

# COMPOUNDS COMPOUNDED

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Since earliest times, speakers of English, true to the Germanic heritage of their language, have created thousands of new words by joining together two (or more) independent morphemes to form compounds. In the November 1978 *Word Ways*, Dmitri Borgmann's "Word Relationships" explored the various interactions between the elements in noun-noun compounds, and Maxey Brooke's "A Complex of Compounds" illuminated the complex grammar of compound words by constructing a four-by-four matrix (Noun-Adjective-Adverb-Verb) that yielded sixteen different combinations.

It has occasionally been noted that English words combine in such ingenious ways that the part of speech of a compound may be different from that of either of its components. This logologically happy state of affairs raises the following question: can the third dimension of the matrix be filled out so that each of the sixteen types that Brooke posits functions as a noun, adjective, adverb, and verb, yielding a total of sixty-four entries? On the next page is my response to that burning question. In the matrix, I have tried to use only recognizable "English" word parts and to avoid repetition and grammatical suffixes, such as -ly for adverbs. Readers are encouraged to offer any improvements.

Most of the items are self-explanatory, but some require a brief exegesis. Weekend (n + n = adv) and sunrise (n + v = adv) act adverbially in sentences of the type "Each weekend (or sunrise) he would rise to chop wood." Overmatched (adv + v = adv) and worn out (v + adv = adv) also act adverbially in sentences such as "He left the ring overmatched and worn out." Similarly, punchdrunk (v + adj = adv) is an adverb in the sentence "He left the ring punchdrunk." High-low (adj + adj = v) and fast forward (adv + adv = v) are new but well-entrenched compounds in the language: when one leads first the high and then the low card in Bridge in a two-card suit, he high-lows, and when one presses the "cue" button on a tape recorder or video tapedeck, he fast forwards. Atone (adv + adj = v) derives from the words "at" and "one," starboard (v + n = adv) from the Old English words meaning "steering side," and willy-nilly (v + v = adv) from the verbal construction "will I, nill I?" (and ultimately from the Latin "volo nolo"). Finally, Webster's does list wherefore (adv + adv = n) as a noun, a use that is preserved in the expression "the whys and wherefores."

	Noun-Noun	Noun-Adj	Noun-Adv	Noun-Verb
N	bookcase	bootblack	flashback	household
Adj	shipshape	homesick	head-on	handmade
Adv	weekend	knee-deep	hands down	sunrise
V	tiptoe	court-martial	zero in	handpick
	Adj-Noun	Adj-Adj	Adj-Adv	Adj-Verb
N	madman	deaf-mute	blackout	slowpoke
Adj	whitewall	blue-green	straightforward	rough hewn
Adv	barefoot	northeast	moreover	roughshod
V	blackball	high-low	black in	dryclean
	Adv-Noun	Adv-Adj	Adv-Adv	Adv-Verb
N	upshot	evergreen	wherefore	upkeep
Adj	offhand	overdue	never-never	income
Adv	overboard	outright	henceforth	overmatched
V	outlaw	atone	fast forward	understand
	Verb-Noun	Verb-Adj	Verb-Adv	Verb-Verb
N	scarecrow	catchall	standstill	hearsay
Adj	telltale	fail-safe	tumbledown	slapdash
Adv	starboard	punchdrunk	wornout	willy-nilly
V	pickpocket	blow dry	give up	make believe

I do not pretend that the boxes above cover all the possible grammatical alliances for compounds. Additional combinations include he-man (pro + n = n), himself (pro + n = pro), whoever (pro + adv = pro), each other (adj + n = pro), into (adv + adv = prep), whenever (adv + adv = conj), and the combinations of three or more words from good-for-nothing to Joseph Farris's exquisite having-a-heart-to-heart-talk-with-your-daughter-about-sex-and-finding-she-knows-more-than-you-do-phobia (Colloquy, November 1978).