

# THE ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

SEVENTH EDITION

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## CHAPTER

## 11 New Words from Old

The previous chapter points out that new words are constantly entering the language. This chapter examines five processes by which they do so: creating, combining, shortening, blending, and shifting the grammatical uses of old words. Shifting the meanings of old words is considered also in the preceding chapter, and borrowing from other languages is considered in the next.

## CREATING WORDS

## ROOT CREATIONS

Most new words come in one way or another from older words. To create a word out of no other meaningful elements (a root creation) is a very rare phenomenon indeed. The trade name *Kodak* is sometimes cited as such a word. It first appeared in print in the U.S. *Patent Office Gazette* of 1888 and was, according to George Eastman, who invented the word as well as the camera it names, "a purely arbitrary combination of letters, not derived in whole or in part from any existing word" (Mencken, *Supplement I*), though his biographer points to the fact that his mother's family name began with the letter *K*.

Other commercial names—like those for the artificial fabrics *nylon* (a term never trademarked), *Dacron*, and *Orlon*—also lack an etymology in the usual sense. According to a Du Pont company publication (*Context* 7.2, 1978), when nylon was first developed, it was called *polyhexamethylenedipamide*. Realizing the stuff needed a catchier name than that, the company thought of *duprooh*, an acronym for "Du Pont pulls rabbit out of hat," but instead settled on *no-run* until it was pointed out that stockings made of the material were not really run-proof. So the spelling of that word was reversed to *nuron*, which was modified to *nilon* to make it sound less like a nerve tonic. Then, to prevent a pronunciation like "nillon," the company changed the *i* to *y*, producing *nylon*. If this account is correct, beneath that apparently quite arbitrary word lurks the English expression *no-run*. Most trade names are clearly based on already existing words. *Vaseline*, for instance, was made from German *Wasser* 'water' plus Greek *elaion* 'oil' (Mencken, *American Language*); *Kleenex* was made from

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*clean*, and *Cutex* came from *cuticle*, both with the addition of a rather widely used but quite meaningless pseudoscientific suffix *-ex*.

### ECHOIC WORDS

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Sound alone is the basis of a limited number of words, called *echoic* or *onomatopoeic*, like *bang*, *burp*, *splash*, *tinkle*, *bobwhite*, and *cuckoo*. Words that are actually imitative of sound, like *meow*, *moo*, *bowwow*, and *vroom*—though these differ from language to language—can be distinguished from those like *bump* and *flick*, which are called *symbolic*. Symbolic words regularly come in sets that rhyme (*bump*, *lump*, *clump*, *hump*) or alliterate (*flick*, *flash*, *flip*, *flop*) and derive their symbolic meaning at least in part from the other members of their sound-alike sets. Both imitative and symbolic words frequently show doubling, sometimes with slight variation, as in *bowwow*, *choo-choo*, and *pe(e)wee*.

### EJACULATIONS

PODEL  
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Some words imitate more or less instinctive vocal responses. One of these ejaculations, *ouch*, is something of a mystery: it does not appear in British writing except as an Americanism. The *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED) derives it from German *autsch*, an exclamation presumably imitative of what a German exclaims at fairly mild pain, such as stubbing a toe or hitting a thumb with a tack hammer—hardly anything more severe, for when one is suffering really rigorous pain, one is not likely to have the presence of mind to remember to say “Ouch!” The vocal reaction, if any, is likely to be a shriek or a scream. *Ouch* may be regarded as a conventional representation of the sounds actually made when one is in pain. The interesting thing is that the written form has become so familiar, so completely conventionalized, that Americans (and Germans) do actually say “Ouch!” when they have hurt themselves so slightly as to be able to remember what they *ought* to say under the circumstances.

Other such written representations, all of them highly conventionalized, of what are thought to be “natural utterances” have also become actual words—for instance, *ha-ha*, with the variant *ho-ho* for Santa Claus and other jolly fat men, and the girlish “Teheel!” (today’s *tee-hee*) uttered by the naughty but nonetheless delectable Alison in Chaucer’s “Miller’s Tale,” in what is perhaps the most indecorously funny line in English poetry.

Now, it is likely that, if Alison were a real-life woman (rather than better-than-life, as she is by virtue of being the creation of a superb artist), upon receipt of the misdirected kiss, she might have tittered, giggled, guffawed, or gurgled under the decidedly improper circumstances in which she had placed herself. But how to write a titter, a giggle, a guffaw, or a gurgle? Chaucer was confronted with the problem of representing by alphabetical symbols whatever the appropriate vocal response might have been, and the Middle English *tehee*, which was doubtless more or less conventional in his day, was certainly as good a choice as he could have made. The form with which he chose to represent girlish glee has remained conventional. When we encounter it today in

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reading, as *tee-hee*, we think—and, if reading aloud, we actually say—[tʰiːhi], and the effect seems perfectly realistic to us. (Alison, in her pre-vowel-shift pronunciation, would presumably have said [tʰeːhe].) But it is highly doubtful that anyone ever uttered *teheeltee-hee*, or *ha-ha*, or *ho-ho*, except as a conscious reflection of the written form. Laughter, like pain, is too paroxysmal in nature, too varying from individual to individual, and too unspeechlike to be represented accurately by speech sounds.

It is somewhat different with a vocal manifestation of disgust, contempt, or annoyance, which might be represented phonetically (but only approximately) as [č]. This was, as early as the mid-fifteenth century, represented as *tush*, and somewhat later less realistically as *twish*. *Twish* became archaic as a written form, but [təʃ] survives as a spoken interpretation of *tush*.

*Pish* and *pshaw* likewise represent “natural” emotional utterances of disdain, contempt, impatience, irritation, and the like, but have become conventionalized, as shown by the citation in *Webster’s Third New International Dictionary* for *pish*: “pished and pshawed a little at what had happened.” Both began as something like [pʃ]. W. S. Gilbert combined two such utterances to form the name of a “noble lord,” Pish-Tush, in *The Mikado*, with two similarly expressive ones, Pooh-Bah, for the overweeningly aristocratic “Lord High Everything Else.” Yum-Yum, the name of the delightful heroine of the same opera, is similarly a conventionalized representation of sounds supposedly made as a sign of pleasure in eating. From the interjection *yum-yum* comes the adjective *yummy*.

*Pew* or *pugh* is imitative of the disdainful sniff with which many persons react to a bad smell, resembling a vigorously articulated [p]. But, as with the previous examples, it has been conventionalized into a word pronounced [pyu] or prolongedly as [piːyu]. *Pooh* (sometimes with reduplication as *pooh-pooh*) is a variant, with somewhat milder implications. The reduplicated form may be used as a verb, as in “He pooh-poohed my suggestion.” *Fie*, used for much the same purposes as *pew*, is now archaic; it likewise represents an attempt at imitation. *Faugh* is probably a variant of *fie*; so, doubtless, is *phew*. *Ugh*, from a tensing of the stomach muscles followed by a glottal stop, has been conventionalized as an exclamation of disgust or horror or as a grunt.

A palatal click, articulated by placing the tongue against the palate and then withdrawing it, sucking in the breath, is an expression of impatience or contempt. It is also sometimes used in reduplicated form (there may in fact be three or more such clicks) in scolding children, as if to express shock and regret at some antisocial act. A written form is *tut(-tut)*, which has become a word in its own right, pronounced not as a click but according to the spelling. However, *tsk-tsk*, which is intended to represent the same click, is also used with the pronunciation [tʰskˈtʰsk]. Older written forms are *tchick* and *tck* (with or without reduplication). *Tut(-tut)* has long been used as a verb, as in Bulwer-Lytton’s “pishing and tutting” (1849) and Hall Caine’s “He laughed and tut-tutted” (1894), both cited by the *OED*.

A sound we frequently make to signify agreement may be represented approximately as [mʰhm]. This is written as *uh-huh*, and the written form is responsible for the pronunciation [əˈhə]. The exhalation of air often accompanying the censuring of another’s actions as foolish is imitated by *duh*, made

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famous by the animated cartoon character Homer Simpson as *doh*, though both words predated him and had variants in *dooh* and *do-o-o-o*, as the OED observes. The *p* of *yep* and *nope* was probably intended to represent the glottal stop frequently heard in the pronunciation of *yes* (without *-s*) and *no*, but one also frequently hears [yep] and [nop], pronunciations doubtless based on the written forms.

The form *brack* or *braak* is sometimes used to represent the so-called Bronx cheer. Eric Partridge (*Shakespeare's Bawdy*) has suggested, however, that Hamlet's "Buz, buz!" spoken impatiently to Polonius, is intended to represent the vulgar noise also known as "the raspberry." (*Raspberry* in this sense comes from the Cockney rhyming slang phrase *raspberry tart* for *fart*.) In all these cases, some nonlinguistic sound effect came first—a cry of pain, a giggle, a sneeze, or whatever. Someone tried to represent it in writing, always inadequately by a sequence of letters, which were then pronounced as a new word in the language. And so the vocabulary of ejaculations grew.

## COMBINING WORDS: COMPOUNDING

Creating words from nothing is comparatively rare. Most words are made from other words, for example, by combining whole words or word parts. A compound is made by putting two or more words together to form a new word with a meaning in some way different from that of its elements—for instance, a dry-erase *whiteboard* is not the same thing as a *white board*; indeed, today a whiteboard may even be a white, interactive, OptiPro-surfaced Smart Board that can be ruined when a hapless absent-minded professor writes on it with a dry-erase marker. Compounds may be spelled in three ways: solid, hyphenated, or open (*website*, *laid-back*, *ice cream*), as explained below. The choice between those three ways is unpredictable and variable.

From earliest times, compounding has been very common in English, as in other Germanic languages as well. Old English has *bliðheort* 'blitheheart(ed),' *eaxlgestella* 'shoulder-companion = comrade,' *brēostnet* 'breast-net = corslet,' *leornungcniht* 'learning retainer (knight) = disciple,' *wærloga* 'oath-breaker = traitor (warlock),' *woroldcýning* 'world-king = earthly king,' *fullfyllan* 'to fulfill,' and many other such compounds. A slightly gruesome one from the Middle English era is *bonfire* from *banefire* 'bone-fire,' originally a fire in which bones were burned.

The compounding process has gone on continuously. The American Dialect Society has recorded examples from recent years: *Dracula sneeze* 'covering one's mouth with the crook of one's elbow when sneezing,' *epic fail*, *flat screen*, *Generation Z*, *Government Motors* 'nickname for General Motors,' *high def*, *junk shot* 'pumping material into a well leak [such as Deepwater Horizon] in an effort to plug the blowout preventor,' the *Justin Bieber* 'haircut with long sideswept bangs,' and *Tea Party* 'pro-deficit-reduction, anti-Obama, anti-tax, and anti-government movement.'

The Internet has been particularly fecund in producing new terms, such as *ambient knowledge* 'passive awareness facilitated by social media,'

cloud computing, cyberbullying, dotcom 'Internet address for a commercial site or a company using the Internet for business,' Facebook, Internet addiction, iPod (i from the 1998 launch for the iMac, when Steve Jobs said the 'i' stands for 'Internet, individual, instruct, inform, inspire'; and pod from a reference to the white, one-occupant EVA pods of the fictional spacecraft Discovery One in the movie 2001: A Space Odyssey, famously remembered in Dave's unsuccessful command to the villainous, lip-reading artificially intelligent computer, HAL 9000: "Open the pod bays, HAL!"), netbook, podcast, Pottermore, search engine, sexting, Web addict, Web browser, weblog (the second element ultimately from a ship's log[book], and typically shortened to blog), webmaster, and website.

Another recent compounding is *social media mode* 'communicating via Internet media,' as in this quotation from an American journalist at <http://www.hometownheadlines.com/> (News Talk 1470 WRGA), reporting from a downtown Christmas parade: "We're switching to 'social media mode' for the duration of the parade. Follow us on Twitter or on our Hometown Headlines Facebook page" (John Druckenmiller). In the Oxford University Press blog, "Defining Our Language for 100 Years," *Concise Oxford English Dictionary* editor Angus Stevenson observes that two Old English words have recently gained new secondary meanings from social media: *follower* 'someone tracking a particular person, group, etc., on a social networking site' and *friend* 'a contact on a social networking site,' replacing *friend*'s earlier ancillary meaning 'a person who acts for one, e.g. as a second in a duel.'

#### SPELLING AND PRONUNCIATION OF COMPOUNDS

Compound adjectives are usually hyphenated, like *one-horse*, *loose-jointed*, and *front-page*, though some that are particularly well established, such as *outgoing*, *overgrown*, *underbred*, and *forthcoming*, are solid. (One day, *e-mail*, a word in such frequent use that it is already regularly written *email*, may become universally written solid (*email*); see <http://oxforddictionaries.com/>, where the first spelling listed for British and World English is in fact the solid *email*, with *e-mail* listed as the second form, and where for U.S. English, the first spelling listed is *e-mail*, with *email* as the second form.) A similar inconsistency is seen with compound verbs, like *overdo*, *broadcast*, *sidestep*, beside *double-date* and *babysit*, though these sometimes occur as two words. Compound nouns are likewise inconsistent: we write *ice cream*, *Boy Scout*, *real estate*, *post office*, *high school* as two words; we hyphenate *sit-in*, *go-between*, *fire-eater*, *higher-up*; but we write solid *postmaster*, *highlight*, and *football*. Hyphenation varies to some extent with the dictionary one consults, the style books of editors and publishers, and individual whim, among other factors. Many compound prepositions like *upon*, *throughout*, *into*, and *within* are written solid, but others like *out of* have a space. Also written solid are compound adverbs such as *nevertheless*, *moreover*, and *henceforth* and compound pronouns like *whoever* and *myself*. (For a study of the writing of compounds, see *Webster's Third New International Dictionary* 28a–29a.)

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A more significant characteristic of compounds—one that tells us whether we are dealing with two or more words used independently or as a lexical unit—is their tendency to be more strongly stressed on one or the other of their elements, in contrast to the more or less even stress characteristic of phrases. A *man-eating shrimp* would be a quite alarming marine phenomenon; nevertheless, the contrasting primary and secondary stresses of *man* and *eat* (symbolized by the hyphen) make it perfectly clear that we are here concerned with a hitherto unheard-of anthropophagous decapod. There is, however, nothing in the least alarming about a *man eating shrimp*, with approximately even stresses on *man* and *eat*.

The primary-secondary stress in compounds marks the close connection between the constituents that gives the compound its special meaning. In effect, it welds together the elements and thus makes the difference between the members of the following pairs:

hotbed: 'place encouraging rapid growth'  
highbrow: 'intellectual'  
blackball: 'vote against'  
greenhouse: 'heated structure to grow plants'  
makeup: 'cosmetics'  
headhunter: 'savage or recruiter of executives'  
loudspeaker: 'sound amplifier'

hot bed: 'warm sleeping place'  
high brow: 'result of receding hair'  
black ball: 'ball colored black'  
green house: 'house painted green'  
make up: 'reconcile'  
head hunter: 'leader on a safari'  
loud speaker: 'noisy talker'

In compound nouns, it is usually the first element that gets the primary stress, as in all the examples on the left above, but in adverbs and prepositions, it is the last (*nevertheless*, *without*). For verbs and pronouns, it is impossible to generalize (*broadcast*, *fulfill*, *somebody* [or *somebody*], *whoever*). The important thing is the unifying function of stress for compounds of whatever sort.

Generally, when complete loss of secondary stress occurs, phonetic change occurs as well. For instance, *English mán*, having in the course of compounding become *English-mán*, proceeded to become *Englishman* [-mən]. The same vowel reduction has occurred in *highwayman* 'robber,' *gentleman*, *horseman*, and *postman*, but not in *businessman*, *milkman*, and *iceman*. It is similar with the [-lənd] of *Maryland*, *Iceland*, *woodland*, and *highland* as contrasted with the secondarily stressed final syllables of such newer compounds as *wonderland*, *movieland*, and *Disneyland*; with the *-folk* of *Norfolk* and *Suffolk* (there is a common American pronunciation of the former with [-fok] and, by assimilation, with [-fɔrk]); and with the *-mouth* of *Portsmouth*, the *-combe* of *Wycombe*, the *-burgh* of *Edinburgh* (usually [-brəl]), and the *-stone* of *Folkestone* ([-stən]). Even more drastic changes occur in the final syllables of *coxswain* ['kaksən], *Keswick* ['kesɪk], and *Durham* ['dərəm] (though in *Birmingham*, as the name of a U.S. city in Alabama, the *-ham* is pronounced as the spelling suggests it should be). Similarly, drastic changes occur in both syllables of *boatswain* ['bosən], *forecastle* ['foksəl], *breakfast*, *Christmas* (that is, *Christ's mass*), *cupboard*, and *Greenwich*. (Except for Greenwich Village in New York and for Greenwich, Connecticut, the American place-name is usually

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pronounced as spelled, rather than as [greniɕ] or [greniʃ]. The British pronunciation is sometimes [griniʃ].)

Perhaps it is lack of familiarity with the word—just as the landlubber might pronounce *boatswain* as ['bɒt,swen]—that has given rise to an analytical pronunciation of *clapboard*, traditionally ['klæbəd]. *Grindstone* and *wristband* used to be respectively ['grinstən] and ['rɪzbænd]. Not many people have much occasion to use either word nowadays; consequently, the older tradition has been lost, and the words now have secondary stress and full vowels instead of [ə] in their last elements. The same thing has happened to *waistcoat*, now usually ['west,kot]; the traditional ['wɛskət] has become old-fashioned. Lack of familiarity can hardly explain the new analysis of *forehead* as ['fɒr,hed] rather than the traditional ['fɒrəd]; consciousness of the spelling is responsible.

#### AMALGAMATED COMPOUNDS

The phonetic changes we have been considering have the effect of welding the elements of certain compounds so closely together that, judging from sound (and frequently also from their appearances when written), one would sometimes not suspect that they were indeed compounds. In *daisy*, for example, phonetic reduction of the final element has caused that element to be identical with the suffix -y. Geoffrey Chaucer was quite correct when he referred to "The dayesyē, or elles the yē [eye] of day," in the prologue to *The Legend of Good Women*, for the word is really from the Old English compound *dægesēage* 'day's eye.' The -y of *daisy* is thus not an affix like the diminutive -y of *Katy* or the -y from Old English -ig of *hazy*; instead, the word is from a historical point of view a compound.

Such closely welded compounds were called *amalgamated* by Arthur G. Kennedy (*Current English* 350), who lists, among a good many others, *as* (OE *eal* 'all' + *swā* 'so'), *garlic* (OE *gār* 'spear' + *lēac* 'leek'), *hussy* (OE *hūs* 'house' + *wif* 'woman, wife'), *lord* (OE *hlāf* 'bread' or 'loaf' + *weard* 'guardian'), *marshal* (OE *mearh* 'horse' + *scealc* 'servant'), *nostril* (OE *nosu* 'nose' + *pyrel* 'hole'), and *sheriff* (OE *scīr* 'shire' + (ge)rēfa 'reeve'). Many proper names are such amalgamated compounds—for instance, among place-names, *Boston* ('Botulf's stone'), *Bewley* (Fr. *beau* 'beautiful' + *lieu* 'place'), *Sussex* (OE *sūþ* 'south' + *Seaxe* 'Saxons'; compare *Essex* and *Middlesex*), and *Norwich* (OE *norþ* 'north' + *wīc* 'village'). *Norwich* is traditionally pronounced to rhyme with *porridge*, as in a nursery jingle about a man from Norwich who ate some porridge; the name of the city in Connecticut is, however, pronounced as the spelling seems to indicate. The reader will find plenty of other interesting examples in Eilert Ekwall's *Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Place-Names*. It is similar with surnames (which are, of course, sometimes place-names as well)—for instance, *Durward* (OE *duru* 'door' + *weard* 'keeper'), *Purdue* (Fr. *pour* 'for' + *Dieu* 'God'), and *Thurston* ('Thor's stone,' ultimately Scandinavian); and with a good many given names as well—for instance, *Ethelbert* (OE *æðel* 'noble' + *beorht* 'bright'), *Alfred* (OE *ælf* 'elf' + *ræd* 'counsel'), and *Mildred* (OE *milde* 'mild' + *þryð* 'strength').

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## FUNCTION AND FORM OF COMPOUNDS

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The making of a compound is inhibited by few considerations other than those dictated by meaning. A compound may be used in any grammatical function: as noun (*wishbone*), pronoun (*anyone*), adjective (*foolproof*), adverb (*overhead*), verb (*gainsay*), conjunction (*whenever*), or preposition (*without*). It may be made up of two nouns (*baseball, mudguard, manhole*); of an adjective followed by a noun (*bluegrass, madman, first-rate*); of a noun followed by an adjective or a participle (*bloodthirsty, trigger-happy, homemade, heartbreaking, time-honored*); of a verb followed by an adverb (*pinup, breakdown, setback, cookout, sit-in*); of an adverb followed by a verb form (*upset, downcast, forerun*); of a verb followed by a noun that is its object (*daredevil, blowgun, touch-me-not*); of a noun followed by a verb (*hemstitch, pan-fry, typeset*); of two verbs (*can-do, look-see, stir-fry*); of an adverb followed by an adjective or a participle (*overanxious, oncoming, well-known, uptight*); of a preposition followed by its object (*overland, indoors*); or of a participle followed by an adverb (*washed-up, carryings-on, worn-out*). Some compounds are welded-together phrases: *will-o'-the-wisp, happy-go-lucky, mother-in-law, tongue-in-cheek, hand-to-mouth*, and *lighter-than-air*. Many compounds are made of adjective plus noun plus the ending *-ed*—for example, *baldheaded, dimwitted, and hairy-chested*—and some of noun plus noun plus *-ed*—for example, *pigheaded* and *snowcapped*.

## COMBINING WORD PARTS: AFFIXING

## AFFIXES FROM OLD ENGLISH

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Another type of combining is affixation, the use of prefixes and suffixes. Many affixes were at one time independent words, like the insignificant-seeming *a-* of *aside, alive, aboard*, and *a-hunting*, which was earlier *on* but lost its *-n*, just as *an* did when unstressed and followed by a consonant (132–3). Another is the *-ly* of many adjectives, like *manly, godly*, and *homely*, which developed from Old English *lic* ‘body.’ When so used, *lic* (which became *lic* and eventually *-ly* through lack of stress) originally meant something like ‘having the body or appearance of:’ thus the literal meaning of *manly* is ‘having the body or form of a man.’ Old English regularly added *-e* to adjectives to make adverbs of them (106–7)—thus *riht* ‘right,’ *rihte* ‘rightly.’ Adjectives formed with *-lic* acquired adverbial forms in exactly the same way—thus *cræftlic* ‘skillful,’ *cræftlice* ‘skillfully.’ With the late Middle English loss of both final *-e* and final unstressed *-ch*, earlier Middle English *-lich* and *-liche* fell together as *-li* (*-ly*). Because of these losses, we do not ordinarily associate Modern English *-ly* with *like*, the Northern dialect form of the full word that ultimately was to prevail in all dialects of English. In Modern English, the full form has been used again as a suffix—history thus repeating itself—as in *gentlemanlike* and *godlike*, beside *gentlemanly* and *godly*.

Other prefixes surviving from Old English times include the following:

AFTER-: as in *aftermath, aftereffect, afternoon*

BE-: the unstressed form of *by* (OE *bi*), as in *believe, beneath, beyond, behalf, between*

FOR-: either intensifying, as in *forlorn*, or negating, as in *forbid, forswear*

MIS-: as in *misdeed, misalign, mispronounce*

OUT-: Old English *ūt-*, as in *outside, outfield, outgo*

UN-: for an opposite or negative meaning, as in *undress, undo, unafraid, un-English*; *uncola* was originally an advertising slogan for the soft drink 7Up as an alternative to colas but was metaphorically extended in "France [wants] to become the world's next great 'Uncola,' the leader of the alternative coalition to American power." (*New York Times*, February 26, 2003)

UNDER-: as in *understand, undertake, underworld*

UP-: as in *upright, upheaval, upkeep*

WITH-: 'against,' as in *withhold, withstand, withdraw*

Other suffixes that go back at least to Old English times are the following:

-DOM: Old English *dōm*, earlier an independent word that has developed into *doom*, in Old English meaning 'judgment, statute,' that is, 'what is set,' and related to *do*; as in *boredom, Christendom, freedom, kingdom, martyrdom, wisdom*

-ED: used to form adjectives from nouns, as in *storied, crabbed, bowlegged*

-EN: also to form adjectives, as in *golden, oaken, leaden*

-ER: Old English *-ere*, to form nouns of agency, as in *singer, babysitter, do-gooder*, a suffix that, when it occurs in loanwords—for instance, *butler* (from Anglo-French *butuiller* 'bottler, manservant having to do with wines and liquors') and *butcher* (from Old French *bochier*, literally 'dealer in flesh of billy goats [OF *boc*, OE *bucca*])—goes back to Latin *-ārius*, but that is nevertheless cognate with the English ending

-FUL: to form adjectives, as in *baleful, sinful, wonderful*, and, with secondary stress, to form nouns as well, as in *handful, mouthful, spoonful*

-HOOD: Old English *-hād*, as in *childhood* and *priesthood*, earlier an independent word meaning 'condition, quality'

-ING: Old English *-ung* or *-ing*, to form verbal nouns, as in *reading*

-ISH: Old English *-isc*, to form adjectives, as in *English* and *childish*

-LESS: Old English *-lēas* 'free from' (also used independently and cognate with *loose*), as in *wordless, reckless, hopeless, feckless*

-NESS: to form abstract nouns from many adjectives (and some participles), as in *friendliness, bitterness, darkness, drunkenness, witness*

-SHIP: Old English *-scipe*, to form abstract nouns, as in *lordship, fellowship, worship* (that is, 'worth-ship')

-SOME: Old English *-sum*, to form adjectives, as in *lonesome, wholesome, winsome* (OE *wynn* 'joy' + *sum*)

-STER: Old English *-estre*, originally feminine, as in *spinster* 'female spinner' and *webster* 'female weaver,' but later losing all sexual connotation, as in *gangster* and *speedster*

-TH: to form abstract nouns, as in *health, depth, sloth*

-WARD: as in *homeward, toward, outward*

-Y: Old English *-ig*, to form adjectives as in *thirsty, greedy, bloody*

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There are several homonymous -y suffixes in addition to the one of Old English origin. The diminutive -y (or -ie) of *Kitty*, *Jackie*, and *baby* is from another source and occurs first in Middle English times. It is still available for forming new diminutives, just as we continue to form adjectives with the -y from Old English -ig—for example, *jazzy*, *loony*, *iffy*. The -y's in loanwords from Greek (*phlebotomy*), Latin (*century*), and French (*contrary*, *perjury*, *army*) cannot be extended to new words.

Many affixes from Old English may still be used to create new words. They may be affixed to nonnative words, as in *misprounce*, *obligingness*, *czardom*, *pocketful*, *Romish*, *coffeeless*, *orderly* (-liness), and *sugary* (-ish). Other affixes, very common in Old English, have survived only as fossils, like *ge-* in *enough* (OE *genōg*, *genōh*), *afford* (OE *gefordian*), *aware* (OE *gewær*), *handiwork* (OE *handgeweorc*), and *either* (OE *ægðer*, a contracted form of *æg[e]hwæðer*). *And-* 'against, toward,' the English cognate of Latin *anti-*, survives only in *answer* (OE *andswaru*, literally 'a swearing against') and, in unstressed form with loss of both *n* and *d*, in *along* (OE *andlang*)).

#### AFFIXES FROM OTHER LANGUAGES

The languages with which English has had closest cultural contacts—Latin, Greek, and French—have supplied a number of affixes freely used to make new English words. One of the most common is Greek *anti-* 'against,' which, in addition to long-established learned words like *antipathy*, *antidote*, and *anticlimax*, since the seventeenth century has been used in many American creations—for example, *anti-Federalist*, *anti-Catholic*, *antitobacco*, *antislavery*, *antisaloon*, *antiaircraft*, and *antiabortion*. *Pro-* 'for' has been somewhat less productive. *Super-*, as in *superman*, *supermarket*, *supersize*, and *superhighway*, has also been an informal adjective since Dickens used it in *Pickwick Papers* ("best extra-super behaviour"), according to the OED, and in the 1970s, one often heard phrases such as "Isn't it super?" or the reduplicated form *superduper* 'very super.' Other foreign prefixes are *ante-*, *de-*, *dis-*, *ex-*, *inter-*, *multi-*, *neo-*, *non-*, *post-*, *pre-*, *pseudo-*, *re-*, *semi-*, *sub-*, and *ultra-*. Even rare foreign prefixes like *eu-* ('good' from Greek) have novel uses; J.R.R. Tolkien invented *eucatastrophe* as an impressive term for "the sudden happy turn in a story which pierces you with a joy that brings tears," as he explained in a letter quoted in the OED.

Borrowed suffixes that have been added to English words (whatever their ultimate origin) include the following:

- ESE: Latin *-ēnsis* by way of Old French, as in *federalese*, *journalese*, *academese*
- (I)AN: Latin *-(i)ānus*, used to form adjectives from nouns, as in *Nebraskan*, *Miltonian*
- (I)ANA: from the neuter plural of the same Latin ending, which has a limited use nowadays in forming nouns from other nouns, as in *Americana*, *Menck-eniana*, and *Dickensiana*, but that appeared as early as 1679, in *Baconiana* (the Sir Francis type), as the OED observes
- ICIAN: Latin *-ic-* + *-iānus*, as in *beautician*, *mortician*

- IZE: Greek *-izein*, a very popular suffix for making verbs, as in *pasteurize*, *criticize*, *harmonize*, *demonize*, *canonize*, *actualize*, *fossilize*, *incentivize*, and *apologize*
- OR: Latin, as in *chiropractor* and *realtor*
- ORIUM: Latin, *pastorium* 'Baptist parsonage,' *crematorium* 'place used for cremation,' *cryatorium* 'place where frozen dead are stored until science can reanimate them'

One of the most used of borrowed suffixes is *-al* (Lat. *-alis*), which makes adjectives from nouns, as in *doctoral*, *marginal*, *hormonal*, *providential*, *constitutional*, and *tidal*. The continued productivity of that suffix can be seen in the decree of a chief censor for the NBC television network: "No frontal nudity, no backal nudity, and no sidal nudity."

### VOGUEISH AFFIXES

Though no one can say why—probably just fashion—certain affixes have been popular during certain periods. For instance, *-wise* affixed to nouns and adjectives to form adverbs, such as *likewise*, *lengthwise*, *otherwise*, and *crosswise*, was practically archaic until approximately the 1940s. The OED cites a few new examples in modern times—for instance, *Cardinalwise* (1677), *festoonwise* (1743), and *Timothy- or Titus-wise* (1876). But around 1940, a mighty proliferation of words in *-wise* began—for example, *serpent-wise*, *positionwise*, *plotwise*, *job-wise*, *moneywise*—and hundreds of others continued to be invented: *drugwise*, *personalitywise*, *securitywise*, *timewise*, and *salarywise*. Such coinages are useful additions to the language because they are more concise than phrases with *in respect of* or *in the manner of*, while ones like *fringe-benefitwise* are emphatic and amusing.

*Type* has enjoyed a similar vogue and is freely used as a suffix. It forms adjectives from nouns, as in "Catholic-type bishops" and "a Las Vegas-type revue." Like *-wise*, *-type* is also economical, enabling us to shortcut such locutions as *bishops of the Catholic type* and *a revue of the Las Vegas type*.

The suffix *-ize*, listed above, has had a centuries-old life as a means of making verbs from nouns and adjectives, not only in English but in other languages as well—for instance, French *-iser*, Italian *-izare*, Spanish *-izar*, and German *-isieren*. Many English words with this suffix are borrowings from French—for instance (with *z* for French *s*), *authorize*, *moralize*, *naturalize*; others are English formations (though some of them may have parallel formations in French)—for instance, *concertize*, *patronize*, *fertilize*; still others are formed from proper names—for instance, *bowdlerize*, *mesmerize*, *Americanize*. In the last half century, many new creations have come into being, such as *accessorize*, *moisturize*, *sanitize*, *glamorize*, and *tenderize*. *Finalize* descended to general use from the celestial mists of bureaucracy, business, and industry, where nothing is merely ended, finished, or concluded. It is a great favorite of administrators of all kinds and sizes—including the academic-type one.

In Greek, nouns of action were formed with the ending *-ismos* or *-isma*, as in the loanwords *ostracism* and *criticism*. New uses of the suffix *-ism* have developed in English. The prejudice implied in *racism* has extended to *sexism*,

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*ageism*, and *speciesism* 'human treatment of other animals as mere objects.' Other popular derivatives are *Me-ism* 'selfishness,' *foodism* 'gluttony,' *volunteerism* 'donated service,' and *presidentialism* 'respect for and confidence in the office of president.' The suffix *-ism* is even used as an independent word, as in "creeds and *isms*." The suffix *-ology* has also been so used to mean 'science,' as in "Chemistry, Geology, Philology, and a hundred other *ologies*." The prefixes *anti-*, *pro-*, *con-*, and *ex-* are likewise used as independent words.

*De-*, a prefix of Latin origin with negative force, is much alive. Though many words beginning with it are from Latin or French, it has for centuries been used to form new English words. Noah Webster first used *demoralize* and claimed to have coined it, though it could just as well be from French *démoraliser*. Other creations with the prefix are *defrost*, *dewax*, *debunk*, and more pompous specimens such as *debureaucratize*, *dewater*, *deinsectize*, and *deratizate* 'get rid of rats.' Two other more familiar words are *decontaminate* and *dehumidify*, ostentatious ways of saying 'purify' and 'dry out.' A somewhat different sense of the prefix in *debark* has led to *debus*, *detrain*, and *deplane*. *Dis-*, likewise from Latin, is also freely used in a negative function, particularly in officialese, as in *disincentive* 'deterrent,' *disassemble* 'take apart,' and *dysfunctional* 'harmful to the emotional well-being of those involved.'

Perhaps as a result of an ecologically motivated decision that smaller is better, the prefix *mini-* enjoys maxi use. Among the new combinations into which it has entered are *mini black holes*, *minicar* and *minibus*, *minicam* 'miniature camera,' *mini-reviews*, *miniconcert*, the seemingly contradictory *miniconglomerate* and *minimogul*, *minilecture*, *mini-mall*, and *minirevolution*. The form *mini*, which is a short version of *miniature*, came to be used as an independent adjective, and even acquired a comparative form, as in a *New Yorker* magazine report, "Fortunately, the curator of ornithology decided to give another talk, *mini-er* than the first." Despite ecological respect for *mini-*, the *minicinema* has given way to the immersive *IMAX*, whose second half is a mini version of *mini*'s antonym, *maxi*.

Another voguish affix is *non-*, from Latin, as in *nonachievement* 'uselessness,' *non-motorist* 'pedestrian, cyclist,' and *non-availability* 'lack.' *Non-* has also developed two new uses: first, to indicate a scornful attitude toward the thing denoted by the main word, as in *non-book* 'a potboiler or picturebook'; and second, to indicate that the person or object denoted by the main word is dissimulating or has been disguised, as in *non-candidate* 'candidate who pretends not to be running for office.' Others are *-ee*, from French, as in *employee*, *appellee* 'one who is appealed against, defendant,' *payee* 'one to whom payment is made,' *legatee* 'one to whom a legacy has been bequeathed,' *devotee*, *refugee*, *mentee* 'person receiving the a mentor's attention,' and *trustee*; and *-re-*, from Latin, as in *redecontaminate* 'purify again,' *retweet* 'share a tweet on Twitter,' and *recondition* 'repair, restore.' The scientific suffix *-on*, from Greek, has been widely used in recent years to name newly discovered substances like *interferon* in the human bloodstream and posited subatomic particles like the *gluon* and the *graviton*. Perhaps an extension of the *-s* in disease names like *measles* and *shingles* has supplied the ending of words like *dumbs* and *smarts*, as in "The administration has been stricken with a long-term case

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of the dumbs" and "He's got street-smarts" (that is, 'the ability to live by one's wits in an urban environment').

Another recent suffix is the agentive ending *-nik* 'a person or thing associated with,' from Yiddish *nudnik* 'a tedious person, a bore' (Polish *nuda* 'boredom'), reinforced by the mid-twentieth-century popularity of *sputnik* 'travelling companion' (s 'with, accompanying' + *put* 'road, way' + *-nik*—that is, someone or something accompanying a person associated with a road [that is, a traveler]), a word thrust into the public's eye by the Russian sputnik launch that was covered in the October 14, 1957, issue of *Newsweek*, in which an ISZ (*Iskusstvenniy sputnik zemlyi* 'artificial earth companion') the size of a beach ball became simply "sputnik" (Albert L. Weeks). The *-nik* is often derogatory: *beatnik*, *nogoodnik*, *peacenik* 'pacifist,' *foundation-nik* 'officer of a foundation,' and *conferencenik*, and is also used humorously, as in *kaputnik*. It has been revived with a professional mien in the twenty-first century as moniker for the newest, largest, most versatile breed of online dictionary, Wordnik, at <http://www.wordnik.com/>.

Of uncertain origin, but perhaps combining the ending of such Spanish words as *amigo*, *chicano*, and *gringo* with the English exclamation *oh*, is an informal suffix used to make nouns like *ammo*, *cheapo* 'stingy person,' *combo*, *daddy-o*, *kiddo*, *politico*, *sicko* 'psychologically unstable person,' *supremo* 'leader,' *weirdo*, *wrongo* 'mistake'; adjectives like *blotto* 'drunk,' *sleazo* 'sleazy,' *socko* and *boffo* 'highly successful,' and *stinko*; and exclamations like *cheerio* and *righto*. Equally voguish are a number of affixes created by a process of blending: *agri-*, *cyber-*, *docu-*, *e-*, *Euro-*, *petro-*, and *syn-*; *-aholic*, *-ateria*, *-gate*, *-rama*, and *-thon*. Such affixes and the process through which they come into being are discussed in the section "Blending Words."

## SHORTENING WORDS

### CLIPPED FORMS

A clipped form is a shortening of a longer word that sometimes supplants the latter altogether. Recently, *pizza* is clipped to *za*, as in: "Text Papa John's—order some za." *Mob* supplanted *mobile vulgus* 'movable, or fickle, common people'; and *omnibus*, in the sense 'motor vehicle for paying passengers,' is almost as archaic as *mobile vulgus*, having been clipped to *bus*. The clipping of *omnibus*, literally 'for all,' is a strange one because *bus* is merely part of the dative plural ending *-ibus* of the Latin pronoun *omnis* 'all.' *Periwig*, like the form *peruke* (Fr. *perruque*), of which it is a modification, is completely gone; only the abbreviated *wig* survives, and few are likely to be aware of the full form. *Taxicab* has completely superseded *taximeter cabriolet* and has, in turn, supplied us with two new words, *taxi* and *cab*. As a shortening of *cabriolet*, *cab* is almost a century older than *taxicab*. *Pantaloons* is quite archaic. The clipped form *pants* won the day completely. *Bra* has similarly replaced *brassiere*, which in French means a shoulder strap (derived from *bras* 'arm') or a bodice fitted with such straps.

Other abbreviated forms more commonly used than the longer ones include *cell* ('cellular telephone'), *phone*, *zoo*, *extra*, *flu*, *auto*, and *ad*. *Zoo* is from

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zoological garden with the pronunciation [zu] from the spelling, a pronunciation now sometimes extended back to the longer form as [zuə-] rather than the traditional [zoə-]. *Extra*, which is probably a clipping from *extraordinary*, has become a separate word. *Auto*, like the full form *automobile*, has been replaced by *car*, an abbreviated form of *motorcar*. *Auto* sounds more and more archaic. *Advertisement* became *ad* in America but was clipped less drastically to *advert* in Britain, though *ad* is now frequent there. *Razz*, a clipped form of *raspberry* 'Bronx cheer' used as either noun or verb, is doubtless more frequent than the full form.

*Internet* is the shortened form of *internetwork* (*inter-* 'between, among' + *network*), a lowercased word that Vinton G. Cerf and Robert E. Kahn used in a May 1974 paper for the Institute for Electrical and Electronic Engineers (IEEE), outlining an "internetwork protocol" connecting smaller local networks such as LANs; Cerf and Kahn discuss such issues as "internetwork routing" and the need for a "uniform internetwork TCP address space . . . to routing and delivery of internetwork packets" ("A Protocol for Packet Network Interconnection"). By December 1974, Cerf and others had clipped *internetwork* and uppercased it to *Internet* in 'Internet Transmission Control Program,' which resulted in the phrase 'Internet Protocol.' Over time, the uppercased *Internet* became thought of as a compound of *international* and *network* since the word *Internet* denoted a global computer information system (also, in the Acknowledgment section of the May 1974 IEEE paper, Cerf and Kahn thank colleagues for their helpful comments made during discussions of "international network protocols").

Other recent clippings of nouns are *bio* (*biography*, *biographical sketch*), *fax* (*facsimile*), *high tech*, *perk* (*perquisite*), *photo op* (*photographic opportunity*), *pre-nup* (*pre-nuptial agreement*), *soap* (*soap opera*), *telecom* (*telecommunications*), and *blog*, also a verb (from *web-log*). Clipped adjectives are *op-ed* 'pertaining to the page opposite the editorial page, on which syndicated columns and other "think pieces" are printed' and *pop*, derived from *popular*, as in "pop culture," "pop art," and "pop sociology." *Hype*, used as either a noun 'advertising, publicity stunt' or a verb 'stimulate artificially, promote,' is apparently a clipping of *hypo*, which, in turn, is a clipping of *hypodermic needle*, thus reflecting the influence of the drug subculture on Madison Avenue and hence on the rest of us. Another clipped verb is *rehab*, from *rehabilitate*, as in "Crumbling historic buildings have been rehabbed as reasonably priced apartments," also used as a noun, in "The celebrity went into rehab for her alcohol addiction."

As the foregoing examples illustrate, clipping can shorten a form by cutting between words (*soap opera* > *soap*) or between morphemes (*biography* > *bio*). But it often ignores lexical and morphemic boundaries and cuts instead in the middle of a morpheme (*popular* > *pop*, *rehabilitate* > *rehab*). In so doing, clipping creates new morphemes and thus enriches the stock of potential building material for making other words. In *helicopter*, the -o- is the combining element between Greek *helic-* (the stem of *helix*, as in the *double helix* structure of DNA) 'spiral' and *pter(on)* 'wing,' but the word has been reanalyzed as *heli-copter* rather than as *helic-o-pter*, thus producing *copter* and *heliport* 'terminal for helicopters.'



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## INITIALISMS: ALPHABETISMS AND ACRONYMS

An extreme kind of clipping is the use of the initial letters of words (*HIV*, *YMCA*), or sometimes of syllables (*TB*, *TV*, *PJs* 'pajamas'), as words. Usually, the motive for this clipping is either brevity or catchiness, though sometimes euphemism may be involved, as with old-fashioned *BO*, *BM*, and *VD*. Perhaps *TB* also was euphemistic in the beginning, when the disease was a much direr threat to life than it now is and its very name was uttered in hushed tones. When such initialisms are pronounced with the names of the letters of the alphabet, they are called **alphabetisms**. Other examples include *CD* 'compact disc,' *HDTV* 'high-definition television,' *HOV* 'high occupancy vehicle' (of an expressway lane), *HTML* 'HyperText Markup Language,' and *HTTP* 'HyperText Transfer Protocol' or 'HyperText Transport Protocol' (in lower-case letters followed by a colon, the beginning of a web address). As linguist Grant Barrett notes, recently one hears *TBTF* 'too big to fail' (used to describe titanic financial institutions that many believe should be protected from financial collapse owing to their gargantuan size).

One of the oldest English alphabetisms, and by far the most successful one, is *OK*, now often shortened in texting to *K*. Allen Walker Read traced the history of the form *OK* to a March 23, 1839, *Boston Morning Post*, showing that it originated as a clipping of *oll korrekt*, a playful misspelling that was part of a fad for orthographic jokes and abbreviations. It was then used as a pun on *Old Kinderhook*, the nickname of Martin Van Buren during his political campaign of 1840. Efforts to trace the word to more exotic sources—including Finnish, Choctaw, Burmese, Greek, and more recently African languages—have been unsuccessful but will doubtless continue to challenge the ingenuity of amateur etymologists. Allan Metcalf outlines the fascinating history and life of *OK* in *OK: The Improbable Story of America's Greatest Word* (Oxford 2010, 2012).

Inevitably, it dawned on some witty genius that the initial letters of words in certain combinations frequently made a pronounceable sequence of letters. Thus, the abbreviation for the military phrase *absent without official leave*, *AWOL*, came to be pronounced not only as a sequence of the four-letter names, but also as though they were the spelling for an ordinary word, *awol* ['e,wol]. It was, of course, even better if the initials spelled out an already existing word, as those of *white Anglo-Saxon Protestant* spell out *Wasp*. There had to be a learned term to designate such words, and acronym was coined from Greek *akros* 'tip' and *onyma* 'name,' by analogy with *homonym*. Recently, we have *SIM* 'subscriber identity module' (integrated circuit on SIM card securely storing International Mobile Subscriber Identity); *KWIC* 'key word in context' (display format enabling sophisticated language analysis by, for example, the *Oxford English Corpus*); *STEM* 'science, technology, engineering, math' (educators' buzz word); and, as Grant Barrett observes, *Weird* 'Western, educated, industrialized, rich, and democratic' (an acronym mocking the easily recruited subjects—undergraduates—studied by behavioral scientists). There are also mixed examples in which the two systems of pronunciation are combined—for example, *VP* 'Vice President' pronounced and sometimes spelled *veep* and *ROTC* 'Reserve Officers Training Corps' pronounced like "rotcy."

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The British seem to have beaten Americans to the discovery of the joys of making acronyms, even though the impressively learned term to designate what is essentially a letters game was probably born in America. In any case, as early as World War I days, the Defence [sic, in British spelling] of the Realm Act was called *Dora*, and members of the Women's Royal Naval Service were called (with the insertion of a vowel) *Wrens*. *Wrens* inspired the World War II American *Wac* (Women's Army Corps) and a number of others—our happiest being *Spar* 'woman Coast Guard,' from the motto of the U.S. Coast Guard, *Semper Paratus* ('always ready').

The euphemistic *fu* words—the most widely known is *snafu*—are also among the acronymic progeny of World War II. Less well known today are *snafu*'s humorous comparative, *tarfu* 'things are really fouled up,' and superlative, *fubar* 'fouled up beyond all recognition' (to use the euphemism to which Webster's *Third New International Dictionary* had recourse in etymologizing *snafu* as 'situation normal all fouled up'). Initialisms are sometimes useful in avoiding taboo terms, the shortest and probably best-known example being *f-word*, on the etymology of whose referent Allen Walker Read published an early article, "An Obscenity Symbol," without ever using the word in question.

The acronymic process has sometimes been reversed or at least conflated; for example, *Waves*, which resembles a genuine acronym, most likely preceded or accompanied the origin of its phony-sounding source, Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service (in the Navy). That is, to ensure a good match, the creation of the acronym and the phrase it stands for were simultaneous. The following are also probably reverse acronyms: *JOBS* (Job Opportunities in the Business Sector), *NOW* (National Organization for Women), and *ZIP* (Zone Improvement Plan).

Acronyms lend themselves to humorous uses. *Bomfog* has been coined as a term for the platitudes and pieties that candidates for public office are wont to utter; it stands for 'Brotherhood of Man, Fatherhood of God.' *Yuppie* is from 'young urban professional' + *-ie*. *Wysiwyg* ['wizi,wig] is a witty computer term from 'What you see is what you get,' denoting a monitor display that is identical in appearance with the corresponding printout. Another is *gigo* for 'garbage in, garbage out,' reminding us that what a computer puts out is no better than what we put in it. The Internet has spawned a massive number of such initialisms used as an esoteric code among the initiated, such as *IM* 'instant messaging,' *imho* 'in my humble opinion,' *bnf* 'bye for now,' and *lol* 'laughing out loud.'

Other initialisms are used in full seriousness and have become part of the everyday lives of millions of Americans. For example, people do their *IMing* (Instant Messaging) while driving their *RVs* (recreational vehicles, such as "motor homes") or *SUVs* (sport-utility vehicles). Even more serious is the *SWAT* (special weapons and tactics) team or force, deployed in highly dangerous police assignments such as flushing out snipers. When astronauts first reached the moon, they traveled across its surface in a *lem* (lunar excursion module). Other technical acronyms are *radar* (radio detecting and ranging) and *laser* (light amplification by stimulated emission of radiation). Now we

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are concerned with alphabetisms like *DNA* (deoxyribonucleic acid) and *DVD* (digital video disc) and with acronyms like *NASA* (National Aeronautics and Space Administration), *PAC* (political action committee), and *DWEM* (dead white European male).

### APHERETIC AND APHETIC FORMS

A special type of clipping, *apheresis* (or for the highly learned, *aphaeresis*), is the omission of sounds from the beginning of a word, as in the colloquial "Scuse me" and "I did it 'cause I wanted to." Frequently, this phenomenon has resulted in two different words—for instance, *fender-defender*, *fence-defense*, and *sport-disport*—in which the first member of each pair is simply an *apheretic* form of the second. The meanings of *etiquette* and its *apheretic* form *ticket* have become rather sharply differentiated, the primary meaning of French *etiquette* ('a little note or bill') being preserved in the English shortening. Sometimes, however, an *apheretic* form is merely a variant of the longer form—for instance, *possum-opossum* and *coon-raccoon*.

When a single sound is omitted at the beginning of a word and that sound is an unstressed vowel, we have a special variety of *apheresis* called *aphesis*. *Aphesis* is a phonological process in that it results from lack of stress on the elided vowel. Examples are *cute-acute*, *squire-esquire*, and *lone-alone*.

### BACK-FORMATIONS

*Back-formation* is the making of a new word from an older word that is mistakenly assumed to be a derivative of it, as in *to burgle* from *burglar*, the final *ar* of which suggests that the word is a noun of agency and hence ought to mean 'one who burgles.' The facetious *to ush* from *usher* and *to buttle* from *butler* are similar.

*Pease* (an obsolete form of the word *pea*, as in the "pease porridge" of a nursery rhyme) has a final consonant [-z], which is not, as it seems to the ear to be, the English plural suffix -s; it is, in fact, not a suffix at all but merely the last sound of the word (OE *pīse*). But by the seventeenth century, *pease* was mistaken for a plural, and a new singular, *pea*, was derived from a word that was itself singular, precisely as if we were to derive a form \**chee* from *cheese* under the impression that *cheese* was plural; then we should have *one chee*, *two chees*, just as we now have *one pea*, *two peas*. *Cherry* has been derived by an identical process from Anglo-French *cherise*, the final [s] having been assumed to be the plural suffix. Similarly, *sherry wine* was once *sherris wine*, named for the city in Spain where the wine was originally made, Xeres (now Jerez). (In Spanish, *x* formerly had the value [š], so the English spelling was perfectly phonetic.) Similarly, the wonderful one-hoss *shay* of Oliver Wendell Holmes's poem was so called because of the notion that *chaise* was a plural form, and the *Chinee* (from *Chinese*) of a Bret Harte poem is similarly explained.

Other nouns in the singular that look like plural forms are *alms* (OE *ælmysse*, from Lat. *eleēmosyna*), *riches* (ME *richesse* 'wealth'), and *molasses*. The first two are in fact now construed as plurals. Nonstandard *those molasses*

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assumes the existence of a singular *that* \**molass*, though such a form is not indeed heard. In early eighteenth-century Scotland, *ho* was used as a false singular for *hose* 'stockings,' for example, in Allan Ramsay's "Christ's Kirk on the Green," in which a "left leg *ho* was flung" (Palmer 602). When twentieth-century American television talk-show host Johnny Carson responded to a single handclap with "That was a wonderful applaw," his joke reflected the same tendency in English that leads to the serious use of *kudo* as a new singular for *kudos*, although the latter, a loanword from Greek, is singular itself.

The adverb *darkling* 'in the darkness' (*dark* + adverbial *-ling*, an Old English suffix for direction or manner) has been misunderstood as a present participial form, giving rise to a new verb *darkle*, as in Lord Byron's "Her cheek began to flush, her eyes to sparkle, / And her proud brow's blue veins to swell and darkle" (*Don Juan*), in which *darkle* means 'to grow dark.' Keats had earlier used *darkling* with its historical adverbial sense in his "Ode to a Nightingale": "Darkling I listen; and, for many a time, / I have been half in love with easeful Death." This is not to say that Byron misunderstood Keats's line; it merely shows how easily the verb developed as a back-formation from the adverb. *Grovel*, the first recorded use of which is by Shakespeare, comes to us by way of a similar misconception of *groveling* (*grufe* 'face down' + *-ling*), and *sidle* is likewise from *sideling* 'sidelong.' A joking use of *-ing* as a participial ending occurs in J. K. Stephen's immortal "When the Rudyards cease from Kipling, / And the Haggards ride no more." There is a similar play in "Do you like Kipling?" "I don't know—I've never kippled."

In some back-formations, the derived form could just as well have been the original one. *Typewriter*, of American origin, came before the verb *typewrite*; nevertheless, the ending *-er* of *typewriter* is actually a noun-of-agency ending (early *typewriter* referred to either the machine or its operator), so the verb could just as well have come first, only it didn't. It is similar with *housekeep* from *housekeeper* (or *housekeeping*), *babysit* from *babysitter*, and *bargain-hunt* from *bargain hunter*. The adjective *housebroken* (in the form *housebroke* in 1856) 'excretorily adapted to the indoors' is older than the verb *housebreak*; but, since *housebroken* is actually a compounding of *house* and the past participle *broken* (which in the 1800s was *broke*), the process might just as well have been the other way around—but it wasn't.

### BLENDING WORDS

The blending of two existing words to make a new word was doubtless an unconscious process in the oldest periods of our language. *Hapel* 'nobleman' in the fourteenth-century poem *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* is apparently a blend of *apel* (OE *æpele* 'noble') and *halep* (OE *hælep* 'man'). Other early examples, with the dates of their earliest occurrence as given in the OED, are *flush* (*flash* + *gush*) [1548]; *twirl* (*twist* + *whirl*) [1598]; *dumfound* (apparently *dumb* + *confound*) [1653]; and *flurry* (*flutter* + *hurry*) [1698].

Lewis Carroll (Charles Lutwidge Dodgson) made a great thing of such blends, which he called portmanteau words, particularly in his "Jabberwocky" poem. A portmanteau (from French *porter* 'to carry' + *manteau* 'mantle') was a

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term for a large suitcase with two halves that opened like a print book on a center hinge. Carroll said that blend words are like that: they contain "two meanings packed up into one word." Several of his creations—*chortle* (*chuckle* + *snort*), *galumph* (*gallop* + *triumph*), and *snark* (*snake* + *shark*)—have found their way into dictionaries. The author of *Alice through the Looking Glass* had a fantastic passion for seeing things backwards, as indicated by his pen name: *Carolus* is the Latin equivalent of *Charles*, and *Lutwidge* must have suggested to him German *Ludwig*, the equivalent of English *Lewis*. *Charles Lutwidge* thus became (in reverse) *Lewis Carroll*.

Among the most successful of blends are *smog* (*smoke* + *fog*) and *motel* (*motor* + *hotel*). *Urinalysis* (*urine* + *analysis*) first appeared in 1889 and has since attained scientific respectability, as have *quasar* (*quasi* + *stellar* [*object*]) and *pulsar* (*pulsating* + *quasar*). More recent blends are *belieber* (*believer* + *Bieber*) 'a fan of Canadian pop singer Justin Bieber,' *flexitarian* (*flexible* + *vegetarian*) 'a vegetarian who sometimes eats meat,' *jeggings* (*jeans* + *leggings*), *infomercial* (*information* + *commercial*), *netiquette* (*Internet* + *etiquette*), and *shareware* (*share* + *software*). Boy Scouts have *camporees* (*camp* + *jamboree*), and a favorite Sunday meal is *brunch* (*breakfast* + *lunch*). Other contemporary blends include *e-book* (*electronic* + *book*), *half-alogue* (*half* + *dialogue*) 'an overheard one-sided cell phone conversation,' *retweet* 'repost or forward a message posted on Twitter,' *sofalize* (*sofa* + *socialize*) 'people who prefer to stay home and communicate with others electronically,' and *webisode* 'episode of a TV serial program broadcast on the World Wide Web.'

Designated the "most pointless" word of 2010 by the American Dialect Society, *refudiate* (*refute* + *repudiate*) was apparently coined by a pot-seller in Colorado and reported by *New York Times* journalist David Segal, was tweeted a month later by former VP candidate Sarah Palin, was picked up by the media, and was eventually dubbed Word of the Year by Oxford University Press (June 26, 2010).

Blends are easy to create, which is doubtless why they are so popular and numerous. From Brooklyn to Seoul to Sydney, *coffice* (*coffee* + *office*) is used to describe 'coffee houses used as offices for work and study,' as Grant Barrett notes. In the 1940s, science fiction readers and writers coined *fanzine* (*fan* + *magazine*) to describe a nonprofessional, nonofficial publication produced by fans of science fiction (also by fans of fantasy, comic books, and graphic arts), and since that time, the term broadened to apply to fans of any cultural phenomenon, including fans of horror films, rock and roll, punk, mod, role-playing-games, and sports. Changes in sexual mores have given rise to *palmomy* (*pal* + *alimony*), *sexcapade* (*sex* + *escapade*), *sexploitation* 'commercial exploitation of sex by industries such as entertainment and advertising,' and *sexting* (*sex* + *texting*). *Intexticated* (*intoxicated* + *texting*) was created to indicate the danger of those who text and drive. Popular in text messaging is the *emoticon* (*emote* + *icon*), such as the smiley face, frowning, winking, or other expressive icon; and *staycation* (*stay home* + *vacation*) has become more prevalent in a double-dip recession.

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## NEW MORPHEMES FROM BLENDING

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Blending can, and frequently does, create new morphemes or give new meanings to old ones. For instance, in German *Hamburger* 'pertaining to, or associated with, Hamburg,' the *-er* is affixed to the name of the city. This adjectival suffix may be joined to any place-name in German—for example, *Braunschweiger Wurst* 'Brunswick sausage,' *Wiener Schnitzel* 'Vienna cutlet,' and the like. In English, however, the word *hamburger* was blended so often with other words (*cheeseburger* being the chief example, but also *steak burger*, *chicken burger*, *veggie burger*, and a host of others) that *burger* came to be used as an independent word for a sandwich containing some kind of patty. A similar culinary example is the *eggwich* and the commercially promoted *Spamwich*, which have not so far, however, made *-wich* into an independent word.

*Automobile*, taken from French, was originally a combination of Greek *autos* 'self' (also in *autohypnosis*, *autograph*, *autobiography*) and Latin *mobilis* 'movable.' Then *automobile* was blended to produce new forms like *autocar*, *autobus*, and *autocamp*. The result is a new word, *auto*, with a meaning quite different from that of the original combining form. One of the new blendings, *autocade*, has the ending of *cavalcade*, which also appears in mid-twentieth century's *aquacade* 'aquatic entertainment,' also in *motorcade* and *tractorcade*, with the sense of *-cade* as either 'pageant' or 'procession.' The second element of *automobile* has acquired a combining function as well, as in *bookmobile* 'library on wheels' and *bloodmobile* 'blood bank on wheels.'

Productive new prefixes are *e-* from *electronic*, as in *e-banking*, *e-book*, *e-commerce*, *e-mail*, *e-ticket* (used first by airlines and now in ubiquitous use for subways and toll tunnels, parking, sports events, concerts, exhibitions, and ski resorts, as stored on smartcards, RFID tags, key fobs, watches, and cell phones); and *cyber*, as in *cyberart*, *cyberattack*, *cyberbully*, *cyberchondriac*, *cybercommunity*, *cyberhate*, *cybersex*, *cyberspace*, *cyberterrorism*. Another new morpheme created by blending is *-aholic* 'addict,' one who habitually does or uses, whatever the first part of the word denotes, as in *bookaholic*, *carboholic*, *chocoholic* (from *chocolate*), *computerholic*, *golfaholic*, *hashaholic*, *infoholic*, *newsaholic*, *rageaholic*, *spendaholic*, *sugarholic*, and *workaholic*. Yet another is *-athon* 'group activity lasting for an extended time and designed to raise money for a charitable cause,' the tail end of *marathon*, whence the notion of endurance in such affairs as a *radiothon*, a *talkathon*, and a *walkathon*.

An old morpheme given a new sense by blending is *gate*. After the forced resignation of Richard Nixon from the U.S. presidency in 1974, the term *Watergate* (the name of the apartment-house and office complex where the events began that led to his downfall) became a symbol for scandal and corruption, usually involving some branch of government and often with official efforts to cover up the facts. In that sense, the word was blended with a variety of other terms to produce such new words as *Dallasgate*, *Hollywoodgate*, *Irangate* (also called *Armstrongate*, *Contragate*, *Northgate*, and *Reagagate*, both the latter after the two principal persons involved in it), *Koreagate*, *Oilgate*, *Peanutgate*, and many another. Although use of *-gate* began as a topical allusion, the formative shows remarkable staying power. New words made with it

continue to appear; for example, *Buckinghamgate* (news leaks from the royal palace) and *Papergate* (the writing of bad checks by members of Congress).

### FOLK ETYMOLOGY

Folk etymology—the naive misunderstanding of a more or less esoteric word that makes it into something more familiar and hence seems to give it a new etymology, false though it be—is a minor kind of blending. Spanish *cucaracha* ‘wood louse’ has thus been modified to *cockroach*, though the justly unpopular creature so named is neither a rooster (*cock*) nor a freshwater fish (an early, still alternate sense of *roach*). By the clipping of the term to its second element, *roach* has come to mean what *cucaracha* originally meant.

A neat example of how the folk-etymological process works is furnished by the experience of a German teacher of ballet who attended classes in modern dance at an American university in order to observe American teaching techniques. During one of these classes, she heard a student describe a certain ballet jump, which he referred to as a “soda box.” Genuinely mystified, she inquired about the term. The student who had used it and other members of the class averred that it was precisely what they always said and that it was spelled as they pronounced it—*soda box*. What they had misheard from their instructor was the practically universal ballet term *saut de basque* ‘Basque leap.’ One cannot but wonder how widespread the folk-etymologized term is in American schools of the dance.

A classified advertisement in a college town newspaper read in part “Stove, table & chairs, bed and Chester drawers.” The last named item of furniture is what is more conventionally called a *chest of drawers*, but the pronunciation of that term in fast tempo has led many a hearer to think of it as named for an otherwise unknown person named Chester. Children are especially prone to such folk-etymologizing. As a child, one of the original authors of this book misheard *artificial snow* as *Archie Fisher snow*, a plausible enough howler because a prominent businessman in town was named Archie Fisher and used the stuff in his display windows at Christmas. Similarly, the present author as a child was often taken in July to visit her Cuban relatives in “Miami,” which the five-year-old girl heard as a first-person possessive singular pronoun in front of “Ami,” as “My Ami,” and so told her mother on one occasion, “I can’t wait to visit Your Ami this summer.” Many people can recall such errors from their childhood.

When this sort of misunderstanding of a word becomes widespread, we have acquired a new item in the English lexicon—one that usually completely displaces the old one and frequently seems far more appropriate than the displaced word. Thus, *crayfish* seems more fitting than would the normal modern phonetic development of its source, Middle English *crevice*, taken from Old French, which language in turn took it from Old High German *krebiz* ‘crab’ (Modern *Krebs*). *Chaise lounge* for *chaise longue* ‘long chair’ is listed as a variant in *Webster’s Third New International Dictionary*, and seems to be on the way to full social respectability. A dealer says that the prevailing pronunciation, of both buyers and sellers, is either [ʃɛz laʊnʃ] or [ʃɛs laʊnʃ], the first of these in some circles

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being considered somewhat elite, not to say snobbish, in that it indicates that the user has "had" French. In any case, as far as speakers of English are concerned, the blooper is remarkably apt, as indeed are many folk-etymologies. The aptness of a blunder has much to do with its ultimate acceptance.

## SHIFTING WORDS TO NEW USES

### ONE PART OF SPEECH TO ANOTHER

A very prolific source of new words is the facility of Modern English, because of its paucity of inflection, for converting words from one grammatical function to another with no change in form, a process known as **functional shift**. Thus, the name of practically every part of the body has been converted to use as a verb—one may *head* a committee, *shoulder* a burden, *elbow* one's way through a crowd, *hand* in papers, *finger* a criminal, *thumb* a ride, *back* one's car, give someone a *leg* up, *nose* around the office, *shin* up a tree, *foot* a bill, *toe* a mark, and *tiptoe* through the tulips—without any modification of form such as would be necessary in other languages, such as German, in which the suffix *-(e)n* is a necessary part of all infinitives. It would not have been possible to shift words thus in Old English times either, when infinitives ended in *-(a)n* or *-ian*. But Modern English does it with the greatest ease; to cite a few non-anatomical examples, *to contact*, *to chair* (a meeting), *to telephone*, *to date*, *to impact*, *to park*, *to proposition*, and *to M.C.* (or *emcee*).

Verbs may also be used as nouns. One may, for instance, take a *walk*, a *run*, a *drive*, a *spin*, a *cut*, a *stand*, a *break*, a *turn*, or a *look*. A newer example is *wrap* 'a sandwich made of a soft tortilla rolled around a filling.' Nouns are just as freely used as modifiers: *head bookkeeper*, *handlebar mustache*, *stone wall*, and *designer label*, whence *designer water* 'bottled water.' Adjectives and participles are used as nouns—for instance, *commercial* 'sales spiel on TV or radio,' *formals* 'evening clothes,' *clericals* 'clergyman's street costume,' *devotional* 'short prayer service subsidiary to some other activity,' *private* 'noncommissioned soldier,' *elder*, *painting*, and *earnings*.

Adjectives may also be converted into verbs, as with *better*, *round*, *tame*, and *rough*. Even adverbs and conjunctions are capable of conversion, as in "the *whys* and the *wherefores*," "*but* me no *buts*" (with *but* as verb and noun), and "*ins* and *outs*." The attributive use of *in* and *out*, as in *inpatient* and *outpatient*, is quite old. The adjectival use of *in* meaning 'fashionable' or 'influential,' as in "the *in* thing" and "the *in* group," is recent, however. The adjectival use of the adverb *now* meaning 'of the present time,' as in "the *now* king," dates from the fifteenth century, whereas the meaning 'modern, and hence fashionable,' as in "the *now* generation," is a product of more recent times.

Transitive verbs may be made from older intransitive ones, as has happened fairly recently with *shop* ("Shop Our Fabulous Sale Now in Progress"), *sleep* ("Her mansion *sleeps* sixty"), and *look* ("She *looks* her age" and "Look what I found you.").

A good many combinations of verbs and adverbs—for instance, *slow down*, *check up*, *fill in* 'furnish with a background sketch,' *break down*

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'analyze,' and *set up*—are easily convertible into nouns, though usually with shifted stress, as in *to check úp* contrasted with *a chéckup*. Some such combinations are also used as adjectives, as in *sit-down strike*, *sit-in demonstration*, and *drive-through teller*.

As with the verb-adverb combinations, a shift of stress is sometimes involved when verbs, adjectives, and nouns shift functions—compare *upsét* (verb) and *úpsét* (noun), *prodúce* (verb) and *próduce* (noun), *pérfect* (adjective) and *perféct* (verb). Not all speakers make the functional stress distinction in words like *ally* and *address*, but many do. Some words whose functions used to be distinguished by shift of stress seem to be losing the distinction. *Perfume* as a noun is now often stressed on the second syllable, and a building contractor regularly *cóntràcts* to build a house.

### COMMON WORDS FROM PROPER NAMES

A large number of common words have come to us from proper names—a kind of functional shift known as **commonization**. The term **eponym** is somewhat confusingly applied either to the word derived from a proper name or to the person who originally bore the name. From names of such eponymous persons, three well-known eponyms are *lynch*, *boycott*, and *sandwich*. *Lynch* (by way of *Lynch's law*) is from the Virginian William Lynch (1742–1820), who led a campaign of "corporeal punishment" against those "unlawful and abandoned wretches" who were harassing the good people of Pittsylvania County, such as "to us shall seem adequate to the crime committed or the damage sustained" (*Dictionary of Americanisms*). *Boycott* is from Charles Cunningham Boycott (1832–1897), who, because as a land agent he refused to accept rents at figures fixed by the tenants, was the best-known victim of the policy of ostracizing by the Irish Land League. *Sandwich* is from the fourth Earl of Sandwich (1718–1792), said to have spent twenty-four hours at the gaming table with no other refreshment than slices of meat between slices of bread.

The following words are also the unchanged names of actual people: *ampere*, *bowie* (knife), *cardigan*, *chesterfield* (overcoat or sofa), *davenport*, *derby*, *derrick*, *derringer*, *graham* (flour), *guy*, *lavalier*, *macintosh*, *maverick*, *ohm*, *pompadour*, *Pullman*, *shrapnel*, *solon* (legislator), *valentine*, *vandyke* (beard or collar), *watt*, and *zeppelin*. *Bloomer*, usually in the plural, is from Mrs. Amelia Jenks Bloomer (1818–1894), who publicized the garment; one could devise no more appropriate name for voluminous drawers than this surname. *Bobby* 'British policeman' is from the pet form of the name of Sir Robert Peel, who made certain reforms in the London police system. *Maudlin*, long an English spelling for Old French *Madelaine*, is ultimately from Latin *Magdalen*, that is, Mary Magdalene, whom painters frequently represented as tearfully melancholic.

Comparatively, slight spelling modifications occur in *dunce* (from John Duns Scotus [d. ca. 1308], who was in reality anything but a dunce—to his admirers, he was *Doctor Subtilis*) and *praline* (from Maréchal du Plessis-Praslin [d. 1675]). *Tawdry* is a clipped form of *Saint Audrey* and first referred to the lace bought at St. Audrey's Fair in Ely. *Epicure* is an anglicized form of *Epicurus*. *Kaiser* and *czar* are from *Caesar*. *Volt* is a clipped form of the surname

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of Count Alessandro Volta (d. 1827), and *farad* is derived likewise from the name of Michael Faraday (d. 1867). The name of an early American politician, Elbridge Gerry, is blended with *salamander* in the coinage *gerrymander*. *Pantaloon*, in the plural an old-fashioned name for trousers, is only a slight modification of French *pantalon*, which, in turn, is from Italian *Pantalone*, the name of a silly senile Venetian of early Italian comedy who wore such nether coverings.

The following are derivatives of other personal names: *begonia*, *bougainvillea*, *bowdlerize*, *camellia*, *chauvinism*, *comstockery*, *dahlia*, *jeremiad*, *masochism*, *mesmerism*, *nicotine*, *onanism*, *pasteurize*, *platonian*, *poinsettia*, *sadism*, *spoonerism*, *wisteria*, *zinnia*. Derivatives of the names of two writers—*Machiavellian* and *Dickensian*—are of such wide application that capitalizing them hardly seems necessary, any more than *platonian*.

The names of the following persons in literature and mythology (if gods, goddesses, and muses may be considered persons) are used unchanged: *atlas*, *babbitt*, *calliope*, *hector*, *hermaphrodite*, *mentor*, *mercury*, *nemesis*, *pander*, *psyche*, *simon-pure*, *volcano*. *Benedick*, the name of Shakespeare's bachelor par excellence who finally succumbed to the charms of Beatrice, has undergone only very slight modification in *benedict* 'newly married man.' *Don Juan*, *Lothario*, *Lady Bountiful*, *Mrs. Grundy*, *Man Friday*, and *Pollyanna*, though written with initial capitals, belong here also.

The following are derivatives of personal names from literature and mythology: *aphrodisiac*, *bacchanal*, *herculean*, *jovial*, *malapropism*, *morphine*, *odyssey*, *panic*, *quixotic*, *saturnine*, *simony*, *stentorian*, *tantalize*, *terpsichorean*, *venereal*, *vulcanize*. Despite their capitals, *Gargantuan* and *Pickwickian* belong here also.

Some male given names are used generically: *billy* (in *billycock*, *hillbilly*, *silly billy*, and alone as the name of a policeman's club), *tom(my)* (in *tomcat*, *tomtit*, *tomboy*, *tommyrot*, *tomfool*), *john* 'toilet' (compare older *jakes*), *johnny* (in *stage-door Johnny*, *johnny-on-the-spot*, and perhaps *johnnycake*, though this may come from American Indian *jonikin* 'type of griddlecake'+*cake*), *jack* (in *jackass*, *cheap-jack*, *steeplejack*, *lumberjack*, *jack-in-the-box*, *jack-of-all-trades*, and alone as the name of a small star-shaped metal piece used in a toss-and-catch children's game known as *jacks*), *rube* (from *Reuben*), *hick* (from *Richard*), and *toby* 'jug' (from *Tobias*).

Place-names have also furnished a good many common words. The following, the last of which exists only in the mind, are unchanged in form: *arras*, *babel*, *bourbon*, *billingsgate*, *blarney*, *buncombe*, *champagne*, *cheddar*, *china*, *cologne*, *grubstreet*, *guinea*, *homburg* (hat), *java* 'coffee', *limerick*, *mackinaw*, *Madeira*, *madras*, *magnesia*, *meander*, *morocco*, *oxford* (shoe or basket-weave cotton shirting), *panama*, *sauterne*, *shanghai*, *shantung*, *suede* (French name of Sweden), *tabasco*, *turkey*, *tuxedo*, and *utopia*.

The following are either derivatives of place-names or place-names that have different forms from those known to us today: *bayonet*, *bedlam*, *calico*, *canter*, *cashmere*, *copper*, *damascene*, *damask*, *damson*, *denim*, *frankfurter*, *gauze*, *hamburger*, *italic*, *jeans* (pants), *laconic*, *limousine*, *mayonnaise*, *milliner*, *roman* (type), *romance*, *sardonic*, *sherry* (see above), *sodomy*, *spaniel*, *spartan*, *stogy*, *stygian*, *wiener*, *worsted*. *Damascene*, *damask*, and *damson* all three



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come from *Damascus*. *Canter* is a clipping of *Canterbury (gallop)*, the easygoing pace of pilgrims to the tomb of St. Thomas à Becket in Canterbury, the most famous and certainly the "realest" of whom are a group of people who never lived at all except in the poetic imagination of Geoffrey Chaucer and everlastingly in the hearts and minds of those who know his *Canterbury Tales*.

Some commercial products become so successful that their brand or trade names achieve widespread use and may pass into common use; for example, *escalator* and *zipper*. Others maintain their trademark status and so are properly (that is, legally) entitled to capitalization: *Band-Aid*, *Ping-Pong*, and *Scotch* tape. Sometimes a trade name enters common use through a verb derived from it. In England, *to hoover* is 'to clean with a vacuum cleaner' from the name of a famous manufacturer of such vacuums. To photocopy is sometimes called *to xerox*, *to photoshop* something means 'to edit a digital image' (using Adobe Photoshop brand image editing software), and a new verb for 'to search for information on the Internet' is *to google*, while *to Facebook* has a whole host of definitions: 'to spend time using the social networking website Facebook,' 'to contact someone using Facebook,' 'to create an event entry on Facebook,' 'to post something on the site,' and so forth. Verbs are not subject to trademarking, though dictionaries are careful to indicate their proper source.

## SOURCES OF NEW WORDS

In most cases, we do not know the exact circumstances under which a new word was invented, but there are a few notable exceptions.

Two literary examples are *Catch-22*, from the novel of the same name by Joseph Heller, and *1984*, also from a novel of the same name by George Orwell. *Catch-22* denotes a dilemma in which each alternative is blocked by the other. In the novel, the only way for a combat pilot to get a transfer out of the war zone is to ask for one on the ground that he is insane, but anyone who seeks to be transferred is clearly sane, since only an insane person would want to stay in combat. The rules provide for a transfer, but *Catch-22* prevents one from ever getting it. Orwell's dystopian novel is set in the year 1984, and its title has come to denote the kind of society the novel depicts—one in which individual freedom has been lost, people are manipulated through cynical television propaganda by the government, and life is a gray and hopeless affair.

Another literary contribution that has come into the language less directly is *quark*. As used in theoretical physics, the term denotes a hypothetical particle, the fundamental building block of all matter, originally thought to be of three kinds. The theory of these threefold fundamental particles was developed by a Nobel Prize winner, Murray Gell-Mann, of the California Institute of Technology; he called them *quarks* and then discovered the word in James Joyce's novel *Finnegans Wake* in the phrase "Three quarks for Muster Mark!" Doubtless, Gell-Mann had seen the word in his earlier readings of the novel, and it had stuck in the back of his mind until he needed a term for his new particles. It is not often that we know so much about the origin of a word in English.

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## DISTRIBUTION OF NEW WORDS

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Which of the various kinds of word making are the most prolific sources of new words today? One study of new words over the fifty-year period 1941–1991 (Algeo and Algeo, *Fifty Years among the New Words* 14) found that the percentages of new words were as follows for the major types:

Type	Percent
Compounding	40
Affixation	28
Shifting	17
Shortening	8
Blending	5
Borrowing	2
Creating	below 0.5

Other studies have found variable percentages among the types, but there is considerable agreement that nowadays English forms most of its new words by combining morphemes already in the language. Compounding and affixation account for two-thirds of our new words. Most of the others are the result of putting old words to new uses or shortening or blending them. Of relatively minor importance today, but once a frequent source of new words, are loan-words borrowed from other languages (considered in the next chapter). And almost no words are made from scratch.

## FOR FURTHER READING

## GENERAL

- Algeo and Algeo. *Fifty Years among the New Words*.  
 Aronoff and Fudeman. *What Is Morphology?*  
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## WORD FORMATION

- Acronyms, Initialisms, & Abbreviations Dictionary.*  
 Adams. *Complex Words in English.*  
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 Minkova and Stockwell. *English Words: History and Structure.*  
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## SLANG

- Allen. *The City in Slang: New York.*  
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 Dalzell and Victor. *The New Partridge Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English.*  
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## SPECIAL VOCABULARIES

- Allen. *Unkind Words: Ethnic Labeling.*  
 Bucholtz. *White Kids.*  
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