# Punctuation marks and special symbols

## Ampersands ("&")

Avoid the ampersand. Instead, use "and" consistently. Keep the ampersand if it is an essential feature of brand.

## Apostrophes

The curly or "smart" apostrophe is preferred, especially in print.

Our most frequent use of the apostrophe is for the alumni class year, where the apostrophe marks the omission of the "19."

Make sure that the tail of the apostrophe curls toward the left, looking like the a "9." This is the true apostrophe. If the tail curls toward the right, it's not really an apostrophe but a single opening quotation mark.

> *Class of '75*
>
> *Class of '75*

In recent times, to avoid errors, people have been using straight apostrophes and quotation marks. This is acceptable, especially for the web. Just be consistent within a given piece. But whenever possible—especially in print—use the curly or "smart" apostrophe and quotation marks.

## Dashes

There are three kinds of dashes, with different uses:

The em dash is the longest of them all, and it's commonly used to strongly offset a phrase. It should also be used for quote attribution.

> *Students on the Ithaca campus—especially those who have an interest in art—were delighted to hear about the renovations to the Johnson Museum.*
>
> *"I love coming back for Reunion." —Jane Smith '10*

The en dash is the second-longest, and it is used primarily to indicate ranges.

> *Reunion 2017 is happening on June 8–11.*

The hyphen is the shortest dash, and it is used to turn two or more words into one. It is also used to connect certain prefixes to words.

> *student-athlete [where the individual is equally a student and an athlete]*
>
> *black-and-white photograph*
>
> *pre-Vietnam War*

## Plus signs ("+")

Like the ampersand, don't use the plus sign in place of an "and."

## Quotation marks

Curly or "smart" quotation marks are preferred, especially in print. In modern practice, however, the use of straight or "dumb" quotation marks has become acceptable, especially in a digital context. Just be consistent in your application.

## Serial commas

Always use the serial comma. This comma is placed before the last item in a series of three or more, before the "and" or "or."

> *alumni, parents, and friends*