

Workbook Chapter 1

Exercises for Textbook Chapter 1

A. Study questions

1. Identify a set of words with the (pseudo)-affix *Mac*: (e.g. MacBuy, MacWorld).
2. Identify ten compounds containing the elements *net* or *ware* as an element of the compound.
3. Find ten words in your dictionary whose etymology is "unknown."
4. Explain the difference between "core" and "learned" vocabulary.
5. Here is a list of compounds¹
 - (a) Are any of them likely to be found in a good dictionary as separate entries? If so, which ones and why?
 - (b) For each of the "transparent" compounds (therefore not likely to be listed in a dictionary), construct a sentence which shows the syntactic relation between the two parts of the compound. (E.g. for *boy scout*, one might suggest "Boy who is a scout.")

bug spray	fly paper	mothballs
fashion show	heat shield	windmill
car thief	candle light	ink blot
bedbug	sugar beet	arrowhead
tinfoil	mad house	bank teller
buffalo chips	ground water	ground pepper
silkworm	earthworm	worm drive
footwear	onionskin	potato chips

¹ These examples are drawn from Robert B. Lees, "Problems in the grammatical analysis of English nominal compounds", in *Progress in Linguistics*, ed. by Manfred Bierwisch and Karl Erich Heidolph (The Hague: Mouton, 1970), pp. 174-186.

6. Does it make a difference whether they are printed as one word or as two?

Test a couple of dictionaries: do they agree on all of these examples as to whether they are one word or two words?

7. What is the "belles lettres tradition"?

8. What does the expression "creation *de novo*" mean? What is the equivalent expression in English? How does that phrase come to mean "*de novo*"?

9. What is the difference between an "initialism" and an "acronym"? Can you think of any examples which seem to be a mix of initialism and acronym?

10. Look up the word *okay*. It has a complicated history. See if you can sort it out and be prepared to explain how this most famous of all Americanisms came into existence.

11. Suppose a fraternity named itself TAU NU TAU. What word-forming process would they be following? (Be careful: the question is trickier than it looks.)

12. Go to a big library – university or big city – and find your way in the stacks to the shelves labeled PE 1500 to PE 1700. Jot down the subjects of at least ten of the dictionaries you find there. How many topics could you have listed if you had listed all or even most of them?

13. For words created by clipping and blending, there is a general principle that usually governs what part of the word is retained and what parts are thrown away. What is this principle? (Hint: *prof* and *rep* are "good" clippings, but **profé* and **repr* are not; *smog* and *galumph* are good blends, but **smg* and **galmph* are not.)

14. The words *woman*, *lord*, *holiday*, *bonfire*, *hussy*, and *nothing* are listed in Chapter 1 as being words that have been derived from compounds that were once transparent like those in question 5 above. Speculate about the reasons why words like these lose their identity as compounds – what forces are at work?

15. Look at the following sets of sentences exemplifying conversion; the parentheses indicate the *OED* dates of the first attestations of the italicized word-class (noun, verb, adjective). Judging by these dates, what can you say about the usual inputs and targets of conversion? Find three sets of zero-derived words (noun, verb, adjective) that confirm or disconfirm the chronology shown here.

The *gridlock* stretched out to the 405 (1980)
 They *gridlocked* over the last agenda item (1982)
 Are we a culture of *gridlock* mentality? (1983)

The cottage in the *background* caught his attention (1672)
 The *background* material was quite interesting (1854)
 The church *backgrounds* the family scene (1768)

The *conference* ended on an optimistic note (1555)
 They were still *conferencing* when the news hit the airwaves (1865)
 The *conference* center opened in time for the arrival of the delegates (1867)

16. How many words do you think you know? That is, what do you think is approximately the size of your active vocabulary? What are some of the problems you might encounter in trying to calculate any reasonable answer to this question?

17. (This is based on an essay called "The Mathematics of Language" by Henry Kucera, which appears in the front matter of the third edition of the *American Heritage Dictionary* (1992).) Shakespeare's complete works contain 884,647 words. Discounting forms like *loves*, *loved*, *loving* and counting them all as one word (*love*), the total vocabulary he used is about 18,000 words. And yet in a modern body of writing of about the same length, what is known as "The Brown Corpus," they used 37,851 words (defined the same way). Has English gotten richer? Or might there be some other explanation? Hint: what kinds of texts (there were 500 of them) went into the totality of the Brown Corpus? – You don't have to know; you can make a good guess.