

# A COMPLEX OF COMPOUNDS

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Simeon Potter's Modern Linguistics (Andre Deutsch, London, 1957) states there are seven types of compound words:

- 1) noun-noun in which the first component qualifies the second: AIRCRAFT, BEEHIVE, KEYHOLE
- 2) noun-noun in which the second component is a complex word consisting of a verb with the suffix -er: DRESSMAKER, INN-KEEPER, WOODPECKER
- 3) verb-noun: TOSSPOT, CUT-THROAT, DAREDEVIL
- 4) adjective-noun: BLACKBIRD, GENTLEMAN, QUICKSILVER
- 5) noun-verb in which the verb is the present participle: PEACE-LOVING, FACT-FINDING, TIME-CONSUMING
- 6) adjective-verb in which the verb is the past participle: OLD-FASHIONED, HARD-HEADED, NEW-FANGLED
- 7) adjective-adjective: BLUE-BLACK, RED-HOT, TRUE-BLUE

Types 1, 4 and 6 have been given the Sanskrit names Tatpuruṣa, Karmadharaya and Bahuvrihi, respectively.

Compound words have already been encountered by Word Ways readers. The third example is readily recognized to be the Imperative Noun, introduced by Dave Silverman in the May 1973 Kickshaws. More recently, Richard Lederer's "Particular Particles" in the August issue of Word Ways mentions adverb-verb compounds such as OVERDO and UPHOLD, adverb-noun compounds such as ONLOOKER and OUTCRY, and adverb-adjective compounds such as UPTIGHT and OFFHAND.

Compound words occur more frequently than one might expect. I sampled the last entry on every page of a Random House Collegiate Dictionary, finding 111 compound words in 1534 entries for a percentage of 7.23.

I was challenged to find other types of compound words. Since there are seven recognized parts of speech (noun, pronoun, adjective, adverb, verb, preposition, conjunction), there should be 49 possible types of compound words (ignoring some of Potter's finer distinctions). However, not all types are likely to occur.

Take, for example, the case of pronouns. By definition, they are words used as substitutes for nouns. "Jack is thrifty; he saves money." "He" is a substitute for "Jack" and is a recognized pronoun.

"Jack is thrifty; that boy saves money." "Boy" is also a substitute for "Jack"; is it also a pronoun? To avoid ambiguity, I consider nouns and pronouns as members of a single class, even though there are a few pronoun-noun combinations such as HE-CAT and SHE-DEVIL and a few pronoun-adjective combinations such as YOU-ALL and WHOMEVER.

Every preposition in English is also an adverb. When they are used in compounds, they seem to function as adverbs, so I consider them together as a single class.

Conjunctions go between words, so compounds using conjunctions are mostly triple ones like HARD-AND-FAST. Since these are beyond the scope of this discussion, I eliminate them from consideration. (The only exception that comes to mind is ETCETERA.)

This leaves the four-by-four matrix given below:

	Noun	Adjective	Adverb	Verb
Noun	bookcase	seaworthy	northeasternly	wordplay
Adjective	blueberry	bonbon	blackout	old-fashioned
Adverb	onlooker	uptight	forevermore	overdo
Verb	tossport	bowling-green	go-go	follow-through

Can readers of Word Ways (1) find better examples (the one that bothers me the most is BOWLING-GREEN) and (2) invent clever names for the twelve unnamed cases?