See the thinking rear range hand some pal ace her barium. Nonsense? Not if you have an eye for foster compound words. But if you do have an eye for them, the search becomes a hobby and the hobby can be fun, especially when you spy a dignified sign reading DR. EADS, THERAPIST.

Unlike the ordinary variety, a foster compound is etymologically unrelated to the component words. The distinction is best explained by a genealogical analogy from which the term “foster” is derived.

Many ordinary compounds like handspring, iceberg and horseshoe appeared first as two separate words, with the first noun used as an adjective to modify the second, in preference to correct but awkward combinations like “manual spring,” “gelid berg,” and “equine shoe.” Purists abhorring the lapse in syntax joined the components with hyphens, viz: hand-spring, ice-berg and horse-shoe. In time the combinations matured from dualities or individualities and the hyphens were dropped. Genetically the sequence may be likened to:

```
hand spring parents engaged
hand-spring parents wedded
handspring their issue
```

On the other hand, such words as earnest, parsnip and vaseline were never ear-nest, par-smip and vase-line. The resemblance to ordinary compounds is striking but the parentage is obscure. If “ear” weds “nest” and the child “earnest” lacks the genes of either “ear” or “nest,” he is not their issue but a foster child.

To complete the definition, the analogy must cover an intermediate class, words like amenable, malefactor and coinsure. In this class, the underscored component is genetically related to the whole word by a common root, but the other component is no kin. A child of but one of two parents is a stepchild, not a foster child. Hence such words are excluded from the class of foster compounds.

Foster compounds are centuries old to enigmatists who used them unendingly in charades, albeit they favored homonymous components. For example:
Two beasts hostile in fact and name,
My first was feral, my second tame,
The whole made light without a flame.

Some of our most interesting foster compounds were spawned from attempts to anglicize foreign sounds with familiar syllables. From Amerind names for the fish we have alewife and sockeye. From European tongues we have leghorn and pumpernickle. From the birds we have the onomatopoetic bobwhite, killdeer and whippoorwill. Perhaps there should be a term onomatoprosaic to classify claptrap and rapscallion. Similarly potlatch, which is Amerind too.

A few fosters are tandems, combining identical components, like aa, dodo, cancan, tartar and Singsing. Noteworthy also are the dual fosters, divisible in two ways, such as:

- cane sent or canes cent
- car touch or cart ouch
- gar bled or garb led

Readers who find recreation in oddities of words will enjoy watching for foster compounds. Although many like banana, candid and garden are trivial, one will be startled by bogeyed, clandestine, copepod, damselfish, epicenter, prosecute and seersucker. Over the years the writer has accumulated a list of 460 common primitives (excluding plurals and inflections).

For recreation of another type, the reader may care to match the following three-letter components to form 25 foster compounds:

```
ace  few  pig
age  fin  rap
ale  fin  ray
ape  hat  red
ash  hem  rot
ate  her  sat
bet  ice  she
cab  imp  son
can  its  sty
cur  led  ten
car  may  try
ego  not  try
end  ore  wed
end  out  wet
end  pan  win
eon  par  yea
```

Then, with more diversity as well as diversion, match the following components:

```
Intro
The
Chan
25 fo:
al
b
ca
c
co
d
Summ
```

```
Fi
liter
and
```

```
20 fa:
af
ca
c
cc
d
Summ
```

```
l
ap
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WORD WAYS
to form 20 foster compounds of seven or eight letters each:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ace</th>
<th>does</th>
<th>ice</th>
<th>pan</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>acre</td>
<td>evil</td>
<td>kin</td>
<td>ram</td>
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<tr>
<td>all</td>
<td>gain</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>real</td>
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<tr>
<td>bled</td>
<td>god</td>
<td>mass</td>
<td>rest</td>
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<td>can</td>
<td>goes</td>
<td>mode</td>
<td>see</td>
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<td>come</td>
<td>grim</td>
<td>mute</td>
<td>side</td>
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<tr>
<td>corn</td>
<td>heat</td>
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<tr>
<td>din</td>
<td>hers</td>
<td>page</td>
<td>wolf</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Finally this rather summary message. Candid innovations in moderation literally improve us mentally and impart pleasure. Pardon the implied candour and flagrant humour therein.