

Webinar: Expanding Your Vocabulary With Compound Words

Compound words are when two or more words are put together to form a new word with a new meaning.

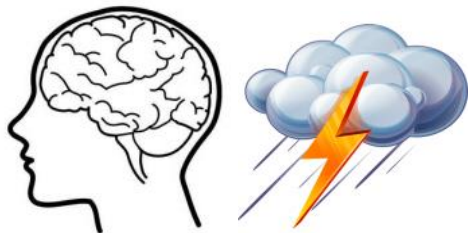
There are three forms of compound words:

- **the closed form, where the words are together**
(*notebook, keyboard, basketball*)
- **the hyphenated form**
(*six-pack, mother-in-law, check-in*)
- **the open form, where the words are separated by a space**
(*post office, real estate, vice president*)

For some words, both the open form and the hyphenated forms are acceptable (light-year, light year), and for some words both the hyphenated and the closed form are acceptable (easy-going, easygoing).

Sometimes compound words are easy to understand: a **bookstore** is a store that sells books; a **dishwasher** is a machine that washes dishes.

But others might not be so obvious; for example, **brainstorm** – an intense process where you think of many different ideas, or **scapegoat** – meaning someone who bears the blame for others.



This word is from “escape” + “goat,” and its origin is in the Bible, which describes a ritual in which a goat symbolically took on the sins (the bad actions) of the people, and was then sent out into the wild to die.

In today’s webinar, I’m going to go through the alphabet A to Z and teach you one or two interesting compound words starting with each letter.

aftermath (n.)

So, is “aftermath” what happens after your mathematics class? No – this word refers to the effects or consequences after an event (usually a tragic one, like a war). The **aftermath** of an earthquake would include many collapsed buildings, injured people, etc.

backfire (v.)

What does it mean for something to **backfire**? Well, imagine shooting a gun, but the bullet comes out the back instead of the front – not good, right? If something backfires, it goes wrong and has the opposite effect than intended. If a company launches a TV commercial to increase sales, but the TV commercial is offensive and sales decrease instead, then you could say the commercial **backfired**.



cloudburst (n.)

You probably already know that this is a cloud, and to “burst” means to explode – so a **cloudburst** is a sudden, heavy rainfall, when rain starts falling very quickly without warning. Another compound word for heavy, continuous rain is a **downpour** because rain is just pouring down out of the sky!



daredevil (n.)

Someone who is “daring” is bold, courageous. And this is a devil – well, a drawing of a devil, anyway. Devils are considered bad. So a **daredevil** is a person who is very bold but in a risky or dangerous way – for example, someone who does rock climbing without any ropes or protective equipment!



eyelid / eye shadow / eyelash / eyebrow (n.)

Now I’m going to teach you four words related to your eyes. The small fold of skin that covers your eyes when you close them is your **eyelid**.

Women like to decorate their eyelids with a type of makeup called **eye shadow**. The tiny hairs on your eyelids are your **eyelashes**, and the line of hairs above your eye is your **eyebrow**.



frostbite (n.)

The word “frost” refers to tiny ice crystals, and to bite is to cut something with your teeth. Put the two together and you get **frostbite** – an injury when your skin is exposed to extreme cold for too long, and the cold destroys the tissues. Sometimes people with frostbite have their fingers or toes amputated because the damage is too great.



greenhouse (n.)

A **greenhouse** is a structure especially used for growing plants. It's usually made of glass so that the temperature and humidity can be controlled.



homemade / handmade (adj.)

How would you like some **homemade** cherry pie? The adjective **homemade** means it was made by a person at home, not by a factory or by a big company.

Similar to that is **handmade**, which describes something made by hand, not by a machine. We usually use homemade for food and handmade for objects.



ironclad (adj.)

“Ironclad” literally means to be covered in the metal called iron. A battleship can be ironclad. But it's often used metaphorically, for example an **ironclad rule** or **ironclad protection** – meaning something that is fixed and can't be broken.



jelly beans (n.)

This one's pretty self-explanatory: a type of candy that's like a bean made out of jelly is a **jelly bean**!



killjoy (n.)

A **killjoy** is a person who ruins other people's fun or pleasure. If your office normally celebrates people's birthday parties, but then there's a new manager who says you can't have parties anymore, he's a **killjoy**.



lightheaded / lighthearted (adj.)

To be **lighthearted** is to be happy and free from worries, trouble, or stress. But feeling **lightheaded** is not so nice – it means you feel dizzy, like you might lose consciousness.



milestone (n.)

When you're driving along the highway, you sometimes see small signs that show how many miles (or kilometers) you've traveled. We actually call these signs "mile markers," but the word **milestone** is used metaphorically to describe an important point in a process.

If your goal is to be fluent in English, and you pass a B2 upper-intermediate level exam, you've reached a **milestone** – you're not finished yet, but you've accomplished a significant goal.



newborn, newlyweds, newcomer, newbie (n.)

A baby that has just recently been born is a **newborn**, and two people who have just recently been married are **newlyweds**.



Someone who has recently arrived at an event or in a social group is a **newcomer**, and a **newbie** is a slang word for someone who is just beginning some activity and doesn't have much knowledge or experience yet.

outlaw (n., v.)

The word **outlaw** actually has two different meanings. A person who is an **outlaw** is a criminal, usually one who is running away from the police and trying to avoid being captured.



The verb **outlaw** means to prohibit something by law – for example, if your country **outlaws** talking on your cell phone while driving, it means that it's now illegal and you will be punished if you do it.

panhandle (v.)

This is a pan and this is its handle – but the verb **panhandle** means to approach someone and ask for money or food – to beg. Maybe the word panhandle began to be used in this way because the beggars used pans to collect the money; I'm not sure.



quarterback (n., v.)

In American football, the **quarterback** is the name of the player who controls the strategy for play; he directs the rest of the team on what to do.

But **quarterback** is also used informally for the action of leading/directing any operation: the marketing department of a company needs someone to **quarterback** the new ad campaign.



runaway (n., adj.) / runaway (n.)

The word **runaway** refers to a person or animal that has escaped – you can have a **runaway** elephant that has gotten out of the zoo. Don't get runaway confused with **runway**, which is the road that an airplane uses to gain speed before taking off.



shipwreck (n.)

When a ship sailing in the ocean crashes into the rocks, this is called a **shipwreck**. We also use the word **shipwreck** for the destroyed remains of the ship, which may be underwater.

For ships, we only use the word **shipwreck**; for cars and trains, we can say **car crash** / **train crash** OR **car wreck** / **train wreck**; and for airplanes, we always say **plane crash** (never “wreck.”)



tiebreaker (n.)

When two teams are playing each other and the score ends in an equal number like 2-2 or 5-5, this is called a **tie**. But in many games and contests, we need one winner – so an extra activity called a **tiebreaker** is done to “break” the tie and determine the champion. (In sports like soccer and basketball, this is often called **overtime**).

upcoming (adj.)

This word is used to describe an event that is coming up in the future: if a presidential election will be held next month, you could call it “the **upcoming** election.”

vineyard (n.)

A vine is a type of plant that “climbs” up a surface as it grows. Grapes grow on vines. And a yard is an area of land – so a **vineyard** is an area where grapes are grown, especially for the purpose of producing wine.



wholesale (adj.) / warehouse (n.)

Sometimes companies buy very large quantities of items from a manufacturer, in order to get a discount. This is called buying **wholesale**.



The great number of items can then be stored in a **warehouse** – a building especially for storage of things that are not being used at the moment – until they are sold.

yearbook (n.)

Many high schools and colleges publish a book at the end of the school year, with pictures and information about the things that happened during that year. This is called a **yearbook**.

zigzag (adj.)

Something that is **zigzag** follows a path with sharp turns in alternating directions. This picture shows a **zigzag** road.



Improving Your Vocabulary

You know, there are really so many interesting compound words; as I was doing the research for this lesson, it was hard to choose which ones to teach! But I hope you've learned some new vocabulary through this webinar.

If you'd like to continue improving your vocabulary, you'll really enjoy the Vocabulary Builder Courses at Espresso English. There are two levels – Level 1, which is easier, and Level 2, which is harder – and each level has 30 lessons.

The first level focuses on essential everyday words for things in daily life, work, study, travel, describing people, describing the world, etc.

And the second level goes deeper into these subjects and also has lessons on more advanced topics like binomials, metaphors, word roots, and prefixes and suffixes.



Now, each level of the course is \$30 – it's \$30 for Level 1, and \$30 for Level 2, because they are two completely different courses. But the special offer I have just for you is that if you buy both levels together, you get a discount – instead of paying \$60, the price is only \$45.

So it's your choice; you can buy only level 1 – for \$30; only level 2 – also for \$30, or both levels for the discounted price of \$45. You'll learn more than 600 new words in each level, and there are also exercises to practice that vocabulary so you don't forget it.

Level 1 – Vocabulary Builder Course - \$30

Start the course today!

Level 2 – Vocabulary Builder Course - \$30

Start the course today!

Levels 1 & 2 – ~~\$60~~ \$45

Register with Discount

Questions

Let me take some time to answer questions about either the webinar or the course – you can send in your questions using the question box, and I'll answer some of them now. If I don't answer your question on the webinar, I'll respond later by e-mail, OK?

Someone's asking, "Can we invent compound words?" Hmm... I would say in general, no, don't try to invent compound words. It's true that new words are invented and come into the language, but this usually happens when a lot of people start to use them at the same time, they're used in the media, and so on. I guess someone had to be the first, but... in general, I wouldn't recommend it, just try to work with the words that already exist because there are plenty!

Okay, another question – "My English level is intermediate, which level of the course is best?" If you're intermediate, you could really go either way. I think that Level 1 will help you get a solid base in the most important vocabulary, and learn some new words as well inside each lesson's topic. In Level 2, one difference is that I do talk a bit faster in the videos, and the words are more advanced, but I think someone at the intermediate level can do Level 2 as well, although it might be a little more of a challenge. So to the person who asked the question – both levels are good, it just depends on whether you want to reinforce and expand your basic knowledge, or take on more of a challenge with the higher level course.

Let's see another one – "I didn't understand the difference between tiebreaker and overtime." Okay, good question. Overtime is usually a time period, and a tiebreaker is more a single activity. I'll use an example from soccer. If a game ends in a tie, first we have something like 20 minutes of overtime – that's the extra playing time. If nobody scores a goal in the overtime, then the penalty kicks are the tiebreaker – the extra activity that will decide the winner. Or on a game show where two contestants have the same number of points, the final question will be the tiebreaker. So overtime implies extra time, whereas a tiebreaker is more like an event or an activity.

Here's another question about the courses – how long is the time limit to finish the lessons? The answer is: there is NO time limit! I know that everyone studies at different speeds, so once you register for the course, you can take as

long as you need, your access to the lessons is permanent, and you can also download everything if you want to study later in someplace where you don't have an internet connection.

A question about the "eye" words – what do you call the colored part of the eye in the middle, is that the eyeball? No, not exactly. The word eyeball refers to the entire eye – the colored part AND the white part. For just the colored part, we have two words – the ring that is blue, green, or brown is called the iris, and the black part in the center is the pupil.

All right, we're almost out of time, so I'm just going to take a few more questions.

Someone says: "I'm confused! The course is one lesson per day, or I get access to all lessons immediately?" You get access to all the lessons immediately. This course was created in January, and when I'm creating a course, the first students do get one lesson per day every day – but now that the course is finished, when you register, you get instant access to all the lessons, so you don't need to wait to receive them.

Here's one: what's the difference between lifetime and lifelong? Hmm. Okay – so both lifetime and lifelong refer to something that lasts your entire life. I don't think there's really any difference between them in terms of their meaning. People just sometimes tend to use one over the other, like for example, you'll often see the phrase "lifetime guarantee" on products, meaning that the product will last for your entire life. The word lifelong is often used with personal things like a lifelong dream or a lifelong friend... or you could say you're a lifelong fan of a particular sports team. So the answer is that lifetime and lifelong mean the same thing, but they're commonly used in some different expressions.

Last question – How do you know when it's one word, two words, or has a hyphen? Ah, I had a feeling someone was going to ask that. The answer is that you can't know; there's really no rule. For each compound word, you just need to check the dictionary and remember which form it takes. I wish there was a better answer to that, but it's just one of the many quirks of the English language.

OK, I have a bunch more questions here, but I'm going to answer the rest by e-mail, all right? So please be patient and wait for my response in the next day or two.

Once again I'd like to say thank you for coming to this webinar, I hope you learned something new, and if you'd like to take advantage of the discount on levels 1 and 2 of the Vocabulary Builder Course together, click the button now so that you don't miss out. Oh and also I'll send out the notes from this webinar next week by e-mail. Thanks everyone - and I hope to see you on the next webinar.



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