

**PRODUCTIVITY OF WORD BUILDING MEANS, MAJOR AND  
MINOR TYPES OF WORD FORMATION**

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**Annotation:** *The article investigates the productivity of both major and minor word-formation processes in the English language. It analyzes the most active mechanisms—such as affixation, compounding, conversion, clipping, and blending—that play a vital role in expanding the vocabulary. Additionally, it covers less productive or marginal processes like back-formation, acronyms, reduplication, coinage, and borrowing. The study emphasizes the dynamic character of word-building and how it reflects social, cultural, and technological changes in contemporary English.*

**Key words:** *word formation, productivity, affixation, compounding, conversion, clipping, blending, back-formation, acronyms, borrowing, English morphology, reduplication, major and minor processes.*

The English language is in a constant state of evolution, adapting to the communicative requirements of its speakers. One of the most vibrant aspects of this evolution is word formation—the method through which new words come into existence. A central concept within this process is productivity, referring to how actively and regularly a morphological mechanism contributes to the creation of new vocabulary.

Word-formation is a subfield of lexicology that examines the patterns and systems involved in producing new words. All word-building methods can be





categorized into two broad types: major and minor processes. The primary methods include derivation and compounding, while secondary (minor) ones involve shortening, blending, acronym formation, sound imitation, sound alternation, back-formation, and shifting stress.

### **Major Word-Formation Processes**

Word-formation involves analyzing words from both structural and semantic perspectives. Simple words form the foundation for derived and compound words. For example, words like consumer or sugar-free are built upon the bases consume or free.

The most productive and frequently used methods include:

#### **a) Derivation**

Affixation refers to the creation of new words through the addition of prefixes or suffixes (e.g., happiness, misprint).

This process divides into:

- Suffixation, primarily forming nouns and adjectives,
- Prefixation, often forming verbs.

Examples:

- un- + happy → unhappy
- teach + -er → teacher

Prefixes usually change the meaning of a word without altering its grammatical category: hear → overhear, fair → unfair.

Suffixes can also affect the grammatical category, as in book → bookish, rapid → rapidly.

#### **b) Conversion**

Conversion involves changing the grammatical category of a word without adding any affixes, leading to the creation of homonyms.

Examples include:

- fly (noun) → fly (verb)
- email (noun) → to email (verb)
- bottle (noun) → to bottle (verb)





This process is highly productive, particularly in business, digital, and modern spoken contexts.

## c) Compounding

Compounding creates new words by combining two or more stems that can function independently.

Examples:

- tooth + brush → toothbrush
- sun + light → sunlight

In most compounds, stress falls on the first element (blackboard), though compound adjectives or numerals often have two primary stresses (hot-tempered, seventy-four).

This method is especially productive in scientific, technological, and commercial terminology.

## d) Clipping

Clipping reduces longer words into shorter forms, often used in casual speech:

- advertisement → ad
- refrigerator → fridge

Clipping is increasingly common in informal, spoken, and online contexts.

## e) Blending

Blending combines parts of two words, involving features of both clipping and compounding.

Examples:

- smoke + fog → smog
- breakfast + lunch → brunch
- modulator + demodulator → modem

Blends are often creative and trendy, naming new concepts, services, or products (e.g., webinar, infomercial).

## Minor Word-Formation Processes

These are less frequent and generally less productive, though they still enrich the language:





## a) Back-formation

This involves forming new words by removing a real or supposed affix, often based on analogy.

Examples:

- editor → edit
- burglar → burgle

Historically important, but less active in present-day word creation.

## b) Acronyms and Initialisms

Acronymy refers to creating words from the initial letters of phrases or names.

Examples:

- NASA (National Aeronautics and Space Administration)
- UNESCO, FBI, ATM

Widely used in formal, technical, and bureaucratic language; moderately productive today.

## c) Reduplication

This process involves repeating or varying sounds within a word, often for stylistic or emphatic effect.

Examples:

- wishy-washy
- zigzag
- walkie-talkie

Productivity is limited, mostly appearing in playful or informal contexts.

## d) Coinage

Coinage involves inventing entirely new words from scratch.

Examples:

- Google (brand name, later a verb)
- Kodak

Rare and typically associated with brand naming or technological innovation.

## e) Borrowing (Loanwords)

Words borrowed from other languages enhance the vocabulary.





Examples:

- piano (Italian), café (French), tsunami (Japanese)

Although borrowing isn't a structural word-formation process, it plays a crucial role in expanding English and reflects cultural exchange.

### **Conclusion**

Word-formation in English encompasses a range of productive and less productive methods. Processes like affixation, compounding, and conversion are the most systematically applied to create new vocabulary in response to cultural, social, and technological demands. Minor processes, while less active, still add variety and richness. A clear understanding of these mechanisms is vital for linguistic studies, lexicography, and effective language instruction.

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