

# Word Formation in English | KSE Academy®

Word formation is a very important aspect of most languages, and English is no exception. The term «word formation» refers to the processes through which new words are created. Given its significance in the English language and in Cambridge English exams, this short article will outline the basic word formation processes. Let's go!

## Word Formation Processes

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#### Compounding

It means creating a word by adding up two or more different words. Compound words have a new meaning, which is obviously related to the meanings of the other words. For example:

- *book + case = bookcase*
- *sign + post = signpost*
- *watch + man = watchman*

Not all compound words are written together. Sometimes they can be hyphenated (con guión) or separate, such as «traffic lights» or «ice-cream». Some, such as «ice-cream» can be written with or without a hyphen.

#### Derivation: prefixes and suffixes

This process is normally done through suffixation or prefixation, that is to say, adding a **suffix** or a **prefix**. For instance:

- *urgent* (adjective) + *-cy* = *urgency* (noun)
- *ir-* + *responsible* (adjective) + *-y* = *irresponsibly* (adverb)
- *national* (adjective) + *-ise* = *nationalise*

#### Conversion

Conversion happens when a word changes from one word class to another. For instance, the verb *to google* is formed from the noun *Google*; or the noun *read* (as in *a good read*) is formed from the verb *to read*. For example:

- *I emailed this document to John.* (*emailed* is a verb formed from the noun *email*)
- *He was bullied at school as a child.* (*bullied* is a verb formed from the noun *bully*)

#### Blending

This involves taking a part of two different words to make a new word, like merging two words based on the sounds of these words. This is extremely popular in the English language, and it produces hundreds of new words every year whose meanings is a mixture of the meanings of the original words. In some cases, these are informal, but there are many that have become a natural part of standard English. Let's see some examples:

- *channel + tunnel = chunnel*

- *motor + hotel = motel*
- *work + alcoholic = workaholic*

## Abbreviation

When we abbreviate a word, we form another word by shortening it or simply by using only part of the word:

- Perambulator → pram
- Veterinary → vet

In general, we can talk about two types of abbreviation: clipping and acronyms.

### Clipping

This means literally clipping the word, which means «cutting» the word to make it shorter. This normally makes the word more informal and/or appealing. Some examples are:

- *advertisement = ad*
- *hamburger = burger*
- *demonstration = demo*

### Acronyms

Acronyms, which are a form of abbreviation, are words formed by using only the first letter(s) of the words. By creating an acronym, we are reducing the meaning of a whole phrase or sentence to a single word. Let's see some popular examples:

- laughing out loud = LOL
- United Nations = UN
- radio detection and ranging = radar

### Novel creation

This basically means coming up with a completely new word without any of the processes above. These words are typically referred to as «neologisms». Some examples are:

- puzzle
- bash
- gimmick
- gadget

### Creative re-spelling

This involves spelling a word differently in order to make it more practical, attractive, or to fulfil some particular aim, usually commercial. For example:

- *because → bcoz*
- *light → lite*
- *forever → 4eva*
- *Combat → Kombat*

### Loan words

In linguistics, a loan happens when we take a word directly from a foreign language. Some examples of loan words in English are:

- solo
- pizza
- tapas
- negro
- carpe diem

- cul de sac

In general, when we loan a word, the spelling doesn't usually change. However, some other changes may occur, like creating a plural form which doesn't exist in the original language. As for pronunciation, we usually pronounce them with an «English accent», so it varies slightly from the original pronunciation.

As far as Cambridge English exams go, it's derivation (prefixes & suffixes) that concerns us most, as it is present in two of the parts of the section of [Use of English B2](#) and [Use of English C1](#).

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