

LESSON 9

Compound Nouns and Collective Nouns

Compound Nouns

A **compound noun** is a noun made up of two or more words. Some compound nouns are written as one word, some as two or more words, and some as hyphenated words.

EXAMPLES

one word	baseball, homework, classroom, laptop
two or more words	Ima Jean Smith, police officer, high school, New Mexico
hyphenated	mother-in-law, one-third, time-out, right-of-way

To form the plural of compound nouns written as more than one word or hyphenated, make the most important part plural.

EXAMPLES

firefighters
mothers-in-law

EXERCISE 1

Identifying Compound Nouns

Identify the compound noun(s) in each of the following sentences.

1. I've been trying to persuade my family to visit the Basketball Hall of Fame.
2. Kevin has a picture of his great-aunt wearing bell-bottoms and a turtleneck.
3. The president-elect suggested that some belt-tightening would help the economy.
4. The standard colors for first aid are red and white.
5. That swayback is actually a famous thoroughbred.
6. Onlookers and passersby watched as the skyscraper grew taller each day.
7. The new tablecloth is in the dining room.
8. Bird-watchers typically use backpacks to carry binoculars, camera, notebook, and other supplies.
9. His brother-in-law was a self-absorbed, conceited attorney-at-law.
10. Sonja's archery goal for the summer was to shoot a bull's-eye.

EXERCISE 2

Understanding Plural Compound Nouns

Write the plural form of the compound noun in parentheses to complete each sentence.

1. Many (African American) published slave narratives during the mid-nineteenth century.

2. (Milk shake) may also be called *frappes*, *cabinets*, or *velvets*, depending on where you live.

3. The general brought several (aide-de-camp) with him to the meeting.

4. Even the (runner-up) at the Olympics are noteworthy athletes.

5. The bridal shower was arranged by Gwen's two future (sister-in-law).

6. During the twentieth century, scientists made many medical (breakthrough).

7. Several of the factory owner's (son-in-law) carried (walkie-talkie) so that they could stay in close contact.

8. Mom was just one of the many winners of the (Woman-of-the-Year) contest.

9. (Chief-of-staff) for United States presidents have highly stressful jobs.

10. (Babysitter) may be expected to bathe children and put them to bed.

EXERCISE 3

Using Compound Nouns

Use these twenty words to form ten compound nouns. If you're not sure whether a newly formed compound word is one or two words or whether it is hyphenated, check a dictionary. Then write a sentence for each compound noun that you form.

arm	school	boxing	stand	register	fiction
tape	light	up	station	gloves	spot
science	make	recorder	cash	high	chair
in	wagon				

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

Collective Nouns

Collective nouns—such as *family*, *committee*, and *class*—name groups that are made up of individuals. A collective noun may be either singular or plural, depending on how the group acts. When the group acts together as one unit to do something, the group is considered **singular**. When individuals within the group act differently or do different things at the same time, the collective noun is **plural**.

EXAMPLES

- singular** The **team** practices for the game on Friday.
 The **jury** eats lunch at the restaurant.
- plural** The **team** change into their street clothes after the game.
 The **jury** often have different reactions to the case.

EXERCISE 4

Identifying and Understanding Collective Nouns

Underline the collective noun in each of the following sentences. Then complete each sentence by choosing the correct form of the verb in parentheses.

1. The class (learns, learn) about World War I.
2. The army (plans, plan) an overland route.
3. Our fleet (arrives, arrive) at the coast today.
4. The company (expands, expand) because of the increase in sales last year.
5. The dance troupe (practices, practice) their solos in the studio.
6. The colony of rabbits (lives, live) under the front porch.
7. A gaggle of geese (flies, fly) across the bright blue sky.
8. The family (sits, sit) down on opposite sides of the bench.
9. The pride of lions (scatters, scatter) across the plain to attack their prey.
10. Each party (nominates, nominate) a candidate for president.

EXERCISE 5

Using Collective Nouns in Your Writing

Write a paragraph about: an association, a league, an organization, a squad, or another group of your own choosing. Describe the group, including its activities. In your description use at least two singular collective nouns and at least two plural collective nouns.
