



## DEVELOPING CREATIVE VOCABULARY BUILDING ACTIVITIES: BLENDS

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### Abstract

Word-formation is the most important way of enriching the vocabulary of any language. One process of word-formation however, still deserves further attention: *Blends*.

The article deals with the presentation and classification of several cases of blends found in authentic texts from magazines, advertisements, and other sources with the purpose to help teachers select materials for their classroom activities and to give a necessary means to the understanding of the subject.

Different from other processes of word-formation, blends do not consist of the combination of established morphemes and groups of morphemes. Blends are words made up of parts of morphemes, or *splinters*. For instance, the word *smog* is a blend because it is formed by the combination of the splinter *sm-* and *og*, which are parts of the morphemes *smoke* and *fog*. There are three types of blends. Here we will deal with only two.

The first type of blends consists of words that cannot be analyzed into constituents, but that contain elements which may remind as of other words similar to them.

The word *squirl*, for instance, reminds us of words *squiggle* and *squirm*, or *swirl*, and *whirl*. In this case, it is very interesting to notice how these words have a similar meaning and a similar form, as if idea of “turning” were condensed in the splinters – *irl* or *squi-*. Of course, these splinters are not morphemes because they have no meaning in the language when found in isolation. However, it cannot be denied that these splinters appear in a group of words, all of which carry a similar meaning.

Modern literature can provide us with some good examples of blends. For instance, Gwendolyn Brooks, a modern African-American writer, created the word *sloshing*, in her poem *Lyfe for my child is simple, and is good*. The word is used to describe the sound of water falling and spreading across the floor, a stylistic process that increases the poetic tone of the work. However, it is also a case of blends, since *sloshing* “reminds” us of the words *sloshing*, *slosh*, *slop*, *sloppiness*, *slogh*, *sludge*, *sluice*, *slush*, all of which carry the same phonoastheme *sl(o)*, similar in form and in some features of meaning. The second type of blends consists of words seen as contracted forms of compounds.





The words thus formed constitute neologisms consciously formed, and the reader is often aware of the elements that are combined in their formation. Besides, these blends are coined for different purposes to suppress the necessities of the language to name new elements or products that are created. Let's have a look at some examples:

1. Blends can be created for scientific purposes to name chemical products, new substances, new medicine: Gasohol= *gasoline and alcohol*, from the magazine article called "The Gasohol Power".
  2. Blends are also used in economics to name new monetary systems, new coins: Petrodollar=an invented monetary value made up of the words *petroleum* and *dollar*.
  3. Blends are used to name new occupations: photojournalist = *photographs* and *journalist*; televangelist = a combination of *television* and *evangelist*.
  4. New categories of television programs are also named by a process of blend formation: docudrama= a combination of television *documentary* and *drama*.
  5. Blends also provide meaningful stylistic resources, often used in poetry to create a psychological effect, to make the ideas shortened and especially, more expressive. Drysert=dry and desert
  6. Following this same principle of stylistic significance, blends are also largely used for a commercial purpose in advertisements. A delifreshing sensation! Join jeaneration.
  7. Blends are also largely used for funny purposes. Test your Eggspertise –a joke found in Reader's Digest. Eggspertise=a combination of eggs and expertise.
- Many magazines are rich sources of blends for comic purposes . They provide an excellent opportunity for teachers to develop students interest. For classroom activities we can suggest the following:

-Encourage your students to bring to class jokes, magazines, and periodicals they enjoy reading. Students love these reading materials, but they don't fully understand the meanings of such jokes. With help of their teachers, they can have a kick out of the English reading lessons.

- Bring to the classroom some issues of magazines and many other reading material for teenagers. Select those section in which you have found blends and ask your students to explain their meanings.-Encourage your students to create their own blend for comic purposes. On a sheet of paper, they can draw a strange mutation, name it, and explain its origin. For example: Rhinocephant = the son of a rhinoceros and an elephant. Lionfly = a lion with butterfly wings. Students exercise the vocabulary related to animals, use their imagination, create freely in the foreign language, and express their artistic tendencies when drawing. Intermediate students





can also coin new words to practice grammatical structures such as the comparative. For example: Rosalic = a rose that smells as bad as garlic. Manraffe = a man as tall as a giraffe. Advanced students can write games for their classmates. Students should name (creatures) according to their classmates commands.

- An interesting exercise consists of asking students to write a list of words with meanings associated with the word two. Students come across words like twice, twain, twilights, tween, twelve, twenty, tweezers, twin, twine, twist. Students learn a lot of new words and memorize them easily, since they are all associated. So, blends constitute instances of the creativity of the language, and of its capacity to coin new words express the necessities of its speakers. Their presence in authentic texts indicate relevance of their study.

## References

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