

Miscellaneous Punctuation

Hyphens

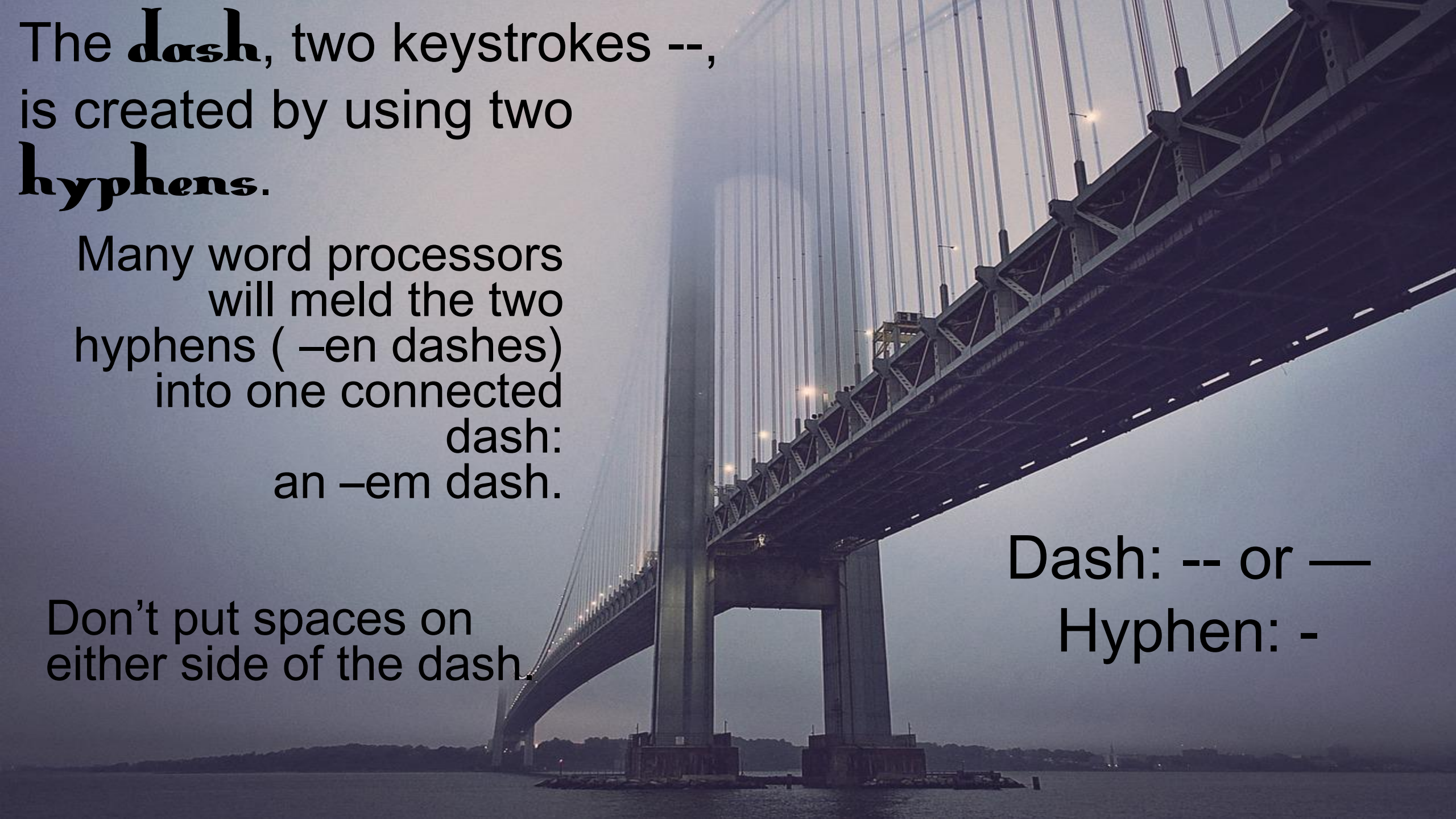
Dashes

Parentheses

Brackets

Ellipses

Slashes

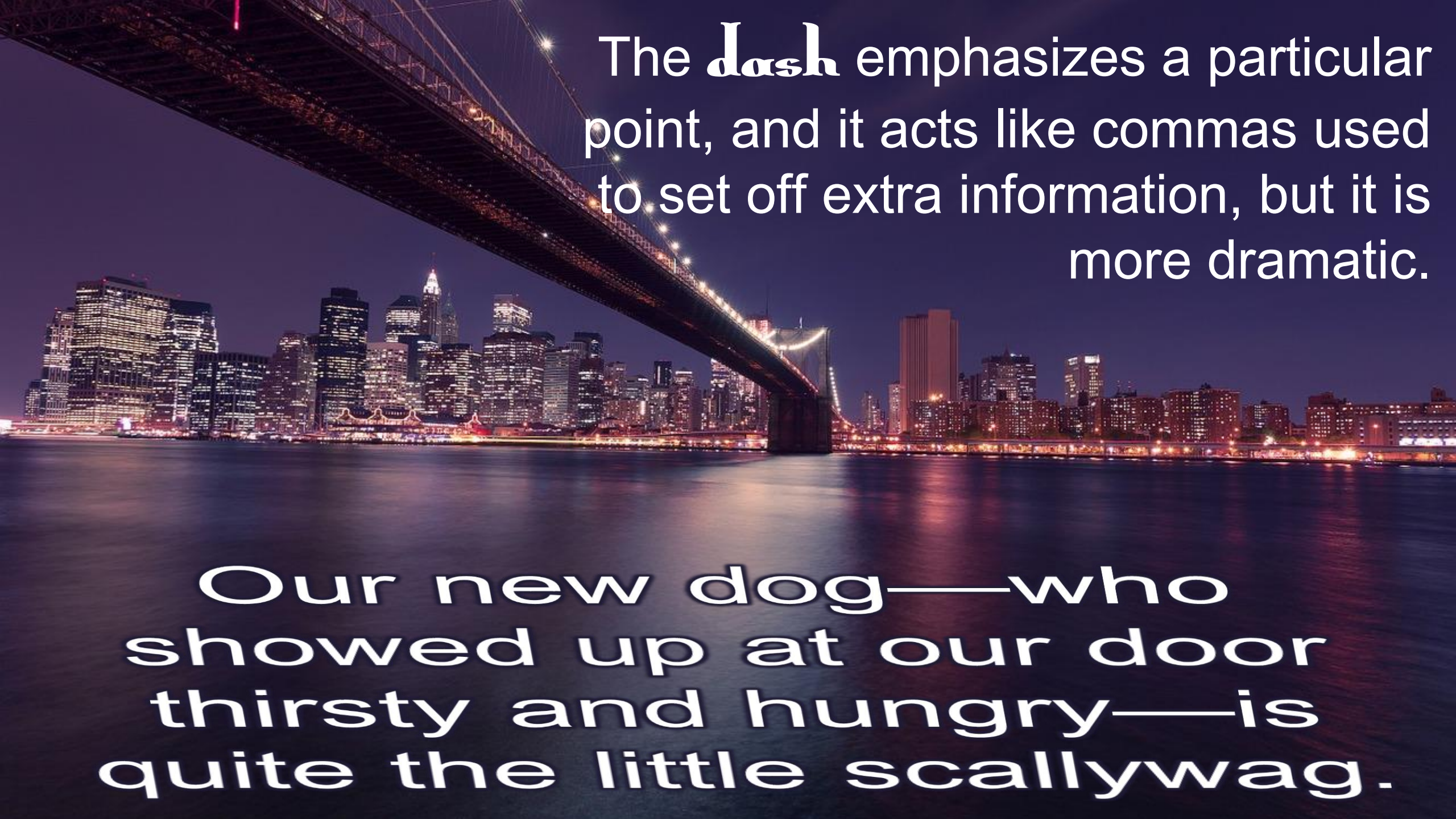


The **dash**, two keystrokes --,
is created by using two
hyphens.

Many word processors
will meld the two
hyphens (–en dashes)
into one connected
dash:
an –em dash.

Don't put spaces on
either side of the dash.

Dash: -- or —
Hyphen: -

A night photograph of the Manhattan skyline across a body of water, with the bridge structure in the foreground. The bridge's steel framework and suspension cables are visible, illuminated by warm lights. The city skyline is a dense collection of brightly lit skyscrapers, their lights reflecting on the calm water. The sky is a deep, dark blue.

The **dash** emphasizes a particular point, and it acts like commas used to set off extra information, but it is more dramatic.

Our new dog—who showed up at our door thirsty and hungry—is quite the little scallywag.

If you have a list as extra information, you can use the **dash** to surround it instead of commas.

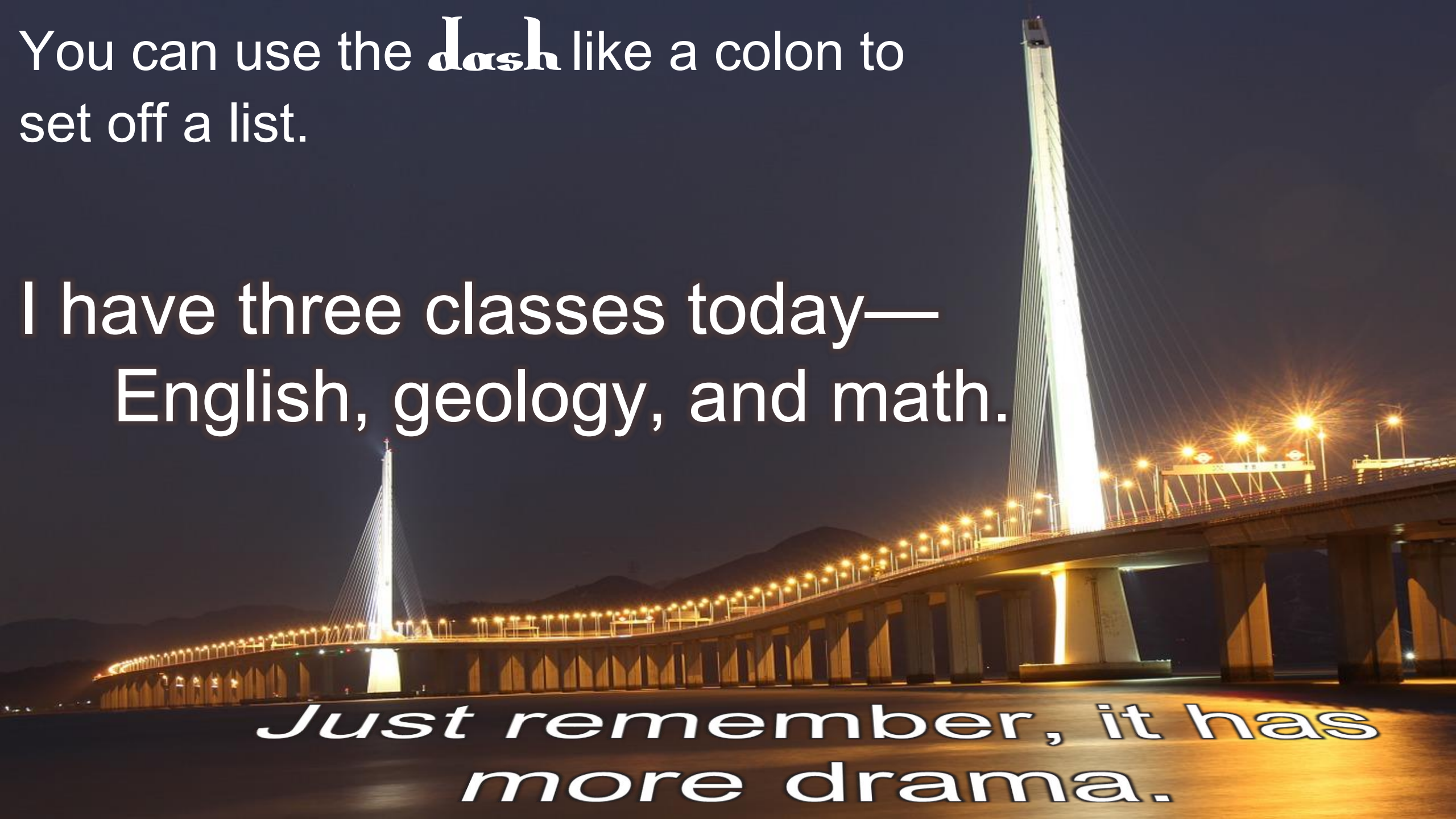


The groceries that spilled in the car—orange juice, milk, and yogurt—didn't smell so good the next day.


You can use the **dash** like a colon to set off a list.

I have three classes today—
English, geology, and math.

*Just remember, it has
more drama.*



If you want to give the list first, always
use the **dash**.



*Sun, sand, and relaxation—
those are the reasons they
went on vacation.*

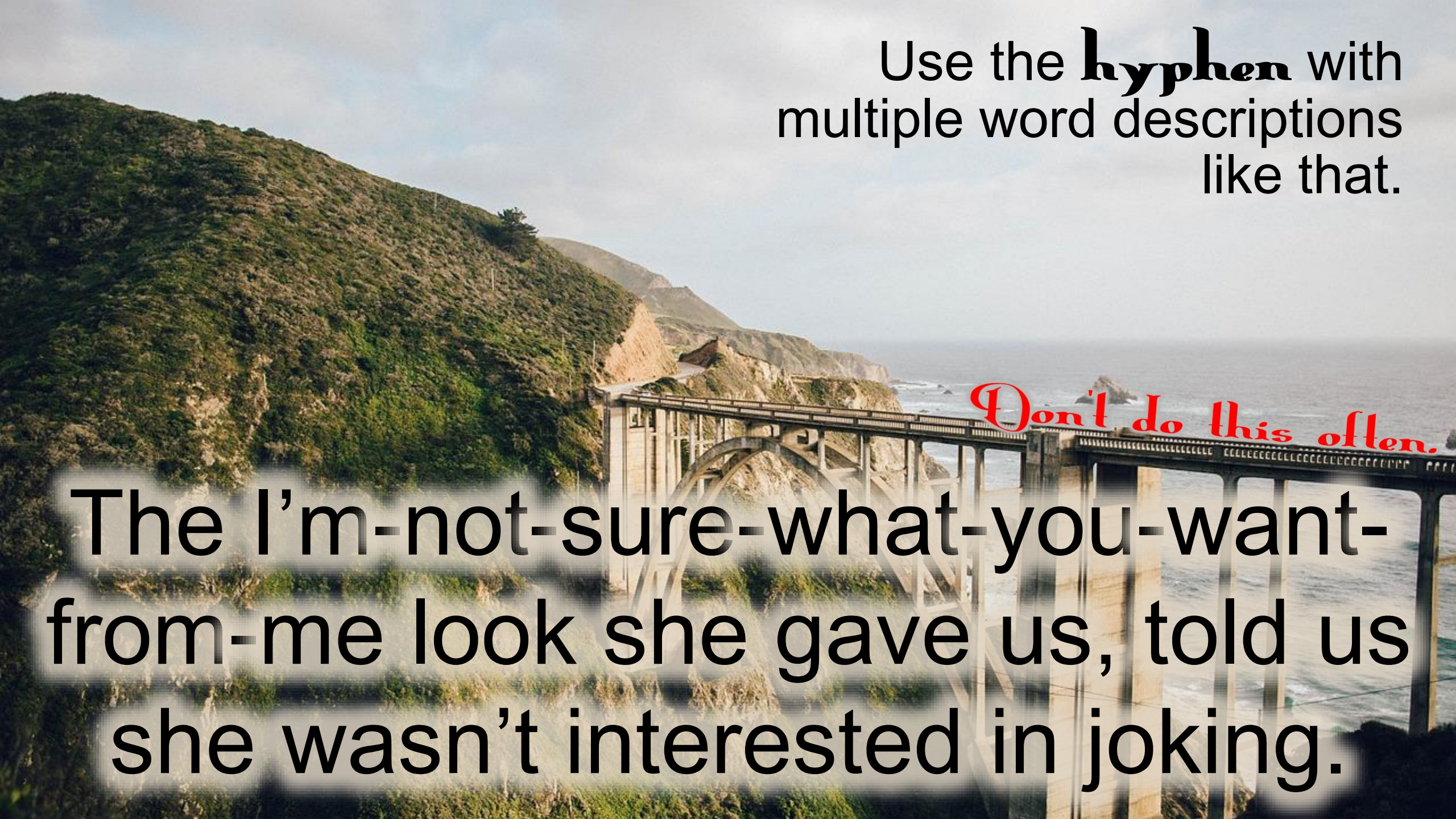
When you use two or more words to describe a noun, use the **hyphen** to connect them.



*The crusty-faced
pirate gave us a
dirty look.*

To check if you need the **hyphen**, ask if you could use the words separately and keep the meaning clear. If you can't or if it means something different, use the hyphen.

The crusty pirate gave us a dirty look.
The faced pirate gave us a dirty look.



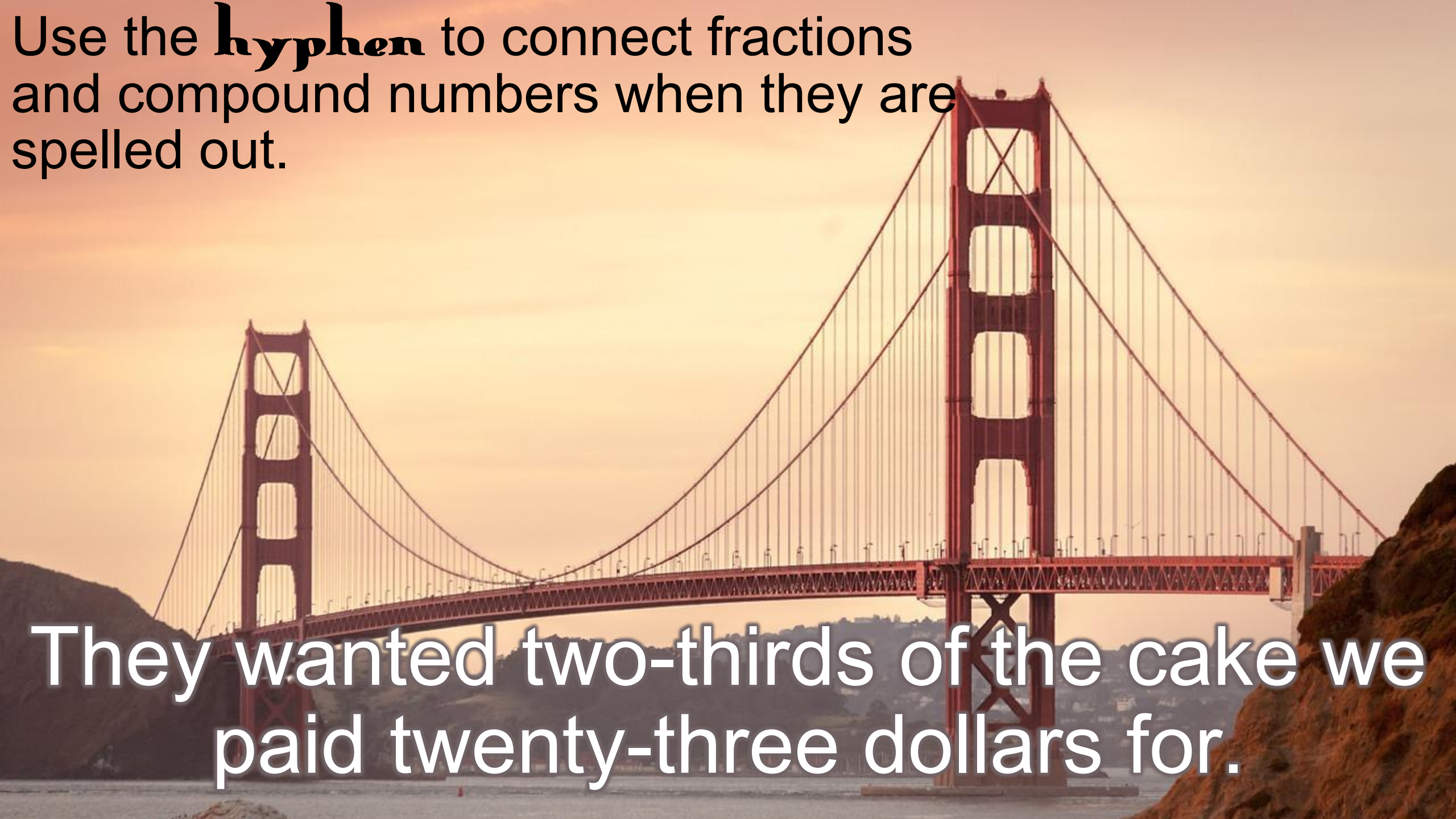
Use the **hyphen** with
multiple word descriptions
like that.

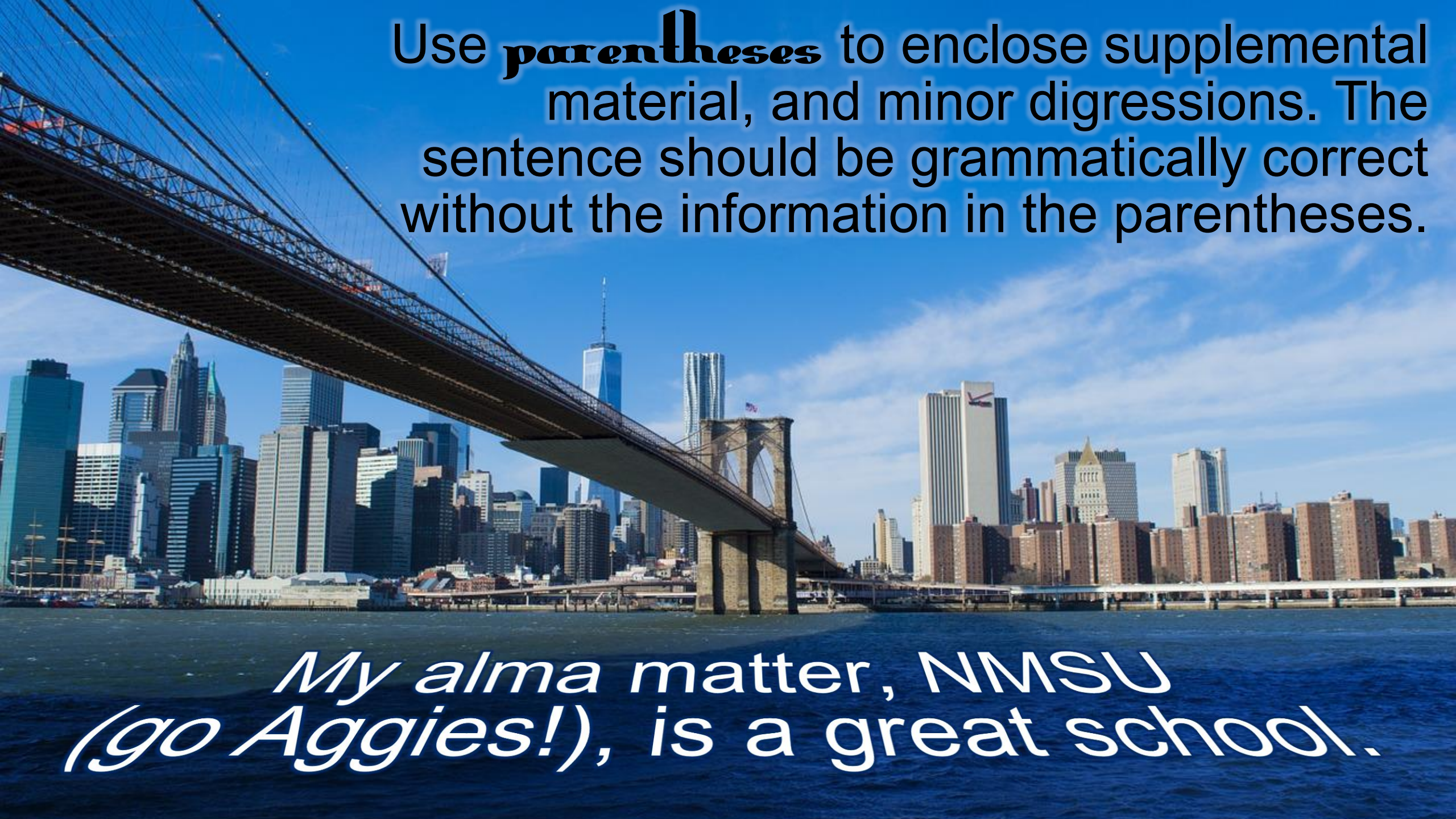
Don't do this often.

The I'm-not-sure-what-you-want-
from-me look she gave us, told us
she wasn't interested in joking.

Use the **hyphen** to connect fractions and compound numbers when they are spelled out.

They wanted two-thirds of the cake we paid twenty-three dollars for.

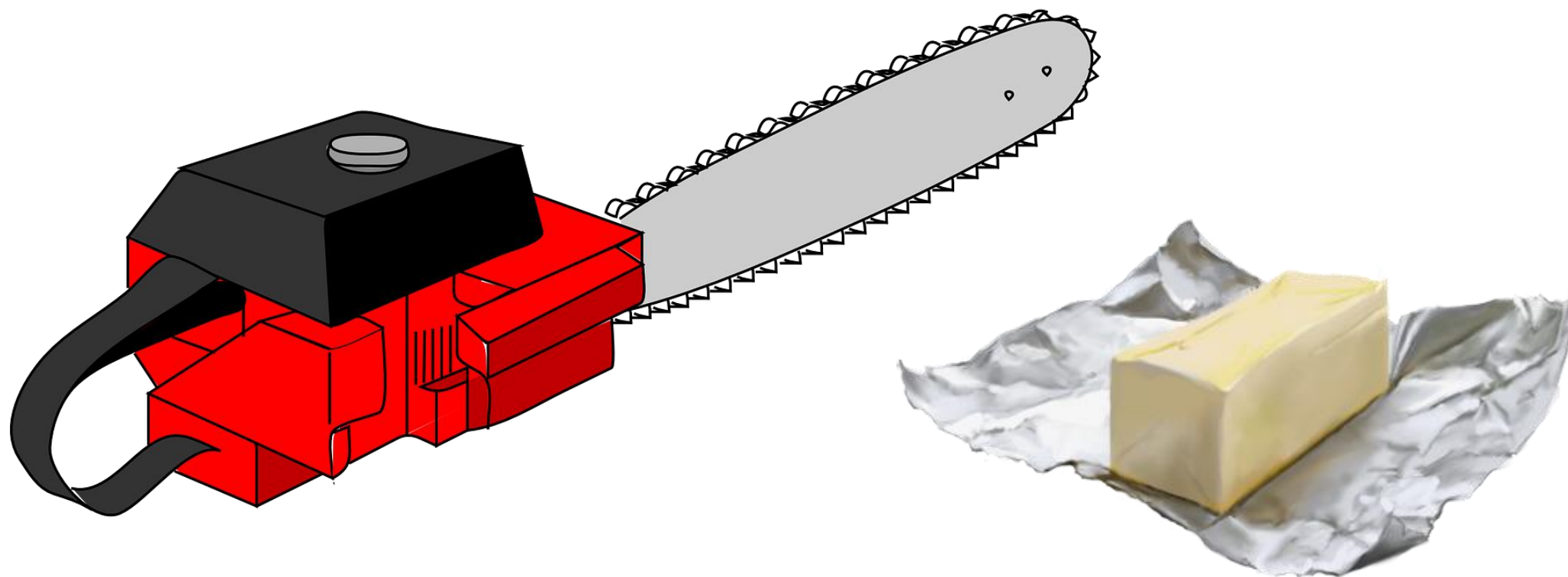


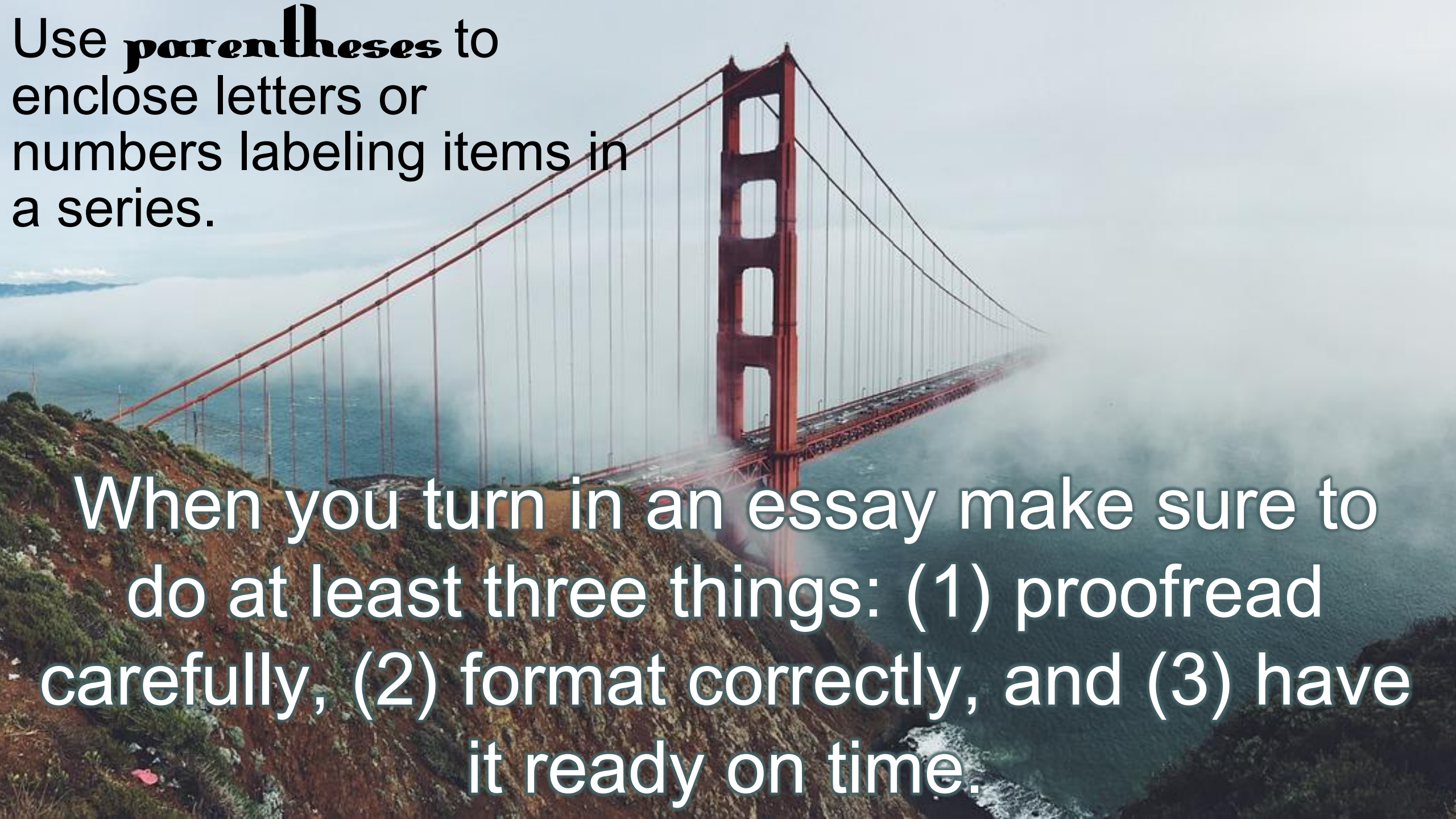


Use **parentheses** to enclose supplemental material, and minor digressions. The sentence should be grammatically correct without the information in the parentheses.

*My alma matter, NMSU
(go Aggies!), is a great school.*

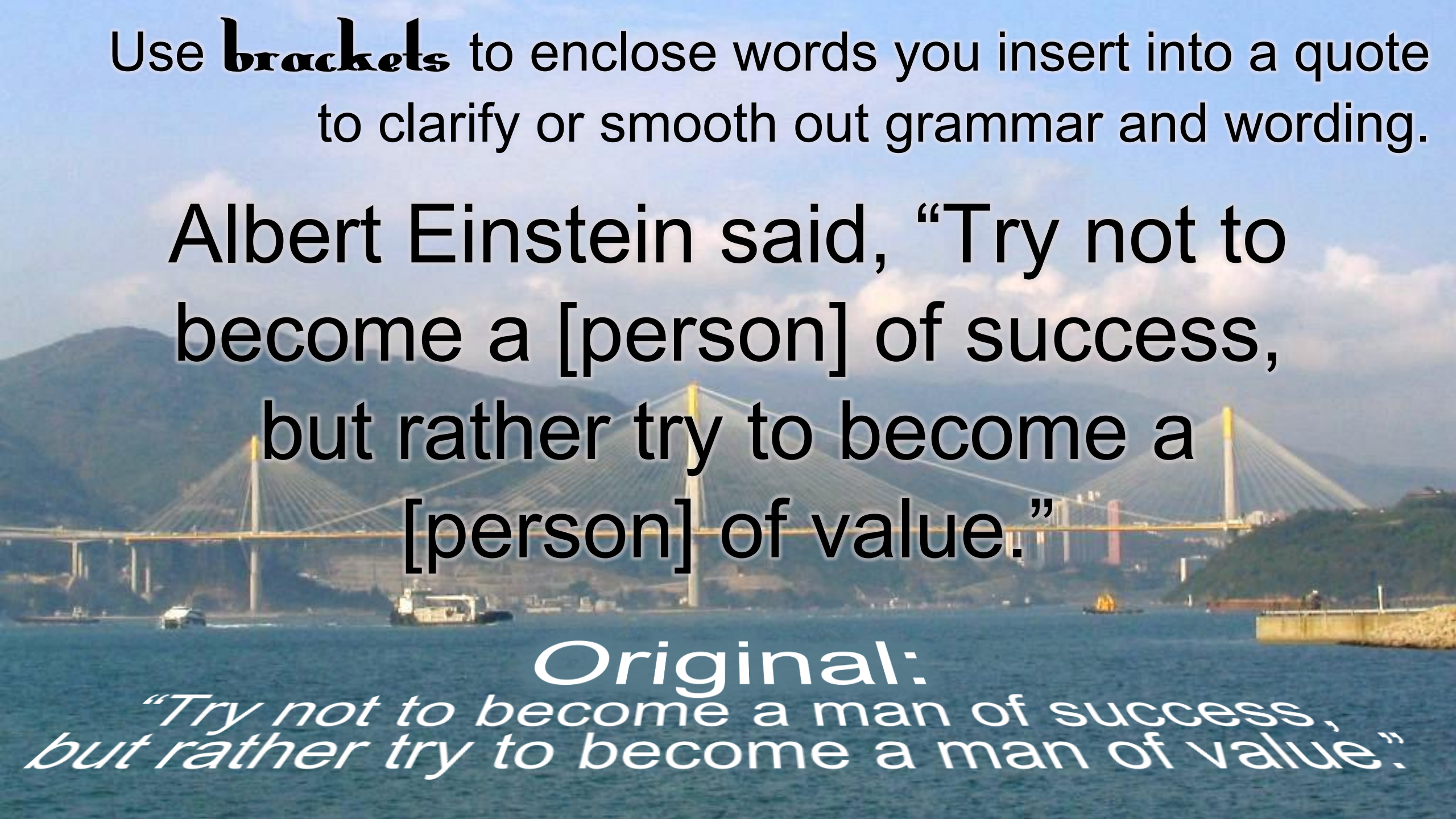
But ask yourself as you ponder this plain page, “Why would I use parenthesis when I can just use comma; after all, I wouldn’t use a chainsaw to cut butter.”



A photograph of the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco, viewed from a high angle on a hillside. The bridge's red-orange towers and suspension cables are prominent against a hazy, overcast sky. The bridge spans a body of water, with the far side partially obscured by fog. The foreground shows a steep, rocky hillside with some sparse vegetation.

Use **parentheses** to
enclose letters or
numbers labeling items in
a series.

When you turn in an essay make sure to
do at least three things: (1) proofread
carefully, (2) format correctly, and (3) have
it ready on time.



Use **brackets** to enclose words you insert into a quote to clarify or smooth out grammar and wording.

Albert Einstein said, “Try not to become a [person] of success, but rather try to become a [person] of value.”

Original:

“Try not to become a man of success, but rather try to become a man of value.”

Use **brackets** to enclose the word *sic* to show there's an error in something you've quoted.

They were "harmoniously abandoning themselves to the rhythm of the music—like two small chips [sic] being tossed about on a rough but friendly sea" (Theodore Dreiser, *An American Tragedy*, 1925, p 328).

It should be "ships"

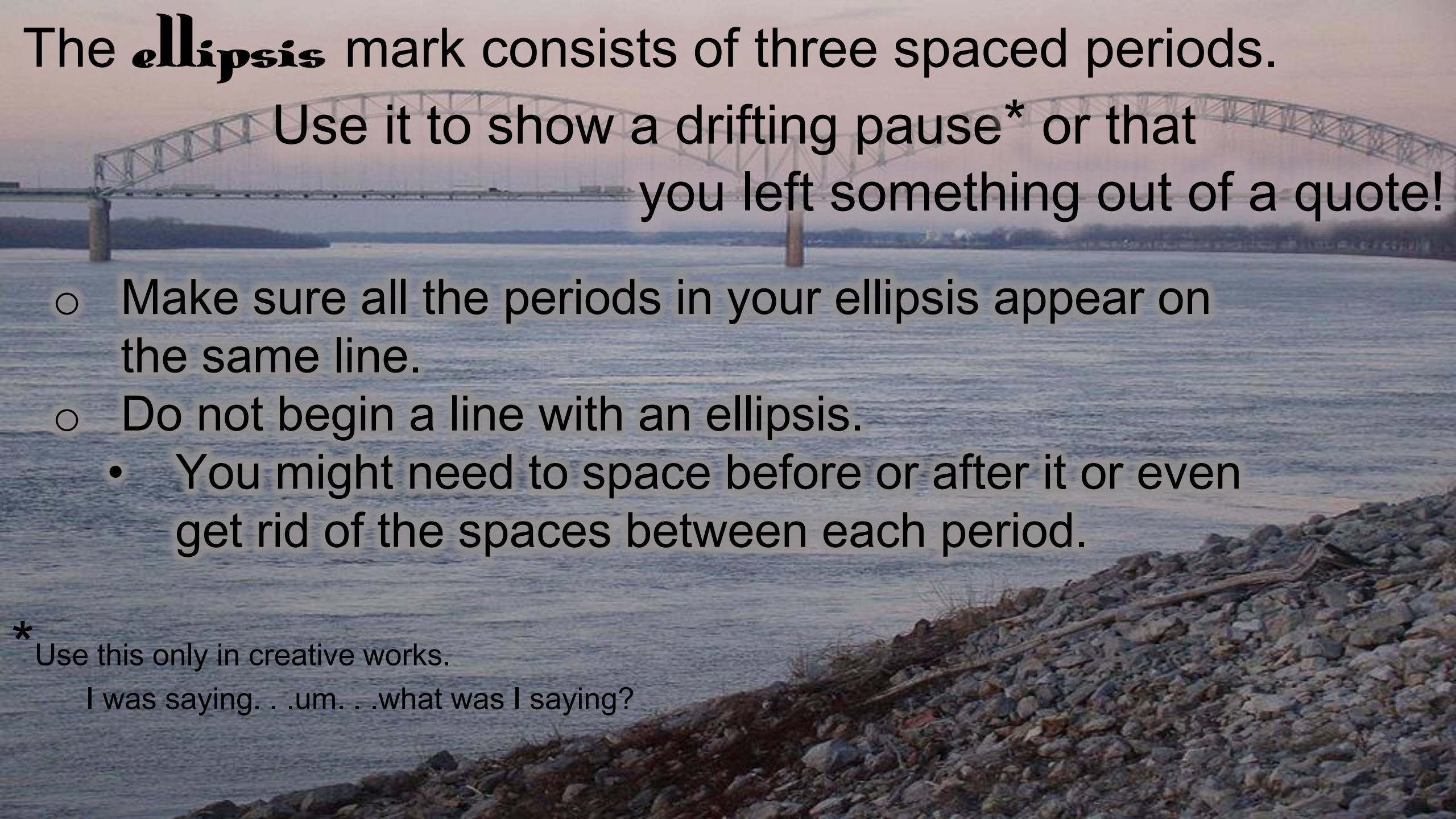
Of course, you could just use **brackets** to replace the incorrect word.

They were "harmoniously abandoning themselves to the rhythm of the music—like two small [ships] being tossed about on a rough but friendly sea" (Theodore Dreiser, *An American Tragedy*, 1925, p 328).

Use **brackets or parentheses** to enclose a translation. Just be consistent.

A large steel truss bridge spans a wide river at sunset. The bridge features multiple arches and a complex network of steel beams. The warm light of the setting sun reflects on the water's surface, creating a golden glow. The sky is a clear, pale blue, and the distant shoreline is visible with some trees and structures.

Some of my first words in Spanish were tortillas con mantequilla (tortillas with butter).



The **ellipsis** mark consists of three spaced periods.

Use it to show a drifting pause* or that
you left something out of a quote!

- Make sure all the periods in your ellipsis appear on the same line.
- Do not begin a line with an ellipsis.
 - You might need to space before or after it or even get rid of the spaces between each period.

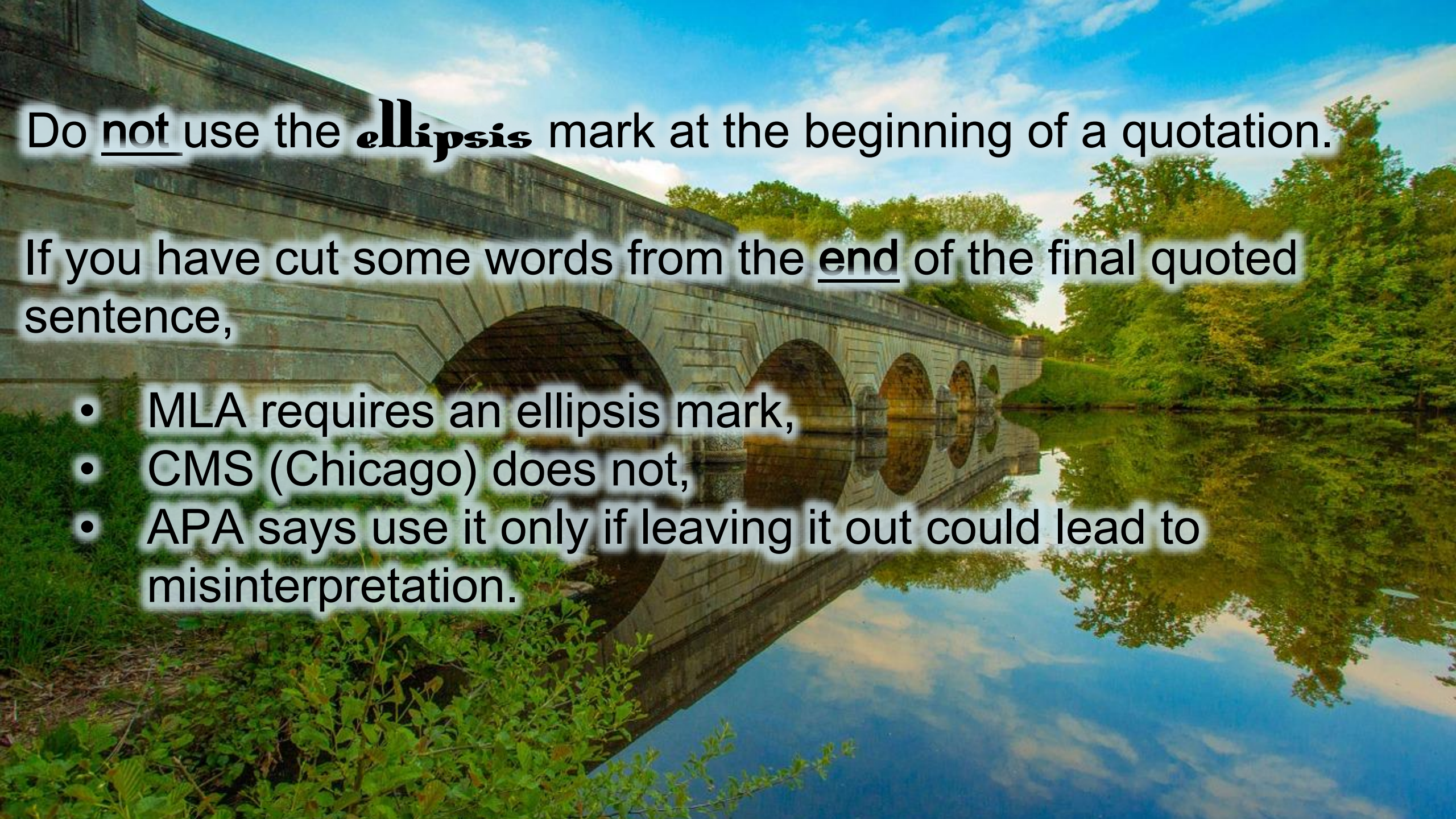
*
Use this only in creative works.

I was saying. . .um. . .what was I saying?

Don't split up the ellipsis, and never let it be the thing that starts a line. (You might have quote marks before it at the beginning of a line, but never it by itself.)

*People on the outside
think there's something
magical about writing . .
. but it isn't like that. You
sit in back of the
typewriter and you work,
and that's all there is to
it. – Harlan Ellison*

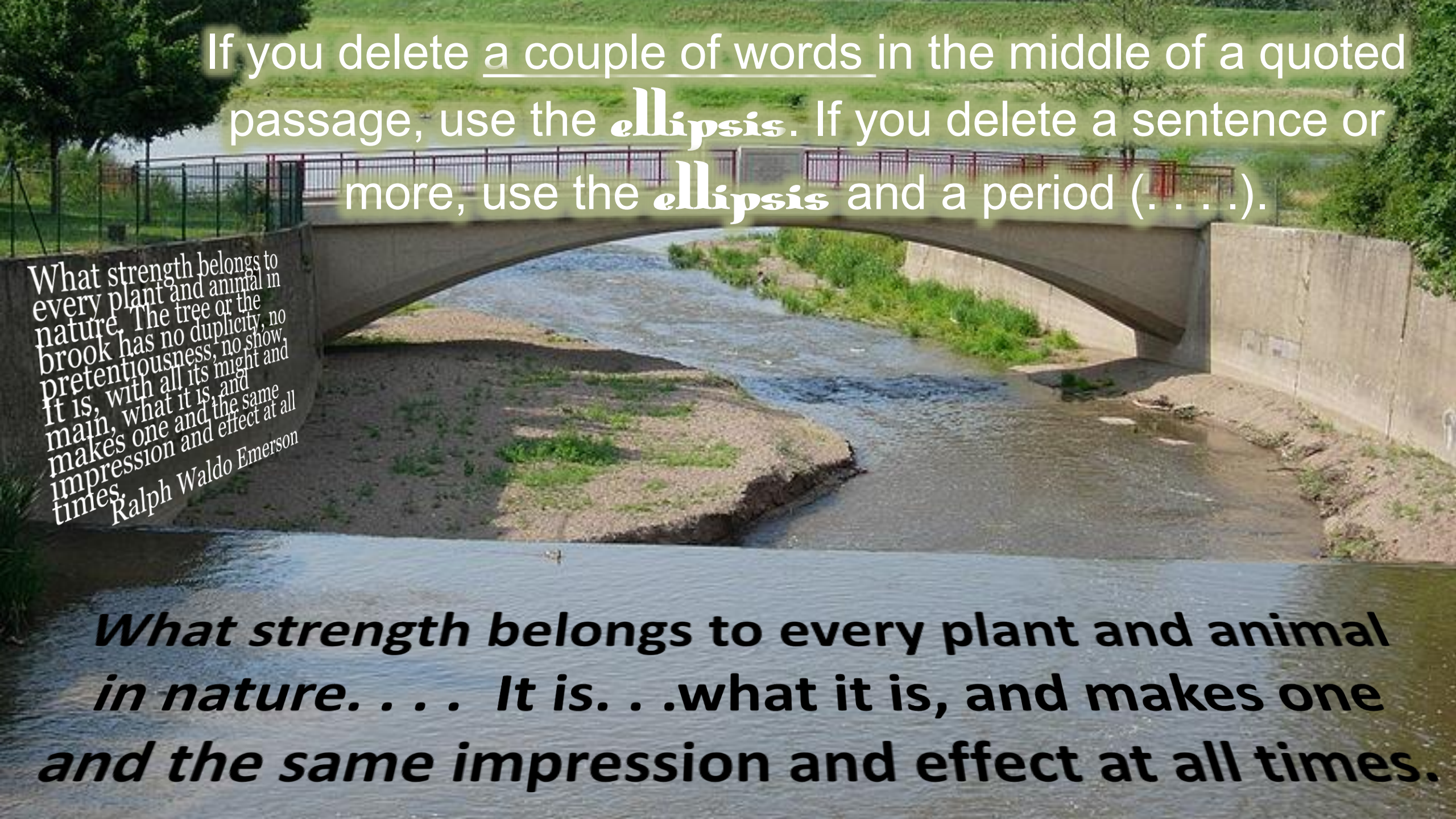
*People on the outside
think there's something
magical about writing...
but it isn't like that. You
sit in back of the
typewriter and you work,
and that's all there is to
it. – Harlan Ellison*



Do not use the **ellipsis** mark at the beginning of a quotation.

If you have cut some words from the end of the final quoted sentence,

- MLA requires an ellipsis mark,
- CMS (Chicago) does not,
- APA says use it only if leaving it out could lead to misinterpretation.



If you delete a couple of words in the middle of a quoted passage, use the **ellipsis**. If you delete a sentence or more, use the **ellipsis** and a period (. . . .).

What strength belongs to every plant and animal in nature. The tree or the brook has no duplicity, no pretentiousness, no show it is, with all its might and main, what it is, and makes one and the same impression and effect at all times.
Ralph Waldo Emerson

What strength belongs to every plant and animal in nature. . . . It is. . . what it is, and makes one and the same impression and effect at all times.



In quoted poetry or song use a full line of **ellipsis** dots to indicate you have dropped a line or more from a poem.

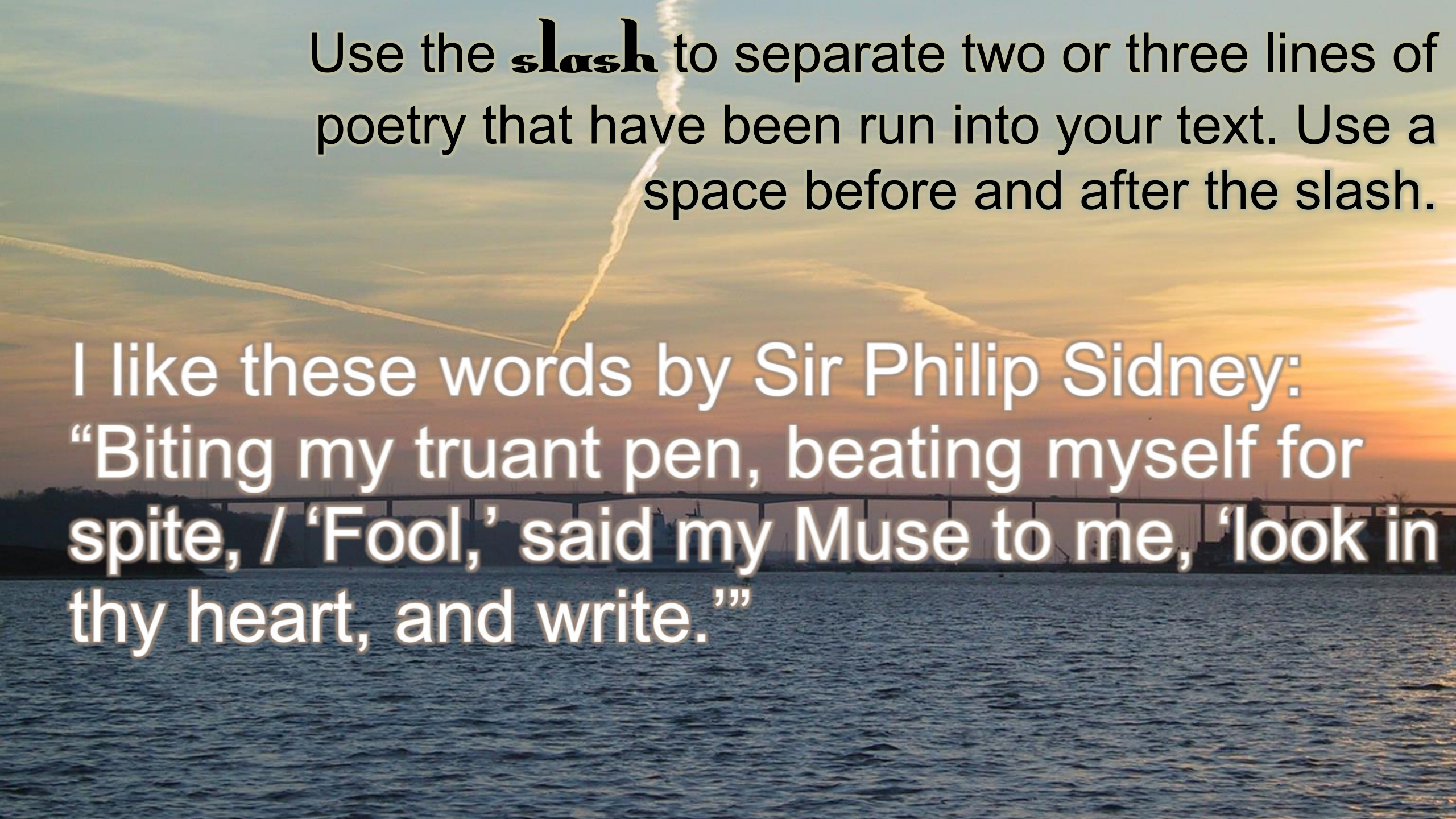
But words came halting forth, wanting invention's stay;

.....

Biting my truant pen, beating myself for spite,

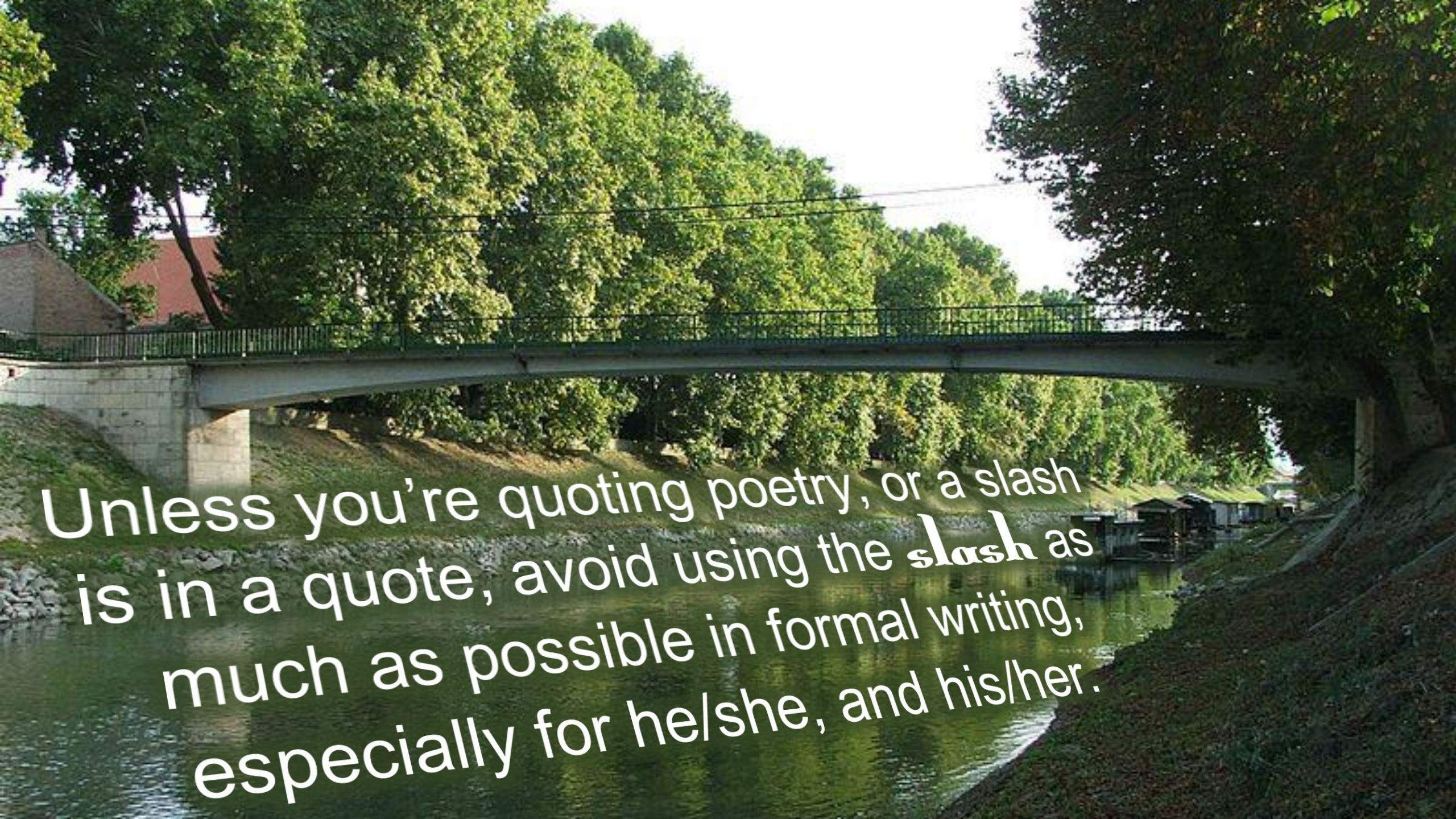
“Fool,” said my Muse to me, “look in thy heart, and write.”

--Sir Philip Sidney, “Astrophil and Stella 1”


A dramatic sunset or sunrise over a body of water. A bridge is visible in the distance. A bright lightning bolt strikes the sky, creating a vertical streak of light. The sky is filled with orange and yellow clouds, and the water is dark blue with some ripples.

Use the **slash** to separate two or three lines of poetry that have been run into your text. Use a space before and after the slash.

I like these words by Sir Philip Sidney:
“Biting my truant pen, beating myself for
spite, / ‘Fool,’ said my Muse to me, ‘look in
thy heart, and write.’”



Unless you're quoting poetry, or a slash is in a quote, avoid using the **slash** as much as possible in formal writing, especially for he/she, and his/her.

A night-time photograph of the Tower Bridge in London, illuminated with blue and white lights. The bridge's two towers and suspension cables are clearly visible, with their lights reflecting on the water below. The background shows the city skyline and other bridges.

In giving paired items using the **slash**, do not use a space before or after the slash.

Next time you can bring coffee and/or cookies.

This was an either/or situation.

Learn the rules
like a pro.

BREAK THEM
LIKE AN
ARTIST!