Word-Formation Processes in E4PS

COMPOUNDING
(compound nouns and compound adjectives)

In English, there are three main ways of putting two nouns together:

- **noun + 's + noun:** ***William's car, my husband's name, the board's decision, London's museums, yesterday's papers;***

- **noun + of + noun:** ***a round of talks, an item of news, a barrel of oil[1], the middle of the meeting, the theory of relativity, the laws of physics;***

- **noun + noun ➔ compound nouns.**

A compound word or a compound is a new word made up of two or more other words – that is, formed by joining two or more existing words. It means that each part of a compound must be able to occur on its own as a word. Here follow some examples of compound nouns:

- *headhunter*, from *head* (n) and *hunter* (n)
- *paperwork*, from *paper* (n) and *work* (n)
- *workforce*, from *work* (n) and *force* (n)
- *lawmaker,* from *law* (n) and *maker* (n)
- *shareholder,* from *share* (n) and *holder* (n)
- *stockholder,* from *stock* (n) and *holder* (n)
- *stakeholder*, , from *stake* (n) and *holder* (n)
- *ballot paper,* from *ballot* (n) and *paper* (n)
- *ballot box,* from *ballot* (n) and *box* (n)
- *market survey,* from *market* (n) and *survey* (n)
- *consumer confidence,* from *consumer* (n) and *confidence* (n)
- *gender pay gap,* from *gender* (n), *pay* (n) and *gap* (n)
- *glass ceiling,* from *glass* (n) and *ceiling* (n)
- *climate crisis,* from *climate* (n) and *crisis* (n)

1 Note that the noun + noun structure, i.e. *an oil barrel*, refers to the container without its content.

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The final part of a typical compound is the head (also called the modified) of the construction, determining its word-class and much of its semantic properties, and is preceded by the modifier.

As to the spelling of compounds, there are three forms:

- **hyphenated compounds, such as *cross-bencher*[2], *bridge-building, decision-making*, *all-party support* or *front-runner*;**
- **open compounds, such as *exchange rate, mass media, peace talks, tax policy, policy brief*[3] or *Home Office, shadow cabinet*;**
- **solid compounds, such as *businessperson, policymaker*, *turnover, startup* or *boardroom*.**

The logical relations between two nouns side by side include, but are not limited to, the following:

- **the first noun answers the question 'what kind of?' (compare *price list* and *list price*; other examples: *corporation tax*, *credit card*);**
- **the second noun is about the first noun (e.g. *currency crisis*, *payment terms*);**
- **the second noun comes from the first noun (e.g. *a newspaper report, a bank loan*);**
- **the first noun makes clear where and/or when the action, exemplified by the second noun, happens: (e.g. *EU job vacancies, Ukraine invasion map, UK visa requirements, 2022 US midterm election, 2024 United Nations Climate Change Conference, New Year Address*).**

REMEMBER THAT

1. **in a compound noun the first noun is usually singular, even if it has a plural meaning.**

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2 *Cross-bencher* is a member of the British House of Lords who does not belong to a particular political party. Remember also the compound nouns *backbencher* (in the House of Commons in Britain and in certain other parliaments, a member who sits in the rows of seats at the back, and who does not have an important position in the government or the Opposition) and *frontbencher* (an important member of the government or the opposition in the British parliament, who sits in the front rows of seats), all referred to the UK Parliament.

[3] A *policy brief* is a concise summary of a particular issue, the policy options to deal with it, and some recommendations on the best option. It is aimed at government policymakers and others who are interested in formulating or influencing policy.

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- **a car factory, a shoe manufacturer, a toolbox, share price. Needs analysis, goods train**

2. when the first noun of a compound is a numerical expression, it is singular:

- **a *four-star* hotel (i.e., a hotel that has four stars)**
- **a *forty-hour* week (a week lasting forty hours)**
- **a *three-million-dollar* contract (a contract worth three million dollars)**
- **a *five-year* plan (a plan lasting five years)**
- **a *six-month* Presidency (a Presidency lasting six months)**
- **a *two-month* internship**

3. a longer compound made up of a sequence of two or more lexical words can be referred to as lexical chain. Be careful both in interpreting the correct logical relation between each item and in translating such chain into Italian. Let's try with the following examples:

- **United Nations Sustainable Development Goals; SDGs**
- **Monthly sales reports;**
- **2024 Russian presidential elections;**
- **Legally-binding reduction targets.**

The following examples, in *italics*, show some patterns of compound adjectives:

- *student-friendly* (adj) coursebooks
- *purpose-built* (adj) premises
- *family-run* (adj) business
- *market-oriented* (adj) policy
- *government-led* (adj) investment initiatives
- *energy-hungry* (adj) industries
- *cost-effective* (adj) solutions
- *nuclear-powered* (adj) submarines
- *highly-skilled* (adj) workers
- *foodborne* (adj) illness
- *vector-borne* (adj) *virus*

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COMPOUND ADJECTIVES

FORM 1 **Two-word adjectives**

Many adjectives are formed by joining two (or more) words with a hyphen (-). There are many types of combinations:

adj + noun:	a **small-scale** operation, a **long-term** policy
adj + noun + *-ed*:	a **narrow-minded** approach, a **short-sighted** policy
adj or adv + past participle:	**low-paid** workers, a **well-informed** person
adj, adv, noun + present participle:	a **high-flying** professional, a **far-reaching** effect,
	a **record-breaking** year, a **problem-solving** approach
noun + adj:	a **tax-free** salary, a **brand-new** product

A few compound adjectives consist of three words:

the **day-to-day** organisation	**up-to-date** information
an **out-of-court** settlement	a **down-to-earth** approach

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