

Ways of combining nouns



1 There are three main ways we can put nouns together.

noun + noun

post office
headache
face-lift

noun + 's + noun

my wife's sister
the doctor's surgery
the dog's bowl

noun + preposition + noun

the end of the garden
a story about true love
the arrival of the police

2 Sometimes more than one structure can be used.

the Prime Minister's arrival
the arrival of the Prime Minister
the floor of the living room
the living room floor
the car door handle
the handle on the car door

But usually only one pattern is possible.

the back of the car

NOT the car back **the car's back**

3 Sometimes there is a change in meaning.

the cat's food = the food that belongs to one particular cat
The dog has eaten **the cat's food**.

cat food = food for cats in general

Can you buy some more **cat food** when you go out?

4 We use the noun + noun pattern (compound nouns) for everyday established combinations.

a love film a horror film

For less established combinations, we prefer noun + preposition + noun

a film about horses

NOT a horse film



6 Combine the words in brackets using one of the three patterns. Sometimes there is more than one answer.

- 1 Can you buy a bottle of wine (wine, bottle) to have with dinner?
- 2 You've just spilt the _____. (milk, baby)
- 3 Can you buy some _____ (paper, toilet)? We've run out.
- 4 I never listened to my _____. (advice, parents)
- 5 Your coat's on the _____. (back, chair)
- 6 What did that _____ (road, sign) say? Did you see it?
- 7 It's such a mess in here. There are empty _____ (wine, bottles) everywhere.
- 8 The _____ (Prime Minister, duties) include entertaining heads of state.
- 9 The _____ (my shoe, heel) has come off.
- 10 Can I borrow your _____? (brush, hair)
- 11 What happened at the _____? (film, end)
- 12 Here is _____. (today, news)
- 13 Where is the nearest _____? (Underground, station)
- 14 It's my _____ (anniversary, parents', wedding) next week.
- 15 The _____ (company, success) is due to efficiency measures.
- 16 I've got a _____ (fortnight, holiday) next month.
- 17 Flared trousers have made a _____ (back, come). They're all the rage again!
- 18 The _____ (government, economic policy) is confusing.
- 19 The annual _____ (rate, inflation) is about 3%.
- 20 Have you heard Beyoncé's latest song? It's going to be another _____. (hit, smash)
- 21 Are there any _____ (coffee, cups) in your bedroom? There are none left in the kitchen.
- 22 Do you want a _____? (coffee, cup)