The dying art of the hyphen

The hyphen joins words together to form a unit.

One common situation when hyphens are handy is when words work together to describe something:
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The children need to study for a test on long division.
The long division test is on Monday.
The long-division test is on Monday.

That movie was packed with action.
Action-packed movies are my favorites.
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When the words being joined include a body part or something worn or possessed, sometimes an –ed is added:

That dancer has long legs. The long-legged dancer is quite skillful.

He was nothing but a jack-booted thug.
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Another common hyphen opportunity comes when we make nouns out of two-word verbs:

The family agreed that they would sit down to dinner together once a week.

A sit-down dinner is more relaxing than fast food eaten on the run.

The civil rights protestors held a sit-in.
Other changes!

When words that can be hyphenated become common, there is a tendency for them to become one word over time. A good dictionary will tell you which way to spell ones you aren’t sure of.

_Bedroom used to be spelled bed-room._

Mark and Karen decided to break up. _It was a very friendly breakup._

non-violent or nonviolent?
Hyphens can help!

Consider these headlines:

- Squad helps dog bite victim
- Man eating piranha mistakenly sold as pet fish