

B1 ENGLISH
CHAPTER 4 Lesson 4
Vocabulary:
Word formation (Unit 75-79)

75 Compound nouns 1: noun + noun

A What are compound nouns?

A compound noun is a fixed expression which is made up of more than one word and functions as a noun. Such expressions are frequently combinations of two nouns, e.g. **car park**, **human being** [person], **science fiction** [fiction based on some kind of scientific fantasy]. A number of compound nouns are related to phrasal verbs and these are dealt with in [Unit 76](#).

B How are compound nouns written?

If you understand both parts of the compound noun, the meaning will usually be clear. Compound nouns are usually written as two words, e.g. **tin opener** [an opener for tins], **bank account** [an account in a bank], **pedestrian crossing** [a place for people to cross a road], but sometimes they are written with a hyphen instead of a space between the words, e.g. **self-control** [control over your own emotions and reactions]. Sometimes they may be written as one word, e.g. **earring**, **trademark** [the symbol of a product], **babysitter** [someone who stays with a baby/child while parents are out].

Note that there are no strict rules about which compound words should be written in which way. There is a lot of variation even between dictionaries.

C Stress in compound nouns

Usually the main stress is on the first part of the compound but sometimes it is on the second part. In the common compound nouns below, the word which contains the main stress is underlined.

<u>alarm</u> clock	<u>contact</u> lens	<u>mineral</u> water	<u>voice</u> mail
<u>blood</u> donor	<u>credit</u> card	<u>package</u> holiday	<u>wind</u> screen
<u>burglar</u> alarm	<u>heart</u> attack	<u>steering</u> wheel	<u>windscreen</u> wiper
<u>bus</u> stop	<u>light</u> bulb	<u>tea</u> bag	<u>youth</u> hostel

D Grammar of compound nouns

Compound nouns may be countable, uncountable or only used in either the singular or the plural. The examples given in C are all countable compound nouns. Here are some examples of common uncountable compound nouns.

air <u>traffic</u> control	<u>computer</u> technology	<u>food</u> poisoning	<u>junk</u> food
<u>birth</u> control	cotton <u>wool</u>	<u>hay</u> fever [allergy to pollen]	<u>mail</u> order
<u>blood</u> pressure	data <u>processing</u>	<u>income</u> tax	<u>pocket</u> money

Here are some examples of common compound nouns used only in the singular.

<u>arms</u> race [two or more countries competing to have the most powerful military]	<u>generation</u> gap
<u>climate</u> change	<u>labour</u> force
<u>death</u> penalty	<u>sound</u> barrier
	<u>welfare</u> state

Here are some examples of common compound nouns used only in the plural.

grass <u>roots</u>	kitchen <u>scissors</u>	<u>race</u> relations	<u>sunglasses</u>
<u>headphones</u>	luxury <u>goods</u>	<u>road</u> works	traffic <u>lights</u>

Exercises

75.1 Complete these bubble networks with any appropriate expressions from the opposite page. Add extra bubbles if you need them.



75.2 Here are some compound expressions you have looked at in this unit. Explain what the significance of the nouns used in the compound is.

- 1 windscreen *A screen that protects a driver from the wind.*

2 burglar alarm

3 food poisoning

4 generation gap

5 climate change

6 kitchen scissors

7 luxury goods

8 pocket money

9 welfare state

10 voice mail

75.3 What are they talking about? In each case the answer is a compound noun opposite.

- 1 I had it taken at the doctor's this morning and he said it was a little high for my age.
blood pressure

2 It's happening through man-made pollution and is causing more extreme weather.

3 She always has terrible sneezing fits in the early summer.

4 I can't understand why they spend so much on devising ways of killing people.

5 They say that working there is much more stressful than being a pilot.

6 The worst time was when one fell out at the theatre and I spent the interval searching around on the floor. I can't see a thing without them.

7 I don't think it should ever be used whatever the crime.

8 It's much easier not to have to make your own travel arrangements.

9 It's not difficult to access mine on my mobile.

10 You really shouldn't cross the road at any other place.

11 I didn't like the low-energy ones at first because they're so slow to get going.

12 I had it very badly once when I ate some chicken that wasn't properly cooked.

75.4 In some cases more than one compound noun can be formed from one particular element. For example, *blood pressure* and *blood donor*; *air traffic control*, *birth control* and *self-control*. Complete the following compound nouns using nouns from the box.

bite	country	fast	inheritance	level
mail	pot	rat	ties	word

- 1 junk *mail*

2 sound

3 blood

4 tea

5 mother

6 tax

7 -processing

8 crossing

9 food

10 race

75.5 Now make up some sentences like those in exercise 75.3 relating to the new compound nouns you made in exercise 75.4.

EXAMPLE 1 *I get a ridiculous amount of this through my letter box every day.* (junk mail)

A

Compound nouns based on phrasal verbs

An example of a compound noun based on a phrasal verb is a **takeover** [when one company takes control of another] from *to take over*. In sections B to E you will see these types of nouns in context. The meaning of the compound noun is given in brackets. To form the plural, 's' is added to the end, e.g. **workouts** [exercise sessions, e.g. at the gym].

B

Journalism

Nouns based on phrasal verbs often have an informal feel to them and they are particularly common in newspaper reporting.

In response to the pay offer, there was a **walkout** at the factory. [strike]

There is going to be a **crackdown** on public spending. [action to stop/reduce]

An inquiry into the recent **breakout** from the local prison has recommended measures to tighten security there. [escape]

Last month saw a tremendous **shake-up** in personnel. [change]

Last week we reported on the **break-up** of the mayor's marriage. [collapse]

C

The economy

The **takeover** of one of our leading hotel chains has just been announced. [purchase by another company]

We're trying to find some new **outlets** for our products. [places to sell]

Take your things to the **check-out** to pay for them. [cash desk]

Cutbacks will be essential until the recession is over. [reductions]

Our profit was £1,000 on a **turnover** of £10,000. [money passing through a company]

The banks were given a huge **bailout** by the government. [money given to a company to save it from failure]

D

Aspects of modern life

What the computer produces depends on the **input**. [information that is put in]

Output has increased thanks to new technology. [production]

We have a rather rapid staff **turnover**. [change]

Just after leaving school he went through a stage of being a **dropout**. [person who rejects society]

The consequences of **fallout** from the explosion at the nuclear reactor were felt for many years. [radioactive dust in the atmosphere]

I can easily get you a **printout** of the latest figures. [paper on which computer information has been printed]

A **breakthrough** has been made in AIDS research. [important discovery]

E

General

The following words can be used in more general circumstances.

Many of the problems were caused by a **breakdown** in communications. [failure]

The **outlook** for tomorrow is good - sunny in most places. [prospect]

There are **drawbacks** as well as advantages to every situation. [negative aspects]

The **outcome** of the meeting was not very satisfactory. [conclusion]

TV companies always welcome **feedback** from viewers. [comments]

It was clear from the **outset** that the **set-up** would cause problems. [start; situation]

We parked in a **lay-by** on the **bypass**. [parking space at the side of a road; road avoiding the centre of a town]

The **outbreak** of war took many people by surprise. [start of something unpleasant]

Exercises

76.1 Which of the words on the opposite page would be most likely to follow the adjectives given below?

- 1 radioactive

2 nervous

3 computer

4 annual
- 5 final

6 sales

7 positive

8 city

76.2 Match the compound nouns on the left with the synonyms on the right.

- 1 breakdown

2 break-up

3 cutback

4 drawback

5 feedback

6 outcome

7 output

8 outset

9 walkout

10 bailout
- e
- a result

b beginning

c production

d strike

e failure

f disadvantage

g payment

h comments

i reduction

j collapse

76.3 Fill in the gaps with an appropriate word from the opposite page.

- 1 AKC make takeover bid for FEDCO

2 Prime Minister announces cabinet

3 Transport union threatens

4 Police plan on vandalism
- 5 Two prisoners escape in jail

6 Football star injured in pre-game

7 Flu in Ireland

8 staff at supermarket announce strike

76.4 Here are some compound nouns based on phrasal verbs. Guess the meaning of the underlined word from its context. Show how it relates to its verb.

- 1 Because of the accident there was a three-mile tailback along the motorway.
queue of traffic (it tails back from a vehicle at the head of the queue)

2 Police are warning of an increased number of break-ins in this area.

3 The papers are claiming the Prime Minister organised a cover-up.

4 Unfortunately, our plans have suffered a setback.

5 I'm sorry I'm late. There was a terrible hold-up on the bridge.

6 The robbers made their getaway in a stolen car.

7 There was a surprisingly large turnout at the concert.

8 I love having a lie-in on Sundays.

9 The lecturer distributed handouts before she started speaking.

10 I'm giving my office a major clear-out this week.

76.5 These words are made up of the same parts but they have very different meanings. Explain the meaning of each of the words. Use a dictionary if necessary.

- 1 outlook / look-out

2 set-up / upset
- 3 outlet / let-out

4 outlay / layout
- Outlook means prospect, whereas a look-out is a person watching out for an enemy or danger.

A

What are binomials?

Binomials are expressions (often idiomatic) where two words are joined by a conjunction (usually 'and'). The order of the words is normally fixed. For example:

odds and ends: small, unimportant things, e.g. Let's get the main things packed - we can do the **odds and ends** later. (NOT ends and odds)

give and take: a spirit of compromise, e.g. Every relationship needs a bit of **give and take** to be successful.

You can often tell something is a binomial because of the sound pattern, which may be a repetition of the same first sound or a rhyme.

Tears are **part and parcel** of growing up. [an important part of / belong to]

The boss was **ranting and raving** /'reɪvɪŋ/ at us. [shouting / very angry]

The old cottage has gone to **rack and ruin**. [is ruined / has decayed]

He's so **prim and proper** at work. [rather formal and fussy]

The hotel was a bit **rough and ready**. [poor standard or quality]

She has to **wine and dine** important clients. [entertain / take out to restaurants]

They stole my wallet. I was left **high and dry**, with no money. [in a very difficult situation]

B

Pairs of near synonyms

At other times, the clue is that the words are near synonyms.

You can **pick and choose** - it's up to you. [have a wide choice]

My English is progressing in/by **leaps and bounds**. [big jumps]

It's nice to have some **peace and quiet** now that the children have left.
[a peaceful/calm situation]

The doctor recommended some **rest and recreation** / **R and R**. [relaxation]

First and foremost, you must work hard. [first and most importantly]

C

Binomials composed of grammar words

Many grammar words combine to form binomials.

There are cafés **here and there** along the sea front. [scattered round / in different places]

We've had meetings **on and off** / **off and on**. [occasionally]

I've been running **back and forth** / **to and fro** all day. [to and from somewhere]

She's better now, and **out and about** again.
[going out]

She ran **up and down** the street.
[in both directions]

Language help

Your language probably has many binomials. Check that the ones which look similar in English have the same word order as your language. These three are very neutral binomials and can be used in formal or informal situations. Try translating them.

*an old **black and white** photograph*
***Ladies and gentlemen**, your attention, please!*
*She ran **back and forth**.*

D

Binomials linked by words other than and

You've got your sweater on **back to front**. [the wrong way]

He won't help her - she'll have to **sink or swim**. [survive or fail]

Slowly but surely, I realised the boat was sinking. [gradually]

Sooner or later, you'll learn your lesson. [sometime in the future]

She didn't want to be just friends - it had to be **all or nothing**.

Well, I'm sorry, that's all I can offer you - **take it or leave it**.

It's about the same distance as from here to Dublin, **give or take** a few miles.
[perhaps a mile or two more, or a mile or two less]

Exercises

77.1 Here is a list of words that can combine to form binomials. Use similarities in sound to join them with *and*. Look at A opposite to check that you have the right word order and meaning. Use the binomials to fill the gaps in the sentences which follow.

prim	dine	high	parcel	ruin	rough	dry
rack	part	ready	proper	rave	rant	wine

prim and proper
.....

- 1 The receptionist is always so terribly *prim* and *proper* ; the whole atmosphere always seems so very formal.
- 2 I was left and , with no one to help me.
- 3 The room's a bit and but you're welcome to stay as long as you like.
- 4 She was in a bad temper and was and at everybody.
- 5 My hosts and me at the best restaurants.
- 6 That old house in the country has gone to and ; nobody looks after it now.
- 7 Working hard and being very disciplined is and of training to be a top athlete.

77.2 Use binomials from B and C to rewrite the words in bold. Your new sentences will often sound more informal than the original ones.

- 1 I'm hoping to get some **time without noise or interruption** at the cottage I've rented.
peace and quiet
- 2 **Most importantly of all**, I want to get a good, steady job.
- 3 I've bumped into Karen **occasionally** but I don't meet her regularly.
- 4 Her violin playing seems to be progressing **very rapidly**.
- 5 I've been running **from one place to another and back again** all morning.
- 6 The doctor said I needed a few weeks of **relaxation without activity**.
- 7 We'll have to stay in a cheap hotel. We can't afford to **choose what we'd like best**.
.....
- 8 There are some nice hotels **in different places** along the coast.
- 9 Mrs James was ill for a while, but now she's **going out and doing things** again.
- 10 Robin's office is on the next floor to mine, so we have to go **from one floor to another** all day.

77.3 Some of the binomials in these sentences are in the right order and some are wrong. Correct the wrong ones.

- 1 I spent a long time going forth and back between different offices to get my visa.
wrong: back and forth
- 2 You look very tired and stressed. You need some rest and recreation.
- 3 I love those old white and black Hollywood films from the 1940s.
- 4 Later or sooner you will learn that he is not a true friend of yours.
- 5 Gentlemen and ladies, would you like to take your seats now, please?
- 6 Slowly but surely my English got better and soon I felt fairly fluent.

77.4 These binomials do not have *and* in the middle. What do they have? Check the opposite page if you are not sure.

- | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| 1 sooner <i>or</i> later | 3 back front | 5 slowly surely |
| 2 all nothing | 4 sink swim | 6 give take |

A

Abbreviations pronounced as individual letters

Most abbreviations are pronounced as individual letters.

Abbreviations for groups or organisations:

BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency (US government agency collecting information about other countries)
EU	European Union
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
MI6	Military Intelligence 6 (UK equivalent of CIA)
WHO	World Health Organisation

Other abbreviations pronounced as individual letters:

ID	Identity (an identity card or passport)
GM	genetically modified
DNA	deoxyribonucleic acid (chemical at the centre of living cells)
FAQ	frequently asked questions
AKA	also known as
IOU	I owe you
ATM	automated teller machine (cash machine usually outside a bank)
ASAP	as soon as possible

Language help

When these abbreviations are stressed words in the sentence, the stress falls on the last letter, e.g. *She works for the CIA. I heard it on the BBC.*

B

Abbreviations pronounced as words

Abbreviations pronounced as individual words are called acronyms.

NATO /neɪtiəʊ/	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
PIN /pin/	Personal Identity Number (e.g. for a bank or credit card)
SAD	seasonal affective disorder (lacking energy and enthusiasm in winter in latitudes where there is little sunlight at that time)
AWOL /eɪwɒl/	absent without leave [permission; usually used in military contexts]

Some acronyms have become so normal as words that people do not think of them as abbreviations any longer, and so they are not written in capital letters.

laser radar scuba sonar

C

Clippings

Some words are often used in an abbreviated form in informal situations. We say, for example, **kilo** instead of 'kilogram' or **gig** for 'gigabyte'. Other examples include:

air con (air conditioning) **satnav** (satellite navigation system)
uni (university) **mobile** (mobile phone) or (US) **cell** (cellphone)
carbs (carbohydrates) **sci-fi** (science fiction) **high-tech** (high-technology)

D

Written abbreviations

Some abbreviations are most frequently used in writing.

PTO	Please turn over (turn to the next page)
PS	post script (written at the end of a message or letter, when you want to add something else)
RSVP	Répondez s'il vous plaît (French, meaning 'please answer') (written at the end of an invitation, to indicate that you should reply)
RIP	Rest in peace (often written on a headstone where someone is buried after they have died)

Exercises

78.1 Match the sentence beginnings on the left with the endings on the right.

- | | | | |
|---|---|-------------------------------------|---------|
| 1 | Wherever I am in the world I listen to the news on the | ☒ | a ID. |
| 2 | Most websites have a page dealing with | ☐ | b PIN. |
| 3 | Holly took some money out of my wallet and left me an | ☐ | c BBC. |
| 4 | What kind of people we are depends on our | ☐ | d SAD. |
| 5 | They won't let you into the club without any | ☐ | e FAQs. |
| 6 | You won't be able to use the ATM if you've forgotten your | ☐ | f AWOL. |
| 7 | I don't know where John can be - he's gone | ☐ | g DNA. |
| 8 | I always feel lethargic in December - I think I suffer from | ☐ | h IOU. |

78.2 Find abbreviations from A, B or C opposite to fit these categories.

- | | | | | |
|---|-------------|------------|--|--|
| 1 Find two that relate to measurement. | <i>kilo</i> | <i>gig</i> | | |
| 2 Find four that relate to food and health. | | | | |
| 3 Find three that relate to money. | | | | |
| 4 Find one that relates to sport. | | | | |
| 5 Find three that are political organisations. | | | | |
| 6 Find two that relate to equipment using sound or radio waves. | | | | |

78.3 Fill each gap with an appropriate abbreviation or acronym.

- 1 Please could you buy me a *kilo* of apples?
- 2 William Barclay James Stubbs has been charged with burglary.
- 3 The surgeons used technology to carry out the operation.
- 4 My sister works in a very office using all the most up-to-date hardware and software.
- 5 Bats cannot see and use a kind of to find their way around.
- 6 When you're driving it's much easier to use a rather than a road atlas.

78.4 Complete the texts with the correct abbreviations from D opposite.

- 1 Party!
At Sam and Beth's house
Saturday 14 August
8 till late
..... by 28 July
 - 2 I've gone shopping with Ana. Back around six.
See you later. Emma
..... Tom phoned for you. Can you call him back?
 - 3 In loving memory of
James Goodman
1945 - 2015
.....
 - 4 Patients should arrive ten minutes before
their appointment time, and must inform
their doctor if they are unable to come to an
appointment.

78.5 Over to you

- 1 What's the nearest uni to the place where you live?
- 2 Have you ever tried scuba diving?
- 3 Would you be happy to eat GM food?
- 4 Do you know anyone who has SAD?
- 5 What is the main source of carbs in your diet?
- 6 How common is air con in your country?

A

Learning and remembering multi-word expressions

Fixed expressions, also known as idioms, often have meanings that are not clear or obvious. For example, the expression **to feel under the weather**, which means ‘to feel unwell’, is typical. The words do not tell us what it means, but the context usually helps.

Think of multi-word expressions as units, just like single words; always record the whole expression in your notebook, along with information on grammar and collocation, e.g. This tin opener **has seen better days**. [it is rather old and broken down; usually of things, always perfect tense form]

Multi-word expressions of this type are often rather informal and include a personal comment on the situation. They are sometimes humorous or ironic. As with any informal words, be careful how you use them. Never use them just to sound ‘fluent’ or ‘good at English’. In a formal situation with a person you do not know, don’t say:

‘How do you do, Mrs Watson? Do **take the weight off your feet**.’ [sit down]

Instead say: ‘Do sit down’ or ‘Have a seat.’

B

Organising multi-word expressions

Multi-word expressions can be grouped in a variety of ways. It is probably best to use whichever way you find most useful to help you remember them.

Grouping by grammar

get (hold of) the wrong end of the stick [misunderstand]	} verb + object
pull a fast one [trick/deceive someone]	
poke your nose in(to) [interfere]	
be over the moon [extremely happy/elated]	} verb + prepositional phrase
feel down in the dumps [depressed/low]	
be in the red [have a negative bank balance]	

Grouping by meaning, e.g. expressions describing people’s character/intellect

He’s **as daft as a brush**. [very stupid/silly]

She **takes the biscuit**. /'bɪskɪt/ [is the extreme / the worst of all]

They’re **a pain in the neck**. [a nuisance / a difficult person]

Little Sam’s **as good as gold**. [behaves very well - usually used about children]

Grouping by a verb or other key word, e.g. expressions with **make**

Why do you have to **make a meal out of** everything? [exaggerate the importance of everything]

I think we should **make a move**. It’s gone ten o’clock. [go/leave]

Most politicians are **on the make**. I don’t trust any of them.

[wanting money/power for oneself]

I’m afraid I’m **making heavy weather** of my essay. [making slow and difficult progress]

C

Grammar of multi-word expressions

It is important when using these expressions to know just how flexible their grammar is. Some are more fixed than others. For instance, **barking up the wrong tree** [be mistaken] is always used in continuous, not simple form, e.g. I think you’re **barking up the wrong tree**. (NOT I think you bark up the wrong tree.)

A good dictionary may help, but it is best to observe the grammar in real examples.

Note how Units 89-94 group expressions in different ways.

For more information on multi-word expressions, see *English Idioms in Use* by Michael McCarthy and Felicity O’Dell.

Exercises

79.1 Complete the expressions from A and B opposite.

- 1 When I passed all my exams, I felt over the moon.
- 2 This printer isn't working again! It's a pain .
- 3 It's almost midnight! I'd better be making .
- 4 I spent too much money last month and now I'm in .
- 5 It's time to change my laptop. It's five years old and has seen .
- 6 She is the absolute limit! She really takes .
- 7 Oh dear, Matthew completely misunderstood me. He always seems to get .
- 8 I'm sorry. I do some really stupid things. You must think I'm as daft .
- 9 I wonder what's wrong with Ursula? She looks down .
- 10 I don't trust politicians. Most of them are just on the .

79.2 Which expressions from the opposite page do these pictures remind you of?



1 be over the moon



3 .



2 .



4 .

79.3 Which is correct, (a) or (b)? Check with A and B opposite.

- 1 Sit down and (a) *get* (b) *take* the weight off your feet. b
- 2 Why does she always have to (a) *poke* (b) *peek* her nose into other people's affairs? .
- 3 I was feeling (a) *under* (b) *below* the weather, so I didn't go to work. .
- 4 Zoe pulled a (a) *quick* (b) *fast* one and didn't pay for her share of the meal. .
- 5 All right, all right! You don't have to (a) *cook* (b) *make* a meal out of it! .
- 6 He's really making (a) *heavy* (b) *bad* weather of what should be a simple task. .

79.4 Without using a dictionary, try to work out the meaning of the underlined expressions from the context.

- 1 It's midnight. It's time to hit the sack. *go to bed*
- 2 This is just kid's stuff. I want something more difficult and challenging!
- 3 I feel fit as a fiddle ever since I started going regularly to the gym.
- 4 I can't understand why he's giving me the cold shoulder. He's usually so friendly.
- 5 I haven't seen Simone for ages. We only get together once in a blue moon.
- 6 I think I've got the hang of this photo-editing program now, though it was complicated at first.

79.5 Over to you

Try a grouping exercise with six expressions from the opposite page, using any of the methods suggested in B. Which type of grouping works best for the expressions you chose?