin as two separate words and then with time become a hyphenated word before evolving into one word. There's a great example of this happening right now. Today's primary mode of written communication—"e-mail" is an abbreviated version of "electronic mail." The word is now in flux with journalism outlets using "e-mail" while other industries, including technology fields, using "email."

Unfortunately, there aren't any rules that govern all compound words.

Keep in mind, though, that compounds words might need a hyphen to clarify the meaning of the word. Take a look at this example.

*My great uncle Bill loves baseball.*

*My great-uncle Bill loves baseball.*

The hyphen clarifies the subject of the sentence.

Similarly, a hyphen can keep a solid word from confusing the reader.

*My sister is a re-creation therapist.*

*My sister is a recreation therapist.*

My best advice for when you're in doubt about a hyphen or solid compound word is to consult your dictionary or writing manual.

Stephen Wilbers, a local writing consultant and author, has posted a list of compound words on his Web site at <http://www.wilbers.com/part24.htm>. It's a great resource for solid compounds, hyphenated compounds, spaced words and words whose spelling changes according to how they are used.

If you find you have trouble with compound words in your training *handouts*, be sure to give me a call before you *hand out* your materials.

*Karen DeYoung is principal of DeYoung Consulting Services, which provides quality learning experiences for individuals and groups. We develop training materials and activities that advance individual, team, and organizational learning. Our work is done with integrity, reliability, and accountability.*

DeYoung Consulting Services  
Helping People Learn up to Their Potential  
4834 Park Avenue  
Minneapolis, MN 55417  
(612) 822-8872  
(612) 220-3440 mobile  
deyoung4@aol.com  
[www.deyoungconsultingservices.com](http://www.deyoungconsultingservices.com)