Compound Adjectives: Student Notes

What Are Compound Adjectives?

Compound adjectives are adjectives made up of two or more words that work together to modify a noun. They often combine an adjective with a noun, a noun with a past participle, or an adverb with a past participle, among other combinations.

Example:
- a **well-known** author
- a **full-length** mirror
- a **high-speed** train

Why Use Compound Adjectives?

Using compound adjectives helps make descriptions more precise and concise. Instead of using multiple words separately, you combine them to form a single idea that describes a noun.

When to Use Hyphens in Compound Adjectives

Hyphens are generally used in compound adjectives when:

1. **They come before the noun they modify.**
   Example:
   - a **two-story** building
   - a **part-time** job
2. **They help avoid ambiguity or confusion.**
   Example:
   - a **small-business owner** (owner of a small business)
   - a **small business owner** (a business owner who is small in size)
3. **They combine numbers and units or fractions used as adjectives.**
   Example:
   - a **10-foot** pole
   - a **three-quarter** share

When NOT to Use Hyphens

- When the compound adjective comes **after** the noun, hyphens are usually not needed.
  Example:
  - The building is **two stories** tall.
  - She works **part time**.

- When the first word is an adverb ending in **-ly**, do not use a hyphen. Example:
  - a **highly respected** scientist
  - a **newly formed** group

Examples of Compound Adjectives

Compound Adjective	Example Sentence
well-known	She is a **well-known** artist.
full-length	They watched a **full-length** movie.
high-speed	The **high-speed** train arrived early.
old-fashioned	He prefers **old-fashioned** clothes.
part-time	She has a **part-time** job.
user-friendly	This software is very **user-friendly**.
blue-eyed	The **blue-eyed** baby smiled.
five-star	They stayed at a **five-star** hotel.

Summary

- Compound adjectives combine two or more words to describe a noun.
- Use hyphens when the compound adjective precedes the noun.
- Avoid hyphens after the noun or when the first word ends in **-ly**.
- Hyphens clarify meaning and prevent ambiguity.

Keep practicing by identifying and using compound adjectives in your writing to make your descriptions clearer and more engaging!