

98 Compound nouns and adjectives



Lois is a **self-employed** accountant.

It's **well-paid** work and I have a small office in my **living room**.

1 Compound nouns

A **compound noun** is a noun made from two words. The first word is usually singular and gives more information about the second word:

a dishwasher = a machine for washing dishes *a firefighter* = a person who fights fires

✓ *There are a lot of **taxi drivers** in London.* ✗ *There are a lot of **taxis drivers** in London.*

- Some compound nouns are written as one word (e.g. *classroom*, *dishwasher*) and some are two separate words (e.g. *bank account*, *car park*). It is best to check the correct form in a dictionary.
- We can make compound nouns by adding a noun, verb, preposition, adverb or adjective to a noun or verb. Here are some common examples:

noun + noun	<i>alarm clock bank account classmate computer science credit card eyelashes film star history teacher homework record shop science fiction shop assistant sunglasses traffic jam website</i>
noun + verb(-er)	<i>DVD player dishwasher firefighter hairdresser screwdriver taxi driver</i>
noun + verb(-ing)	<i>hairdressing horse-riding scuba diving window shopping</i>
verb(-ing) + noun	<i>living room shopping centre swimming pool washing machine</i>
adjective + noun	<i>blackbird grandfather high school supermarket whiteboard</i>
preposition/adverb + verb/noun	<i>bypass downstairs outfit overdraft overtime underground upbringing</i>
verb + preposition/adverb	<i>checkout sleepover turnover dropout walkabout kickoff</i>

The stress is usually on the first syllable of the compound noun: *traffic jam*, *horse-riding*, *underground*. Compare:

*She's an **English** teacher.* (a teacher of English)

*He's an English **teacher**.* (a teacher who is English)

Pronunciation ▶ 1.33

2 Compound adjectives

Compound adjectives can be made from nouns, adjectives, verbs and adverbs.

They usually have a hyphen (-) between the words when they come before a noun:

number/measurement + noun	<i>two-hour five-day ten-kilometre tenth-century two-seater 250-gramme 600-dollar half-price part-/full-time ten-year-old</i>
adjective + noun	<i>high-quality high-level high-speed low-price low-calorie</i>
noun + adjective	<i>user-friendly child-friendly colour blind duty-free worldwide</i>
adjective/adverb + -ed/-ing participle	<i>right-handed short-tempered well-known well-paid good-looking loose-fitting fast-moving best-selling hard-working</i>
verb + preposition/adverb	<i>drive-in burnt-out built-up worn-out broken-down</i>
self + verb/adjective/noun	<i>self-employed self-confident self-service self-assembly</i>

The noun in a compound adjective is usually singular:

✗ *He's a ten-years-old boy.* ✓ *He's a ten-year-old boy.*

✗ *It was a three-hours film.* ✓ *It was a three-hour film.*