**Nouns – Reading Material**

**Overview:**

The names that we take for granted and don't realize the apparent inaccuracy of how we apply it.

**Objectives:**

This reading material is designed to help you:

* Understand the importance of language accuracy especially related to compound words.

**Noun as Adjective**

As you know, a noun is a person, place or thing, and an adjective is a word that describes a noun:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **adjective** | **noun** |
| clever | teacher |
| small | office |
| black | horse |

Sometimes we use a noun to describe another noun. In that case, the first noun "acts as" an

adjective.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **noun**  **as adjective** | **noun** |
| history | teacher |
| ticket | office |
| race | horse |

**The "noun as adjective" always comes first**

If you remember this it will help you to understand what is being talked about:

 a **race horse** is a **horse** that runs in races

 a **horse race** is a **race** for horses

 a **boat race** is a **race** for boats

 a **love story** is a **story** about love

 a **war story** is a **story** about war

 a **tennis ball** is a **ball** for playing tennis

 **tennis shoes** are **shoes** for playing tennis

 a **computer exhibition** is an **exhibition** of computers

 a **bicycle shop** is a **shop** that sells bicycles

**The "noun as adjective" is singular**

Just like a real adjective, the "noun as adjective" is invariable. It is usually in the singular form.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Right** | | **Wrong** |
| boat race | boat races | NOT boats race, boats races |
| toothbrush | toothbrushes | NOT teethbrush, teethbrushes |
| shoe-lace | shoe-laces | NOT shoes-lace, shoes-laces |
| cigarette packet | cigarette packets | NOT cigarettes packet, cigarettes packets |

In other words, if there is a plural it is on the real noun only.

A few nouns look plural but we usually treat them as singular (for example news, billiards, athletics). When we use these nouns "as adjectives" they are unchanged:

 a news reporter, three news reporters

 one billiards table, four billiards tables

 an athletics trainer, fifty athletics trainers

**Exceptions:**

When we use certain nouns "as adjectives" (clothes, sports, customs, accounts, arms), we use them in the plural form:

 clothes shop, clothes shops

 sports club, sports clubs

 customs duty, customs duties

 accounts department, accounts departments

 arms production

**How do we write the "noun as adjective"?**

We write the "noun as adjective" and the real noun in several different ways:

 two separate words (car door)

 two hyphenated words (book-case)

 one word (bathroom)

There are no easy rules for this. We even write some combinations in two or all three different ways: (head master, head-master, headmaster)

**How do we say the "noun as adjective"?**

For pronunciation, we usually stress the first word:

 **shoe** shop

 **boat**-race

 **bath**room

**Can we have more than one "noun as adjective"?**

Yes. Just like adjectives, we often use more than one "noun as adjective" together. Look at these examples:

**car production costs:** we are talking about the costs of producing cars

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| noun as adjective | noun as adjective | noun |
|  |  | **costs** |
|  | **production** | **costs** |
| **car** | **production** | **costs** |

**England football team coach:** we are talking about the coach who trains the team that plays football for England

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| noun as adjective | noun as adjective | noun as adjective | noun |
|  |  |  | **coach** |
|  |  | **team** | **coach** |
|  | **football** | **team** | **coach** |
| **England** | **football** | **team** | **coach** |

Note: in **England football team coach** can you see a "hidden" "noun as adjective"? Look at the word "football" (foot-ball). These two nouns (foot+ball) have developed into a single noun (football). This is one way that words evolve. Many word combinations that use a "noun as adjective" are regarded as nouns in their own right, with their own dictionary definition. But not all dictionaries agree with each other. For example, some dictionaries list "tennis ball" as a noun and other dictionaries do not.

**government road accident research centre:** we are talking about a centre that researches into accidents on the road for the government

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| noun as adjective | noun as adjective | noun as adjective | noun as adjective | noun |
|  |  |  |  | **centre** |
|  |  |  | **research** | **centre** |
|  |  | **accident** | **research** | **centre** |
|  | **road** | **accident** | **research** | **centre** |
| **government** | **road** | **accident** | **research** | **centre** |

Newspapers often use many nouns together in headlines to save space. Look at this example:

BIRD HEALTH RESEARCH CENTRE MURDER MYSTERY

To understand headlines like these, try reading them backwards. The above headline is about a MYSTERY concerning a MURDER in a CENTRE for RESEARCH into the HEALTH of BIRDS.

Note, too, that we can still use a real *adjective* to qualify a "noun as adjective" structure:

 *empty* coffee jar

 *honest* car salesman

 *delicious* dog food

 *rising* car production costs

 *famous* England football team coach

**Is It "Set Up," "Set-Up," or "Setup"?**

Here is the latest in a series of tips on usage and style shared by Mignon Fogarty, better known as the one and only Grammar Girl. One of Mignon's correspondents inquires about when setup should appear as a single, unbroken word, and when there should be a space or a hyphen between set and up.

Karen W. from Ottawa, Canada, sees *set up*, *set-up*, and *setup* used interchangeably and wonders if that's OK.

*Setup* as one word or with a hyphen (*set-up*) is a noun for naming things such as a place setting at a table or a trap for criminals.\*

 The crime boss walked right into the setup.

 Make sure table five has a full setup.

*Set up* as two words is a verb phrase for describing actions such as putting things in order, arranging a date, creating a trap for someone.

 The judges still had to set up the chess boards.

 That snitch set up Billy Red Nose.

 Lucy, known around town as "the matchmaker," loved to set up her friends.

\* As with many compound words, different dictionaries give different advice. Some show the noun as a closed compound and others show it as a hyphenated compound. The verb form is always two words.