



ELL101: Intro to Languages

Yule (2014) Reading Questions Ch.5

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Reading Questions Ch.5

- 1 When we form compounds in English, how do we know whether to join the words (*hairspray*), join them with a hyphen (*hair-spray*) or leave a space between them (*hair spray*)? Using the examples below, and any others that you want to include in the discussion, try to decide if there are any typical patterns in the way we form compounds. Note that multiple rules are operating in the hyphenation of compound words – pay attention to the length, meaning, sound, and usage of the compound words.

backpack, back-pedal, back seat, blackboard, black hole, black-tie affair, bulletin board, double bed, double-cross, house husband, housewarming, housewife, life-saving, lifestyle, life insurance, mother-in-law, mother tongue, postcard, Post-its, post office, workbook, work experience, work-to-rule

Compound words with or without space/hyphen I

Question

- Why do we say *workbook* but *exercise book* (with whitespace)? *Blackboard* but *bulletin board*? *Mailman* but *mail carrier*?



Compound words with or without space/hyphen II

Rule 1: Syllable length

Do not combine words or use the hyphen if at least one element is more than one syllable.

- *work* (1) + *book* (1) → *workbook*
- *exercise* (2) + *book* (1) → *exercise book*
- *black* (1) + *board* (1) → *blackboard*
- *bulletin* (2) + *board* (1) → *bulletin board*
- *mail* (1) + *man* (1) → *mailman*
- *mail* (1) + *carrier* (2) → *mail carrier*

- On a separate note, if a compound consists of more than two words, they should be always hyphenated (e.g., *mother-in-law*, *merry-go-round* etc.)

Compound words with or without space/hyphen III

Rule 2: Adjectival use

Use the hyphen if the usage of a compound is prenominal (before-noun) adjective.

- This is an *off-campus* apartment.
- The apartment is off campus.
- This is a state-of-the-art design.
- The design is state of the art.

Compound words with or without space/hyphen IV

Rule 3: Frequency

High-frequency compounds are often used with a hyphen.

- *black* (1) + *board* (1) → *blackboard*
- *bulletin* (2) + *board* (1) → *bulletin board*
- *checker* (2) + *board* (1) → *checkerboard*
- The design is state of the art.
- The design is state-of-the-art.

Compound words with or without space/hyphen V

- When a compound is used **very** frequently, it will become one single word
 - *God be with you* → *goodbye*
 - *Break it fast* → *breakfast*
 - *break up* → *breakup*
 - *note book* → *notebook*

- Pluralization as a test for lexicalization
 - One *mother-in-law* and two _____
 - One *Mickey Mouse* and two _____
 - One *flat-foot* and two _____
 - One *Maple Leaf* and two _____
 - One *Batman* and two _____

Bibliography I

This presentation slide was created with \LaTeX and *beamer* \LaTeX style.