



Word-building in Modern English



By word-building are understood processes of producing new words from the resources of this particular language. Together with borrowing, word-building provides for enlarging and enriching the vocabulary of the language.



Morpheme is the smallest recurrent unit of language directly related to meaning



All morphemes are subdivided into two large classes: **roots** (or *radicals*) and **affixes**. The latter, in their turn, fall into **prefixes** which precede the root in the structure of the word (as in *re-read*, *mispronounce*, *unwell*) and **suffixes** which follow the root (as in *teach-er*, *cur-able*, *diet-ate*).



We can distinguish words due to a morphological structure

Words which consist of a root are called root words:

house, room, book, work, port, street, table, etc.



We can distinguish words due to a morphological structure

Words which consist of a root and an affix (or several affixes) are called derived words or derivatives and are produced by the process of word-building known as affixation (or *derivation*):

re-read, mis-pronounce, un-well, teach-er.



We can distinguish words due to a morphological structure

A compound word is made when two words are joined to form a new word:

*dining-room, bluebell
(колокольчик), mother-in-law,
good-for-nothing(бездельник)*



We can distinguish words due to a morphological structure

Compound-derivatives are words in which the structural integrity of the two free stems is ensured by a suffix referring to the combination as a whole, not to one of its elements:

kind-hearted, old-timer,
schoolboyishness, teenager.



There are the following ways of word-building:

- Affixation
 - Composition
 - Conversion
 - Shortening (Contraction)
 - Non-productive types of word-building:
 - A) Sound-Imitation*
 - B) Reduplication*
 - C) Back-Formation (Reversion)*
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Affixation

The process of ***affixation*** consists in coining a new word by adding an affix or several affixes to some root morpheme.



The role of the affix in this procedure is very important and therefore it is necessary to consider certain facts about the main types of affixes. From the etymological point of view affixes are classified into the same two large groups as words: **native** and **borrowed**.



Some Native Suffixes

Noun-forming

-er	worker, <i>miner</i> , teacher, painter, etc.
-ness	<i>coldness</i> , <i>loneliness</i> , <i>loveliness</i> , etc.
-ing	feeling, meaning, singing, reading, etc.
-dom	freedom, wisdom, kingdom, etc.
-hood	childhood, manhood, motherhood, etc.
-ship	friendship, companionship, mastership, etc.
-th	length, breadth, health, truth, etc.



Some Native Suffixes

Adjective-forming

-ful	<i>careful, joyful, wonderful, sinful, skilful, etc.</i>
-less	<i>careless, sleepless, cloudless, senseless, etc.</i>
-y	<i>cozy, tidy, merry, snowy, showy, etc.</i>
-ish	<i>English, Spanish, reddish, childish, etc.</i>
-ly	<i>lonely, lovely, ugly, likely, lordly, etc.</i>
-en	<i>wooden, woollen, silken, golden, etc.</i>
-some	<i>handsome, quarrelsome, tiresome, etc.</i>



Some Native Suffixes

Verb-forming

-en

widen, redden, darken, sadden, etc.

Adverb-forming

-ly

warmly, hardly, simply, carefully, coldly, etc.



An affix of foreign origin can be regarded as borrowed only after it has begun an independent and active life in the recipient language and it is taking part in the word-making processes of that language. This can only occur when the total of words with this affix is so great in the recipient language as to affect the native speakers' subconscious to the extent that they no longer realize its foreign flavour and accept it as their own.



By ***productive affixes*** we mean the ones, which take part in deriving new words in this particular period of language development. The best way to identify productive affixes is to look for them among neologisms and so-called nonce-words.

*The adjectives **thinnish** (жидковатый) and **baldish** (лысоватый) bring to mind dozens of other adjectives made with the same suffix: **oldish** (староватый), **youngish** (моложавый), **mannish** (мужеподобная), **girlish** (женоподобный), **longish** (длинноватый), **yellowish** (желтоватый), etc.*

*The same is well illustrated by the following popular statement: "/ don't like Sunday evenings: I feel so **Mondayish**". (Чувствующий лень после воскресного отдыха)*



One should not confuse the productivity of affixes with their frequency of occurrence. There are quite a number of high-frequency affixes which, nevertheless, are no longer used in word-derivation

*e. g. the adjective-forming native suffixes **-ful**, **-ly**; the adjective-forming suffixes of Latin origin **-ant**, **-ent**, **-al** which are quite frequent*



Some Productive Affixes

Noun-forming suffixes	-er, -ing, -ness, -ism(<i>materialism</i>), -ist(<i>impressionist</i>), -ance
Adjective-forming suffixes	-y, -ish, -ed (<i>learned</i>), -able, -less
Adverb-forming suffixes	-ly
Verb-forming suffixes	-ize/-ise (<i>realise</i>), -ate
Prefixes	un- (<i>unhappy</i>), re- (<i>reconstruct</i>), dis- (<i>disappoint</i>)



Some Non-Productive Affixes

Noun-forming suffixes	-th, -hood
Adjective-forming suffixes	-ly, -some, -en, -ous
Verb-forming suffix	-en



Composition

Composition is a type of word-building, in which new words are produced by combining two or more stems



Compounds are not homogeneous in structure. Traditionally three types are distinguished:

- ❖ neutral
 - ❖ morphological
 - ❖ syntactic
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Neutral

In neutral compounds the process of compounding is realised without any linking elements, by a mere juxtaposition of two stems, as in

blackbird(дрозд)

shopwindow(витрина)

sunflower(подсолнух)

bedroom(спальня) etc.



There are three subtypes of neutral compounds depending on the structure of the constituent stems.

The examples: *shopwindow(витрина)*, *sunflower(подсолнух)*, *bedroom(спальня)* represent the subtype which may be described as **simple neutral compounds**: they consist of simple affixless stems.



Compounds which have affixes in their structure are called **derived** or **derivational compounds**.

*E.g. blue-eyed(голубоглазый),
broad-shouldered(широкоплечий)*



The third subtype of neutral compounds is called **contracted compounds**. These words have a shortened (contracted) stem in their structure:

*V-day (день победы) (Victory day),
G-man (агент ФБР) (Government
man "FBI agent"), H-bag (сумочка)
(handbag), T-shirt(футболка), etc.*



Morphological

Morphological compounds are few in number. This type is *non-productive*. It is represented by words in which two compounding stems are combined by a linking vowel or consonant:

e. g. *Anglo-Saxon,*
Franko-Prussian, handiwork (изделие
ручной работы), *statesman*
(политический деятель/политик)



Syntactic

These words are formed from segments of speech, preserving in their structure numerous traces of syntagmatic relations typical of speech: articles, prepositions, adverbs.

*e.g. father-in-law, mother-in-law
etc.*



Conversion

Conversion consists in making a new word from some existing word by changing the category of a part of speech, the morphemic shape of the original word remaining unchanged.



It has also a new paradigm peculiar to its new category as a part of speech. *Conversion is a convenient and "easy" way of enriching the vocabulary with new words.* The two categories of parts of speech especially affected by conversion are **nouns** and **verbs**.



Verbs made from nouns are *the most numerous* amongst the words produced by conversion:

e. g. to hand(передавать)

to back(поддерживать)

to face(стоять лицом к кому-либо)

to eye(рассматривать)

to nose(разнюхивать)

to dog(выслеживать)



Nouns are frequently made from verbs:

e.g. make(марка)

run(бег)

find(находка)

walk(прогулка)

worry(тревога)

show(демонстрация)

move(движение)



Verbs can also be made from
adjectives:

e. g. to pale(побледнеть)

to yellow(желтеть)

to cool(охлаждать)

Other parts of speech are not
entirely unsusceptible to conversion.



Shortening (Contraction)

This comparatively new way of word-building has achieved a high degree of productivity nowadays, especially in American English.

Shortenings (or contracted words) are produced in ***two different ways***.



The first way

The first is to make a new word from a syllable (rarer, two) of the original word.

The latter may lose its beginning (as in **phone** made from **telephone**, **fence** from **defence**), its ending (as in **hols** from **holidays**, **vac** from **vacation**, **props** from **properties**, **ad** from **advertisement**) or both the beginning and ending (as in **flu** from **influenza**, **fridge** from **refrigerator**)



The second way

The second way of shortening is to make a new word from the initial letters of a word group:

U.N.O. from the ***United Nations Organisation***, ***B.B.C.*** from the ***British Broadcasting Corporation***, ***M.P.*** from ***Member of Parliament***.

This type is called *initial shortenings*.



Both types of shortenings are characteristic of informal speech in general and of uncultivated speech particularly:

E. g. **Movie** (from ***moving-picture***), **gent** (from ***gentleman***), **specs** (from ***spectacles***), **circs** (from ***circumstances***, e. g. under the circs), **I. O. Y.** (from ***I owe you***), **lib** (from ***liberty***), **cert** (from ***certainty***), **exhibish** (from ***exhibition***), **posish** (from ***position***)



Non-productive types of word-building

Sound-Imitation

Words coined by this interesting type of word-building are made by imitating different kinds of sounds that may be produced by

human beings: **to whisper** (шептать), **to whistle** (свистеть), **to sneeze** (чихать), **to giggle** (хихикать);



animals, birds, insects: **to hiss** (шипеть), **to buzz** (жужжать), **to bark** (лаять), **to moo** (мычать);

inanimate objects: **to boom** (гудеть), **to ding-dong** (звенеть), **to splash** (брызгать);



Reduplication

In reduplication new words are made by *doubling a stem*, either without any phonetic changes as in ***bye-bye*** (coll, for ***good-bye***) or with a variation of the *root-vowel or consonant* as in ***ping-pong***, ***chit-chat*** (this second type is called gradational reduplication).



This type of word-building is greatly facilitated in Modern English by the vast number of monosyllables. Stylistically speaking, most words made by reduplication represent informal groups: colloquialisms and slang. E. g. **walkie-talkie** ("a portable radio"), **riff-raff** ("the worthless or disreputable element of society"; "the dregs of society"), *chi-chi* (sl. for chic as in a chi-chi girl)



In a modern novel an angry father accuses his teenager son of doing nothing but *dilly-dallying* all over the town. (***dilly-dallying*** — wasting time, doing nothing)



Another example of a word made by reduplication may be found in the following quotation from “The Importance of Being Earnest” by O. Wilde:

Lady Bracknell: I think it is high time that Mr. Bunbury made up his mind whether he was going to live or to die. This *shilly-shallying* with the question is absurd. (***shilly-shallying*** — irresolution, indecision)



Back-formation

Forming the allegedly original stem from a supposed derivative on the analogy of the existing pairs, i. e. the singling-out of a stem from a word which is wrongly regarded as a derivative.



The earliest examples of this type of word-building are the verb **to beg** (*попрошайничать*) that was made from the French borrowing **beggar** (*нищий, бедняк*), **to burgle** (*незаконно проникать в помещение*) from **burglar** (*вор-домушник*).

In all these cases the verb was made from the noun by subtracting what was mistakenly associated with the English suffix *-er*.



Later examples of back-formation are **to blood-transfuse** (делать переливание крови) from **blood-transfusing**, **to force-land** (совершать вынужденную посадку) from **forced landing**, **to baby-sit** (присматривать за ребенком) from **baby-sitter**.
