

Speak Easy #008 – Compound noun stress

Episode description

Compound nouns can be tricky! In this episode, Suzanne and Andrew teach you a trick that will help you pronounce them perfectly!

Fun fact

Nouns that consist of more than one word are called compound nouns. The most common compound nouns are made from two nouns (for example, *basketball*). However, there are also adjective-noun and verb-noun compound nouns (for example, *blueberry* and *washing machine*)!

Material included in the study guide

- Transcript
- Practice exercises
- Bonus audio download



Transcript

Note: The words and expressions that appear in **bold text** within the transcript are discussed in more detail in the Detailed Explanations section that follows the transcript.

Andrew: Hey, everybody, my name is Andrew.

Suzanne: And I'm Suzanne.

Andrew: And you're listening to Culips.com.

Hey there, Suzanne.

Suzanne: Hey, Andrew. How are you?

Andrew: I am fantastic. How are you doing?

Suzanne: Good.

Andrew: Suzanne, we are back today with another episode of our Speak Easy series. And this is our pronunciation series, where we focus on how to pronounce all of the wonderful sounds in the English language. Today we have quite an interesting topic, I think.

Suzanne: Yes. Today, we're gonna talk about dun dun, the dreaded word stress.

Andrew: Word stress.

Suzanne: I know many of you have come to me or, you know, a lot of students in my classes, in my workshops, always ask, "How do I know where to put the emphasis in a word?" And, you know, we talk about sentence stress, what word in a sentence to stress, but more importantly we have to know what syllable to stress in a word that's two or more syllables long. So, we're not gonna cover all of the word stress in the world today, but just one aspect of it.

Andrew: OK, just one aspect of word stress. And what aspect is that?

Suzanne: We're going to look at compound nouns.

Andrew: Compound nouns. OK. Compound nouns.

Suzanne: Yes.

Andrew: Well, maybe we can start with explaining a compound noun—our listeners might be unfamiliar with that term. What is a compound noun?



Suzanne: So, any compound word is when you take two words—so they're separate words completely. Maybe it's like in a compound noun situation, it's maybe an adjective and the noun, or a noun and a noun. And we bring them together. Sometimes they attach. And sometimes there's a space between them, but we put them together to make a whole new noun, a whole new concept, a whole new person, place, thing, idea, or concept.

So, for example, if we have, like, the word blackboard, we have the word black, which is an adjective, and board, which is a noun. And separately they're two totally, completely distinct and different, you know, things and meanings. However, when we bring them together, they create a very specific object. They become a blackboard.

Andrew: That is right. That's a very good example.

So, Suzanne, I'm really excited to hear what you have to say about word stress in compound nouns, but just before we get into that lesson, I would like to remind all of our listeners out there that there is a study guide for this episode. And if you'd like to access it, you just have to visit our website, Culips.com. And in the study guide for this episode, we have extra recordings and some exercises that you can practice with to help make your pronunciation sound, well, more like Suzanne's and mine.

All right, Sue, so let's jump into it.

Suzanne: Yeah.

Andrew: So, what's the plan for today?

Suzanne: Yeah, so first we're going to listen to a sample dialogue, you know, just to warm things up. And we're going to see if we can hear, if we can distinguish any compound nouns that are in the dialogue and see if we can maybe, just by listening, notice some word stress patterns that are going on with those compound nouns.

Andrew: Sounds good. So, everybody, pay attention to the dialogue. You're going to wanna keep your ears open for two things, OK? Compound nouns and where the emphasis, the stress, is placed when we pronounce these compound nouns.

Suzanne: Exactly.

Andrew: All right, Sue, let's get to that dialogue right now.

Suzanne: Yeah.



Friend 1: Hey, did you see my textbook on the bookshelf?

Friend 2: Did you put it there this afternoon?

Friend 1: Yeah, with my yellow lunchbox.

Friend 2: Hmm, that's weird. Maybe you brought it into the bathroom? Or maybe check the biology classroom? I think I saw it there next to the stack of notebooks.

Friend 1: Oh, yeah, I think you're right. I must have left it on the countertop. Thanks.

Andrew: OK, great. So let's listen to that one more time. And this time we're gonna slow it down a bit. So, once again everyone, really pay attention to the compound nouns and the stress that we put on them. So here we go.

Friend 1: Hey, did you see my textbook on the bookshelf?

Friend 2: Did you put it there this afternoon?

Friend 1: Yeah, with my yellow lunchbox.

Friend 2: Hmm, that's weird. Maybe you brought it into the bathroom? Or maybe check the biology classroom? I think I saw it there next to the stack of notebooks.

Friend 1: Oh, yeah, I think you're right. I must have left it on the countertop. Thanks.

Suzanne: So, Andrew, did you hear any compound nouns in that dialogue?

Andrew: I heard quite a few, actually. At the start of the dialogue, I heard textbook and bookshelf, and then I also heard lunchbox, bathroom, classroom, and notebooks. There were a lot in that dialogue.

Suzanne: Yeah, totally. And, also, there's countertop, right? Countertop, also.

Andrew: Oh yeah, countertop.

Suzanne: Did you notice a pattern or any kind of rhythm that popped up for you in hearing those?

Andrew: OK, let's see, I'm gonna say them one more time, see if I can find the pattern, OK? So, textbook, bookshelf, lunchbox. Yeah, I guess they all seem to have the emphasis on the first word, like the first syllable of the compound noun.



Suzanne: Cha-ching—exactly! We have a winner. That's right. So, the emphasis is on the first word, or the first part of the compound, and this is because ... Do you wanna know why?

Andrew: Tell me, please.

Suzanne: So, this is because, in most compound nouns, the stress is on the first word or part because you're describing what kind of noun it is. So, usually in a compound noun we have an adjective plus a noun or a noun plus a noun. So, our sort of second word, it's always kind of like when we look at a word, we have a root word and sometimes we have a suffix or a prefix, but we always look at the root word for the meaning. Well, our second word is kind of like our anchor word, right?

For example, we have textbook, so book is our thing but the first thing, the first part is describing what kind of book, what kind of thing it is. So, we put the stress on text because it's helping us describe the kind of book it is. So, if it's a picture book or a children's book, we stress that first part, right? Picture book, children's book, textbook. So that we're knowing what kind of book it is.

Andrew: Great explanation Suzanne, and I think I got it. So, let's take lunchbox for example, OK? It's not just any box, it's a box that you carry your lunch in. So, we need to put the emphasis on lunch, right? It's a lunchbox.

Suzanne: Right.

Andrew: And I guess if we're talking about a classroom, for example, again, it's not just any room. It's a room where you study, it's a classroom. So, we put the stress on that first element, class.

Suzanne: Exactly, because it's really helping us to define and make more specific the kind of thing that we're talking about.

Andrew: And, as always, the best way, I think, to improve your pronunciation or one of the best ways is to listen to a lot of English. Listen to a lot of Culips podcasts, watch a lot of Netflix, listen to the radio, get your input in because, through listening, you'll be able to hear these things. And once you hear them, then you can produce them in your own speech, as well.

Suzanne: Exactly.

Andrew: Suzanne, I think that about brings us to the end of today's episode.

Suzanne: Awesome.



Andrew: Thanks, Suzanne, for teaching us all about word stress and compound nouns today.

Andrew: And, everyone, one more time, please remember to download the study guide for this episode. It's awesome, and it's available on Culips.com. If you don't follow us on social media, you definitely should. We have been posting a lot of great stuff on our social media accounts, so whether you use Facebook or Twitter or Instagram or YouTube, just search for Culips English Podcast and you'll definitely find us. Finally, one last announcement, if you would like to get in touch with us, please just send us an email. Our address is contact@Culips.com. We'll talk to you next time.

Bye, everyone.

Suzanne: Bye, guys.

Practice exercises

Find the word stress in these compound nouns by underlining the syllable or word you think should be stressed. [The audio for the practice exercises is included at the end of the ad-free version of this episode. To download this file, please visit the Culips Dashboard by visiting \[www.culips.com\]\(http://www.culips.com\) and logging in to your account.](#)

1.

Chequebook	Nail file	Horseshoe
Penalty kick	Race car	Underarm
Rubber band	Golf club	Breakdance

2. Practice pronouncing some compound nouns by listening to and repeating the following words. Beforehand, you can underline the syllable you think should be stressed. [The audio file can be downloaded from the Culips Dashboard.](#)

Chalkboard	Clubhouse	Sports centre
Rock star	Bike path	Coffee cup
Sea shack	Homework	Buttercup



3. Circle the compound nouns in the following sentences. Then, underline the stressed syllable in each compound noun. Then, practice your pronunciation by listening to the recording and repeating the sentences. [The audio file can be downloaded from the Culips Dashboard.](#)

1. Are you bringing the pup tent to the camp out?
2. I put the cardboard on the countertop.
3. Did you eat the leftovers or did you cook the cheeseburgers?
4. I built a treehouse yesterday in the playground.
5. I need my boarding pass and my carry-on bag before I board the flight.

Answers

1.

<u>Cheque</u> book	<u>Nail</u> file	<u>Horse</u> shoe
<u>Penalty</u> kick	<u>Race</u> car	<u>Under</u> arm
<u>Rubber</u> band	<u>Golf</u> club	<u>Break</u> dance

2.

<u>Chalk</u> board	<u>Club</u> house	<u>Sports</u> centre
<u>Rock</u> star	<u>Bike</u> path	<u>Coffee</u> cup
<u>Sea</u> shack	<u>Homew</u> ork	<u>Butter</u> cup

3.

- Are you bringing the pup tent to the camp out?
- I put the cardboard on the countertop.
- Did you eat the leftovers or did you cook the cheeseburgers?
- I built a treehouse yesterday in the playground.
- I need my boarding pass and my carry-on bag before I board the flight.



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