

Compound Adjectives

A compound adjective is an adjective that comprises more than one word. Usually, hyphens are used to link the words together to show that it is one adjective.

Examples:

■ Please request a four-foot table.

('Four-foot' is an adjective describing the table. A hyphen is used to link 'four' and 'foot' to show that it is one adjective.)

■ It is a 6-page document.

■ Claire worked as a part-time keeper at the safari park.

■ That is an all-too-common mistake.

Compound Adjectives from Proper Nouns

Often adjectives are formed from proper nouns (i.e., the names of things), which should be written using capital letters. In these circumstances, there is no need to group the words together using hyphens.

Examples:

■ Did you manage to get the Billy Elliot tickets?

(The words 'Billy Elliot' are one adjective describing the tickets. As the capital

letters group the words, there is no need to use a hyphen.)

1. Compound nouns

- a. Noun + noun: bath towel; boy-friend; death blow
- b. Verb + noun: pickpocket; breakfast
- c. Noun + verb: nosebleed; sunshine
- d. Verb + verb: make-believe
- e. Adjective + noun: deep structure; fast-food
- f. Particle + noun: in-crowd; down-town
- g. Adverb + noun: now generation
- h. Verb + particle: cop-out; drop-out
- i. Phrase compounds: son-in-law

2. Compound verbs

- a. Noun + verb: sky-dive
- b. Adjective + verb: fine-tune
- c. Particle + verb: overbook
- d. Adjective + noun: brown-bag

3. Compound adjectives

- a. Noun + adjective: card-carrying; childproof
- b. Verb + adjective: fail safe
- c. Adjective + adjective: open-ended
- d. Adverb + adjective: cross-modal
- e. Particle + adjective: over-qualified
- f. Noun + noun: coffee-table
- g. Verb + noun: roll-neck
- h. Adjective + noun: red-brick; blue-collar
- i. Particle + noun: in-depth

j. Verb + verb: go-go; make-believe

k. Adjective/Adverb + verb: high-rise;

l. Verb + particle: see-through; tow-away

4. Compound adverbs

uptightly

cross-modally

5. Neo-classical compounds

astro-naut

hydro-electric

mechano-phobe