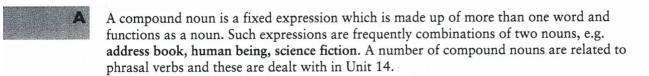
Compound nouns – combinations of two nouns



Compound nouns may be written as two words, e.g. tin opener, bank account, or they may be written with a hyphen instead of a space between the words, e.g. pen-name, baby-sitter. Some expressions are occasionally written with a hyphen and occasionally as two separate words. For instance, both letter box and letter-box are correct. Sometimes they may be written as one word, e.g. earring.

Compound nouns may be countable, uncountable or only used in either the singular or the plural. There are examples of each of these types below. Check that you understand the meanings of each of the expressions listed. If you understand both elements of the expression, the meaning will usually be clear. If the meaning is not fairly obvious, then it is provided below.

Usually the main stress is on the first part of the compound but sometimes it is on the second part. The word which contains the main stress is underlined in the compound nouns below. Here are some examples of common countable compound nouns.

alarm clock	assembly line	blood donor	book token
burglar alarm	contact lens	credit card	handcuffs
heart attack	package holiday	pedestrian crossing	shoe horn
tea-bag	windscreen	windscreen wiper	youth hostel

Here are some examples of common uncountable compound nouns. These are never used with an article.

air- <u>traffic</u> control	<u>birth</u> control	<u>blood</u> pressure	cotton <u>wool</u>
data-processing	family planning	food poisoning	pocket money
income tax	junk food	mail order	hay fever
			(allergy to pollen)

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

<u>arms</u> race (countries wanting most powerful weapons)	<u>death</u> penalty
generation gap	labour force
mother-tongue	sound barrier
greenhouse effect	welfare state
brain drain (highly educated people leaving country to work	k abroad)

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

 cie are some	champies of common	compound nound ac-	out office production
grass roots	luxury goods	human rights	kitchen scissors
race relation	s <u>road</u> works	sunglasses	traffic lights

Compound nouns – verb + preposition

A large number of compound nouns (see Unit 13) are based on phrasal verbs. In Sections B to E you will see a number of examples of such nouns in context. The meaning of the compound noun is indicated in brackets at the end of the sentence. To form the plural, 's' is

added to the end, e.g. pin-ups.

Nouns based on phrasal verbs often have an informal feel to them and they are particularly common in newspaper reporting. Here are examples of such nouns in use.

In response to the pay offer, there was a walk-out at the factory. [strike]

There is going to be a crack-down on public spending. [action against]

There has been a break-out from the local prison. [escape]

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

I never expected the break-up of the USSR. [collapse]

A number of these nouns have economic associations.

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]

We made a profit of £1000 on a turnover of £10,000. [money passing through a company]

Some of these nouns are associated with technology and other aspects of contemporary life.

What the computer produces depends on the quality of the input. [information that is

Output has increased thanks to new technology. [production]

We have a rather rapid staff turnover. [change]

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

It will be a long time before the consequences of fallout from Chernobyl are no longer felt. [radio-active 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]

Some of the 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 situation 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 by-pass. [parking space at the side of a road; road avoiding the centre of a town]

The outbreak of war surprised them. [start of something unpleasant, e.g. disease, violence]