

# **COMPOSITION (compounding)**

*is the combination of two or more existing words to create a new word.*

It is one of the most common and important word-building processes in English.

A **compound** is a unit of vocabulary that consists of more than one lexical stem:

*football, handicraft, sky-blue, off-the-record, touch-me-not.*

- With very few exceptions, it is a **noun**, a **verb** or an **adjective**.
- In most compounds the rightmost morpheme (**head**) determines the category of the entire word:  
*greenhouse (noun);*  
*spoon-feed (verb);*  
*nationwide (adjective).*

# Properties of compounds

- Compounds in English can be written differently:  
as *single words* – **moneywise**,  
with a *hyphen* – **globe-trotter** and  
as *separate words* – **couch potato**.
- Adjective-noun compounds are characterized by a more prominent stress on their first component:  
*a `tall `boy* – *a `tall-boy*.
- Tense and plural markers are attached to the compound as a whole (*exceptions are passersu-by, parkss supervisor, sonss-in-law, etc).*

# Such criteria should be taken into account:

- **solid spelling** – *nickname; underdog, whitewash;*
- **stress** – *`blue collar – `blue `collar; `green house – `green `house;*
- **connecting elements** – *handicraft, speedometer, spokesperson;*
- **impossibility for members of a compound to be modified** – *a blackbird (дрозд); a very black bird (очень черная птица);*
- **semantic unity** (compounds always express a single idea) – *baby-sit, home town, sweetheart.*

# **There are different classifications of compounds according to:**

- their part of speech characteristic;
- the way components are joined together;
- their structure;
- the degree of semantic independence of components;
- the order of components (immediate constituents);
- the meaning of the whole.

# According to the part of speech characteristic, compounds are subdivided into

- nouns (*night-gown, waterfall*);
- verbs (*to honeymoon, to outgrow*);
- adjectives (*free-for-all, hard-working*);
- adverbs (*downstairs, lip-deep*);
- prepositions (*within, into*) and
- numerals (*thirty-seven*).

# According to the way components are joined together, compounds are subdivided into

- neutral (formed by juxtaposition) (*sunflower, bestseller*),
- morphological (joined by a linking element) (*handicraft, microchip*) and
- syntactical (joined by means of form-word stems) (*whodunit, face-to-face, lily-of-the-valley*).

# **According to their structure, compounds are subdivided into**

- **compounds proper** (*earthquake, to window-shop, sky-blue*);
- **compound-derived** (affixed) words (*long-legged, video-player, absent-mindedness*);
- **compound words consisting of 3 or more stems** (*mother-in-law, good-for-nothing, wastepaper-basket*);
- **compound-shortened** words (*h-bag, V-day*).



# According to the degree of semantic independence of components, c-s are divided into

- a) **subordinative** compounds (with 1 component as a semantic centre)  
– *love-sick, nanny-goat, silverware;*
- b) **coordinative** compounds (with both semantically equal components) – *Anglo-Saxon, walkie-talkie, go-go.*

# Subordinative relations can be

- comparative – *snow-white*;
- instrumental – *sunrise*;
- of purpose – *bookshelf*;
- emphatic – *dead-cheap*;
- functional – *bathrobe*;
- sex – *tomcat*;
- adverbial type – *color-blind*.

**Coordinative compounds fall into 3 groups:**

- reduplicative compounds –  
***goody-goody, go-go;***
- c-s formed with rhythmic stems –  
***walkie-talkie; chit-chat;***
- additive compounds –  
***Afro-American,***  
***secretary-stenographer.***

# **According to the order of components (ICs), compounds are subdivided into**

- **syntactic** (with the direct order) (*to frontpage, giver-away, fair-haired*) and  
**asyntactic** (with the indirect order) (*to book-hunt, blood-thirsty, theatre-goer*).

# According to the meaning of the whole, compounds are divided into

- **idiomatic** – *night-cap* (a drink taken before going to bed at night), *butterfingers* (a clumsy person)

and

- **non-idiomatic** – *homeland*, *swimming-pool*, *speedometer*).

- ***Pseudo compounds*** are composed of meaningless root morphemes but put together present an idea:  
*chit-chat* – сплетни; *helter-skelter* – как попало; *razzle-dazzle* – кутерьма.

- Thus, **composition** is the way of word-building consisting in joining 2 or more stems to form one word:  
*underfoot. war-ship. in so far.*