

COMPOUND NOUNS

Nouns can be formed out of two or more combinations of words:

noun + noun: *eyeline*

noun + gerund: *action painting*

gerund + noun: *vanishing point*

verb + adverb: *take-off*

The noun can also be used as an attribute to define an object: *perspective device* (rather than *construction device*).

It can also be used to shorten such phrases as:

the frame of the picture → *picture frame* *the key of the car* → *the car key*.

The plural is formed adding *-s* on the second noun:

picture plane → *picture planes* *church roof* → *church roofs*.

However, there are some exceptions:

sister-in-law → *sisters-in-law* *passer-by* → *passers-by*.

If the noun is uncountable then no plural occurs: *Renaissance music*.

FURTHER NOTES ON COMPOUND NOUNS

- ✓ Compound nouns are nouns formed by joining two or more already-existing words
- ✓ A compound noun is composed of one (or more) modifier(s) + a head

EXAMPLES:

action movie (open compound)

singer-songwriter (hyphenated compound)

artwork (solid compound)

- ✓ Often a compound noun is also a lexical collocation. It happens when neither replacement nor inversion are allowed.
- ✓ Other examples of compound words:
on line, on-line, online (spelling evolution into three stages)
a layout

NOTES

Plane (picture plane) and *plain (plain ground)* are homophones. They have the same sound but different spellings and meaning. The English language is full of such cases.

Exercise 7

Give alternate spellings to the following words.

whole

new

scene

so

steal

sight

whose

sure

moor

WORD STUDY

The suffix *-ful* (as in *skilful*) added to a noun means 'full of'. The suffix *-less* (as in *doubtless*) has the opposite meaning. Sometimes the suffix does not have the equivalent opposite (like *beautiful* - we cannot say *beautyleless!*)

Exercise 9

Add an appropriate suffix to the noun.

- 1) I think Hogarth's engravings are (WONDER).
- 2) His action was very (THOUGHT) and he regretted it afterwards.
- 3) You must be (CARE) when you handle the painting.
- 4) The auctioneers were (HOPE) - they really thought they could sell the statue.
- 5) This text book is completely (USE) - it's too old and out of date.