VIVA VOCABULARY!
Practical Ways to Promote Word Consciousness
By Lois E. Huffman, Ph.D.

Each edition of "Viva Vocabulary!" focuses on different word genres. The goal is to help students (re)discover the joy of language and the expressive power of vocabulary.

Dr. Lois Huffman is a consultant with the Center for Applied Linguistics and a global English educator. Previously, she was an adjunct faculty member at NCSU and UNC-CH. She enjoys leading language and literacy professional development trainings for schools and local reading councils. Contact her at loishuffman@gmail.com.

Word Formation Revisited: Part One of Two*

"Language is a living thing. We can feel it changing. Parts of it become old: they drop off and are forgotten. New pieces bud out, spread into leaves, and become big branches, proliferating." -Gilbert Highet, Scottish writer

As our world continues to change, new words are constantly being formed. In the Viva Vocabulary! series, "New Words: Here Today, Gone Tomorrow: Parts One, Two, and Three," we looked at 12 processes by which words are created in English (Lems, Miller, and Soro, 2017).

This two-part follow-up article will further examine many of these processes and provide more ideas for teaching them. The focus of this first part will be **Coining, Borrowing, Compounding**, and **Blending**. In Part Two, we will look at Clipping, Acronyms and Abbreviations, Conversion, and Paired-Word Sound Play.

Coining   Inventing words to name new phenomena or relabel existing ones is an English literary tradition (vocabulary.com). For many lexophiles, word coinage is a hobby of sorts. And as Anu Garg of Wordsmith.org points out, it's often an endeavor of linguistic efficiency: "Why not come up with a single word instead of using a phrase or a sentence to describe something?"

Below are additional activities to help your students think more deeply about the value of coining words in English.

More Teaching Ideas:
1. For an overview of word formation processes, show the TED ED video "Where Do New Words Come From?" This video reinforces the transience of words in any living language since they reflect the activities and interests of the people who use that tongue.

2. Invite motivated older students to watch Ann Curzan's TED Talk "What Makes a Word 'Real'?" Dr. Curzan, who studies the "dynamism of modern language," points out that some "people embrace language change" while others "get very upset about it."

(nytimes.com) Ask students to jot down and then discuss their reactions to the video. In addition, share this comment from Erin McKean, who is a lexicographer (dictionary maker): "People say to me, 'How do I know if a word is real?' You know, anybody who's read a children's book knows that love makes things real. If you love a word, use it. That makes it real." (TED Talk ["The Joy of Lexicography"](#))

Ask students if they know a word that has been "loved" (repeatedly used) into existence. One example might be a familial or collegial nickname. More information on nicknames, also known as **hypocorisms**, can be found in the Viva Vocabulary! post ["Jack and Jill Can Be More Nym-ble: Part Three."](#)

3. Let secondary students know that Edan Sher who played Sue Heck on the TV series *The Middle* has a website The-Emotionary.com, which is "dedicated to the creation of words for complex feelings that have not yet been discovered." ([abc.go.com](abc.go.com)) Older students might enjoy identifying which process(es) were used to form the new words posted on the site. They might even submit emotion-related words that they've coined. (Please be aware that the site does contain language that is not classroom appropriate.)

4. In the movie *Words and Pictures*, Clive Owens' character Mr. Marcus gives the following assignment to his secondary-level English students:

> "Our language is a living, growing thing that sheds old words and absorbs new ones every day . . . . Invent a new word. Tell us what it means, where it comes from, and why you think it must stay and live in the language for a while. . . . And just maybe it will spread into usage around the school, then the country, and then, who knows, the entire world."

If you teach older students or able younger ones, challenge them to do the same, that is, to "coin away, pollinate the world with their words, and see them bloom." ([Anu Garg](#))

Learners may be inspired to hear that Theodor Geisel (a.k.a. Dr. Seuss) created the word *nerd* (eldacur.com). Author Roald Dahl likewise invented words for his stories. Other neologists include these well-known British authors:

PERSON	NUMBER OF WORDS COINED
William Shakespeare	1700**
John Milton	630
Ben Jonson	558
John Donne	342

(Adapted from theguardian.com)

Some U.S. presidents have also coined words or changed the meanings of existing words. "The *Oxford English Dictionary* 'credits Thomas Jefferson with 110 new words and 382 new senses for older words.' Two of those new words, *anglomania*

2

and *anglophobia,* reflect the love-hate relationship a young America had with Great Britain." (copyediting.com) More examples of presidents who gave us words: George Washington - *off-duty*; Franklin D. Roosevelt - *cheerleader*; and Warren G. Harding - *Founding Fathers* (copyediting.com).

**Linguist David Crystal estimates that the Bard added 1700 words to our language. "Some sources say that Shakespeare coined more than 1,900 English words, but that number is likely to be high. He invented many words and came up with new meanings for old words, but those original counts are high because they come from the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED), whose human workers were known to favor Shakespearean texts when looking for citations. (Bardolotry is still alive and well in England.) Modern searches done with computers have turned up earlier instances of some words." (grammargirl.com)

5. Let the class know about Merriweather Lewis and William Clark's contributions to American English. During their expedition to the western part of what is now the U.S., the two men had to devise names for many plants and animals they had not previously seen. According to language scholars, more than 1000 words appeared in print for the first time in these explorers' journals.

   Lewis and Clark coined words based on how an entity looked or where they encountered it. They also borrowed words from Native Americans. Many of these words are still in use today (e.g., *Yellowstone, prairie dog, grizzly bear, bighorn*). (atlasobscura.com/articles/lewis-clark-linguistics-corps-discovery-exploration)

6. Present the following quote to the class and ask students to explain what it means. (With thanks to Anu Garg of Wordsmith.org.)

   > "Language is the city to the building of which every human being brought a stone." -Ralph Waldo Emerson

   Agree? Disagree? Why? Have students reflect on the intentionality of this "building" and provide word histories to support their positions.

   Also ask students if they have contributed a "stone." Share any "made-up" words that you or others have added to the language. For example, my husband invented the term "*jargonaut* - pursuer of political correctness," which was published in the "Toward More Picturesque Speech" feature of *Readers' Digest* in July 1995. (William Safire used the term in 2006 but offered a different definition. [wordsense.eu]) As Anu Garg notes, "Where there's a word-gap, there's a word coiner."

7. Remind students that "We expand language when we need to express things we've never expressed before." (Katherine Martin, head of dictionaries at Oxford University Press). Then introduce students to the Merriam-Webster Time Traveler tool which allows users to find out what words entered the dictionary the year they were born, started preschool, or graduated from elementary or middle school. Below are examples of words that first appeared in the dictionary in the years listed. You and your students may be surprised that some of the words have been in our language for so long.

   1960: *junk food, reality check, trendsetting*

3

1977: *download, fast fashion, shopaholic*
1984: *cardio, earbud, repurpose*
1996: *fist bump, facepalm, big data*
2000: *google, speed dating*
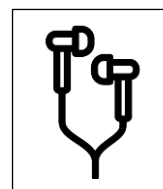
Challenge students to identify how each word was formed. To illustrate: *repurpose* - affixation; *shopaholic* - blending; *cardio* - clipping; *google* - coining; and *earbud* - compounding.

Also have students reflect on what the new words suggest about the attitudes, behaviors, and concerns of Americans. Share relevant ideas and examples from the Quartz post ["The Evolution of American Anxieties, in Words Added to the Dictionary Since 1980."](#) The article categorizes new words that have been invented to express Americans' anxiety in relation to health and medicine, work, food and sustainability, relationships, and technology.

> **"It's lack that provides inspiration."** -Ray Bradbury

Borrowing   English continues to "steal" words from other languages. In the words of H. L. Mencken: "A living language is like a man suffering incessantly from small hemorrhages, and what it needs above all else is constant transfusions of new blood from other tongues. The day the gates go up, that day it begins to die."

Here are additional ways to help students enlarge their vocabularies and better understand the role of borrowing in the expansion of our language.

More Teaching Ideas:
1. Present the following quote from Jim Carnes of the Teaching Tolerance Project of the Southern Poverty Law Center: "American English is a product of commerce, conquest, and migration." Invite students to look for loan words that resulted from each type of cultural contact. An excellent resource on borrowing, including the conventionalization of such words, is at [Ruf.rice.edu](#). As students look into the origins of English words, pose the following questions:
    * What kinds of words are likely to be the oldest in English (or any language)?
    * What things or concepts might a group of people have labeled first?
    * What kinds of words are likely to resist change? (Adapted from Carnes, 1994)

Students will discover that words we learn early in life and use often (e.g., *eat, pray, love, hate, life, drink, death, cat, dog*) have been around the longest. "Many of our names for body parts, and colors and numbers also belong in this category." (Carnes, 1994)
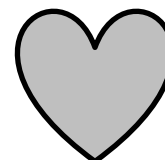
2. Invite interested class members to read or listen to Grammar Girl's commentary "[Japanese Words in English](#)." Additional English words from Japanese are discussed at [Merriam-webster.com](#). Ask students which of these loanwords they use and whether

they realized these terms were borrowed. If any students were aware that a word came from Japanese, encourage them to share how they knew this (e.g., learned from travel, family member, graphic novel).

If desired, you might offer these comments about the post. I received them from one of my former graduate students who is Japanese-American, speaks fluent Japanese, and taught English in Japan for several years. She wrote:

> "[Regarding *pan*,] I'm fairly certain it's from the Portuguese pão.... Japan had extensive contact with Portugal through trading and missionary work. [The post] also says that katakana is used for non-Chinese words. Even though it's true that Japanese script is influenced by Chinese, I think it would be more accurate to say that katakana is used for non-Japanese words. (There are some exceptions to this, of course!)" (Thanks, Stephanie!)
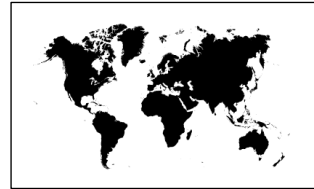
3. Ask your class to develop a hallway bulletin board of borrowed words from languages that are important to the group. These might be the languages of students' forebears or world languages spoken by people in the community. The list of borrowed words at blog.dakwak.com may be useful in selecting languages and words for this project. Merriam-Webster.com also lists borrowed words from Russian, Yiddish, and many other languages. Another resource that may be helpful is the post "15 Words English Borrowed from Chinese" from Grammarly.com.

    Include images on the board and make the material interactive through QR codes which link the words to videos, websites, and other online resources. To model what to do, you might put up information about the Danish word *hygge* [HUE-gah], defined as a feeling of well-being and coziness. The *hygge* aesthetic has been popular in interior décor in the U.S. in the last few years and is exemplified in flickering candles and faux fur throws and pillows. ("20 pictures that explain 'hygge,' the Danish obsession with coziness").

4. Invite each student to select a food that they or someone they know is fond of (e.g., My husband loves *okra*. He grows it and uses it in many dishes, including stir-fries, frittatas, and pizza.) Working together, students should investigate the linguistic origin and adoption of their words. One resource to check out is www.quickanddirty tips.com/education/grammar/delicious-english-words-chocolate-guacamole-aztec-roots.

   Here's what I learned about the word *okra*:

    > **okra** "of African origin; akin to Ibo *ókùrù*." The first known use of the word was in 1679. (Merriam-websters.com) It is likely that *okra* was introduced to the Americas by ships involved in the Atlantic slave trade. (Wikipedia.com)

5. Let the class know that although English has borrowed countless words from other languages, there are still more words that might be useful to adopt. Brenda Power of

5

Choice Literacy notes: "The Germans have a word to describe that feeling of riding the waves: *Gelassenheit* [gə-lah-sen-hite]*.* It translates roughly to letting something be as it is and letting go of the constant urge to fix it." Ask students to discuss life situations in which *Gelassenheit* might be a good approach and whether we Americans should borrow this word.

Then encourage older learners to check out Tim Lomas's list of [216 foreign words for positive emotional states and concepts that we don't have in English](#). The words are organized in three categories: feelings, relationships, and character. Make sure students read the comments which offer corrections and alternative perspectives. (A shorter listing of words from Lomas's work can be found in the *BBC Future* post ["The 'Untranslatable' Emotions You Never Knew You Had."](#))
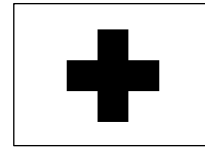
Ask class members which of the words they think English speakers should borrow and to give reasons for their choices. Challenge students to plan how they might influence Americans to adopt the foreign word.

To illustrate: I think we need the German term "*Sitzfleisch* [ZITS-flysh; literal translation: seated meat/flesh], which is the ability to sit through or endure boring tasks." My reasons:

Concept Represented by the Word	The Word Itself
• Boring, repetitive chores are a fact of life. (Most of us cannot afford to hire someone or buy a robot to do this work.) • Demanding assignments and expectations are the norm at school and in the workplace. • Persevering in difficult circumstances is an admirable personal trait and a key to job success. Successful people do the hard stuff and the mundane.	• The word is much shorter and more verbally efficient than the English translation. • The word could be easily pronounced by English speakers. (Even though the spelling is a bit different from English orthography, all the sounds in the word are found in English.)

Another reason I chose *Sitzfleisch* is because my late father modeled this attribute in many ways for my siblings and me. I can still see him in his 80s, kneeling and weeding the garden as the early-June sun beat down. When he finished the task, several rows of beet seedlings could clearly be seen in what had looked like a patch of weeds. (By the way, I was assisting him, but I was probably more of a hindrance than a help.)

5. Let your students know that speakers of American English also borrow words from other Englishes, such as Indian English, British English, and Australian English. British terms that have crept into American speech in recent times are *one-off* (one time only), *liase* (to help two groups work together), and *bespoke* (made to order). *Give it a go* (try something) is a British phrase that some Americans

use. Challenge students to find other examples of "intra-English borrowing." Also have students consider what might be contributing to this phenomenon (e.g., social media, Americans travelling or living abroad, interactions with speakers of other Englishes, streaming services with offerings from other English-speaking countries).

6. Remind students that not all languages are as accommodating of words from other places as American English seems to be. Because of sound and symbol differences, some English words do not mesh well in other world languages. Preservationists are likewise concerned about maintaining the integrity of old languages (theweek.com).

   In addition, language purists do not want English words to seep in and dilute their mother tongue. Students may not realize that Russia, for example, has long fought against foreign words entering its language (eurasiareview.com). In 2017, Turkey's president, Recep Tayyip Erdogan "declared, 'Where do attacks against cultures and civilizations begin? With language.'…Like other languages, Turkish has struggled to check the advance of Western words." (economist.com)

   According to Phillip Durkin in "Does English Still Borrow From Other Languages," at this point in history, "English may be more of a lender than a borrower." The *Dictionary of European Anglicisms*, for example, has gathered together English terms found in 16 European languages. (www.theguardian.com/news/2018/jul/27/english-language-global-dominance)

Compounding   Some words are formed by simply combining two or more smaller words. This process, known as compounding, is often used today, as shown in these examples: *anchor baby*, *baby box/hatch*, *behavior guidance*, *blind packs/bags/boxes*, *blockchain, brand experience, bottle shop, brain fog, breakerspace, bug-out bag, cauliflower steak, clutter-blind, comfort/support animal, crossbody, dad band, dark money, dark web, day drinking. dead food, decision fatigue, deep web, dental tourism, digital nomad, donut wall, drama queen, drone racing, dumpster fire, escape room, email bankruptcy, eyelook, face case, facepalm, fake news, fast fashion, feature fatigue/bloat, filter bubble, float tank, fist bump, food truck, free-range parenting, freerunning, friend group, fur kid, giver high, golf clap, graymail, happy place,*
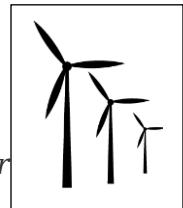
headspace, hivemind, hot desking, human trafficking, humblebrag, latte bowls, lava bomb, leader-board, letter-boxing, life value, live edge, man bun, maternity tourism, meal kit, Minecraft®, mindframe, money grab, open leisure, plant parent, plus-one, pool noodle, power couple, princess syndrome, punch list, quitting point, remote work, restorative discipline/ justice, rideshare, runcommute, SafeRise® building, sanctuary city, scope creep, screamtalking, screengrab, service dog, shapewear, sharing economy, side hustle/gig, skill set, slam dunk, sleep hygiene, slow food, slow living, smart city, sneakerhead, soft launch, spotlight, street harassment, stress eat, sweatworking, teenspeak, tiny house, touchpoint, touchstone, traffic agent, tree cookie, turnabout, vanlife, vegan leather, wage theft, webversion, Wi-Fi deadzone, whitelist, white noise, wind farm, workflow, work spouse, and *ugly cry.*

The Viva Vocabulary! article ["Compounding Students' Word Knowledge"](#) includes lots of detailed information and instructional activities on compound words. Here are more ways to generate interest in compounds.

More Teaching Ideas:
1. Invite class members to look for compound words which relate to the same endeavor, object, or action. The following chart contains examples to share with your students:

Compound Synonyms	Definition
bad break, bum rap, raw deal	an unfair or unlucky situation
cover-up, sugarcoat, whitewash	"to conceal something embarrassing or scandalous." ([thesaurus.com](#))
dustbin, garbage bin, garbage can, trash bin, trashcan, trash receptacle	"a container that holds materials that have been thrown away" ([merriam-webster.com)](#)
headstone, grave marker, gravestone, tombstone	"a burial monument" ([merriam-webster.com](#))

Have learners speculate about the prevalence of compounds for the same phenomenon and analyze the characteristics and uses of these terms. For instance, a *tombstone* has an old or spooky connotation, while a *grave marker* might suggest a newer monument for a deceased person or animal.

2. Another interesting category is animals with compound names: *bullfrog, butterfly, dragonfly, flapjack octopus, honey bee, king cobra, leopard frog, mayfly, mealworm, mountain goat, panda ant, poodle bee, sea turtle,* and *sheepdog.* Ask students to first identify the types of words that have been compounded (e.g., noun, adjective, verb). Then invite student pairs to investigate one of the animals and share what they learn with the whole group.
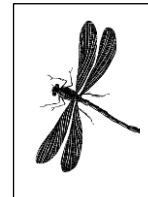
    To pique students' interest and model what to do, you might tell them about *mayflies* and how these insects invade various places for a few days every summer. Show pictures of buildings and vehicles covered with *mayflies*. Let the students know that the return of *mayflies* to Lake Erie was a sign of the lake's improvement following its polluted state in the latter half of the twentieth century. ([Cleveland.com](#)) (Thanks, Glen!)

3. Ask students to explore the origin of one of the compound words in the list at the beginning of this section. Who is credited with birthing the word? What was the original context of use? What is the likelihood the word will stick in our language? (Review the [FUDGE Factors](#) from Allan Metcalf, if needed.) Have the class decide how to share the information they uncover.

4. Compile a list of interesting compound words (e.g., *counterpart, deadline, foothold, guidebook, hallmark, homestretch, manhunt, newsfeed, offspring*, *pathway, sidenote*,

shortcut, spokesperson, spotlight, waitlist, worldview) and invite student pairs to select one of the words. Then have students do the following for their compound:

- Clarify its meaning and contexts in which it's used.
- Learn about its history.
- Find other compound words that contain the same smaller words (word stems) and make a graphic to illustrate their meanings.
- Analyze the commonalities among the compounds that share the same smaller word.

Here is an example:

COMPOUND WORD: *headband* (Chosen with a nod to sweet Fiona!)

DEFINITION: strip of cloth worn around a person's head to keep hair away from the face or sweat off it

CONTEXT OF USE: Discussions or displays of hair accessories, fashion merchandise, or athletic apparel

WORD HISTORY: "First known use was in 1522" (merriam-webster.com)

MORE COMPOUNDS THAT CONTAIN *head*:
airhead, arrowhead, beachhead, blackhead, blockhead, bobblehead, bonehead, chowderhead, deadhead, figurehead, gearhead, greedhead, hardhead, headache, headboard, headcount, headdress, headfirst, headhunter, headlamp, headline, headmaster, headphone, headquarters, headrest, headstand, Head Start, headstrong, headwaters, headway, headwind, hothead, jarhead, jughead, pighead, showerhead, skinhead, sneakerhead, spearhead, steelhead, swellhead, towhead, trailhead, whitehead

SOME COMMONALITIES AMONG COMPOUNDS THAT CONTAIN *head*: *Head* often refers to a person, the body part, or the place where something begins.

MORE COMPOUNDS THAT CONTAIN *band*:
armband, bandage, bandbox, bandleader, bandmaster, bandroom, bandsaw, bandstand, bandwagon, bandwidth, bellyband, broadband, gastric band, hairband, hatband, neckband, rainband, sweatband, waistband, watchband

SOME COMMONALITIES AMONG COMPOUNDS THAT CONTAIN *band*: *Band* is a strip of some kind or a group that makes music.

(More information on synonyms is in the Viva Vocabulary! articles "Synonym Power" and "Just Following Up: Lots of Additions" Part One.)

5. Introduce students to the open compound word *desire paths*. (In an open compound, there is a space between the words that comprise the compound.) It's likely that students are familiar with the concept of *desire paths*, but they may not know the name. A *desire path* (a.k.a. *desire line, game trail, social trail, herd path, cow path, goat track, pig trail, use trail, bootleg trail*) is a trail created by people or animals walking directly as possible from one place to another. These trails, which can be seen in the snow and across patches of grass, do not coincide with the existing sidewalks or walkways.

Share grade-appropriate information from *The New Yorker* article "Tracing (and Erasing) New York's Lines of Desire" as well as examples from the *99invisible.org* piece "Least Resistance: How Desire Paths Can Lead to Better Design." Ask questions to encourage students to reflect on the phenomenon:

- Are there any *desire paths* on the school grounds or in the surrounding area? If so, where are they? Why do you think they were formed?
- Have you ever contributed to the formation of this type of informal path? Tell us about your experience and what motivated you to go that way.
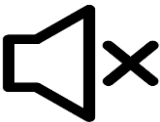
6. Challenge the class to pull together a list of closed compound words (i.e., the words in them are NOT separated by a space or hyphen) that contain at least three smaller words. Here are examples from Englishstackexchange.com: *albeit, heretofore, howsoever, inasmuch, insofar, insomuch, nevertheless, nonetheless, notwithstanding, whatsoever, wherewithal,* and *whosoever.* As one of the commenters noted, most of these terms are used primarily in legal documents. Many of these words are also seen in formal academic writing. Other compounds comprised of three or more words include: *eggshell-thin, merry-go-round, not-for-profit, point-of-sale, singer-songwriter, state-of-the-art.*

7. Bring up the closed compound *groupthink*, which means "a pattern of thought characterized by self-deception, forced manufacture of consent, and conformity to group values and ethics." (merriam-webster.com) Have students consider the dangers of *groupthink* (Some people call it the "dark side of teaming." (Daut, 1989)), situations in which they have observed *groupthink*, and how it differs from authentic consensus. Make sure students are aware that *groupthink* occurs when people just go along with a decision to avoid disagreement.
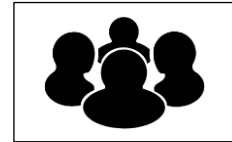
8. Encourage students to notice the many compound words that are formed on the backs of everyday words (Tier 1) such as, back, down, high, low, in, on, off, out, over, and under. Below are examples. More compounds containing back, down, out, and up are in the previous Viva Vocabulary! articles "Compounding Students' Word Knowledge" and "New Words: Here Today, Gone Tomorrow?" Part Two.

Shared Word	Compound Words
back ◄	*backbeat, backbite, backboard, backbone, backbreaking, backchannel, backchat, backdoor, backdraft, backdrop, backfield, backfire, backflip, backflow, background, backhand, backlash, backlike, backlit, backlog, backorder, backpack, backpeddle, backroom, backside, backslide, backspace, backspin, backstage, backstop, backstreet, backstroke, backtalk, backtrace, backtrack, backup, backward, backwoods, backyard, blowback, buyback, callback, cashback, comeback, cutback, drawback, fallback, feedback, flashback, fullback, highback, quarterback, mossback, payback, playback, pullback, pushback, racerback, setback, takeback, throwback, trackback*

|	
down	*beatdown, breakdown, bringdown, cast down, chowdown, clampdown, cooldown, countdown, crackdown, double down, downbeat, down-edit, downfall, downgrade, downhearted, downhill, download, downpayment, downplay, downscale, downsell, downshift, downside, downsize, downside, downspout, downstairs, downstage, downstroke, downswing, downtempo, downtime, downtown, downturn, downtrodden, downvote, downward, downwind, drawdown, hand-me-down, hoedown, knockdown, letdown, lockdown, lowdown, markdown, rubdown, rundown, showdown, shutdown, sitdown, slowdown, smackdown, spend down, splashdown, stand-down, sundown, teardown, touchdown, trickledown, tumbledown* (Invite students to look into whether ALL **"markdowns"** are truly **markdowns**.)
high	*highback, highball, highborn, highbrow, highbush, highchair, highflyer, highjack, highhanded, high horse, highlife, highland, highlife, highlight, high-rise, high road, highspot, hightail, high tide*
in***	*be-in, break-in, buy-in, check-in, drive-in, fill-in, income, in-country, infield, in-fill, inform, in-law, inline, inpatient, input, inseam, inset, inside, install, into, inward, lie-in (British), love-in, run-in, sit-in, shut-in, stand-in, tie-in* (www.glossophilia.org/?p=10952)
low	*lowball, lowborn, lowboy, lowbred, lowbrow, lowdown, lowhanging, lowland, lowlife, lowlights, lowrider, low rise/cut, low road, low tide*
on	*onboard, on call, oncoming, ongoing, online, onlooker, onramp, onrush, onscreen, onset, onshore, onside, onto, onward, ride-on*
off	*bakeoff, blastoff, brushoff, castoff, cookoff, dance-off, handoff, kickoff, knockoff, layoff, offbeat, offboard, off day, offguard, offhand, offkey, offline, offload, off-ramp, offscreen, offset, offspring, off-site, offstage, offtrack, one-off, payoff, playoff, ripoff, runoff, showoff, spin-off, standoff, takeoff, tipoff, tradeoff, turnoff, writeoff* (What do your students know about **carbon offsets**?)
out	*bailout, blackout, blowout, breakout, brownout, bumpout, burnout, buyout, callout, carryout, checkout, closeout, cookout, fallout, freakout, grade-out, grayout, groundout, handout, hangout, knockout, layout, lookout, night out, outboard, outbound, outbreak, outburst, outcast, outclassed, outcome, outcropping, outcry, outdistance, outdo, outdoors, outfit, outflow, outfox, outgrow, outgun, Outland, outlast, outlaw, outlet, outlier, outline, outlook, outman, outmaneuver, outmatched, outmoded, outpace, outparcel, outpatient, outperform, outplan, outpost, output, outrage, outreach, outrun, outskirts, outshine, outsmart, outsource, outspend, outstanding, outstrip, outward, outweigh, outwork, payout, pullout, rollout, sellout, shakeout, shout-out, spendout, stakeout, standout, takeout, timeout, turnout, walkout, washout, wipeout, without, workout* (Ask students to find out how a **brownout** differs from a **blackout**.)

over	*allover, carryover, crossover, do-over, fitover, flashover, flyover, handover, holdover, layover, leftover, makeover, moreover, overachieve, overact, overactive, overage, overall, overarching, overbearing, overblown, overboard, overbooked, overbrowning, overburden, overbuy, overcast, overcharge, overcaught, overcheck, overcoat, overcome, overcommit, overcompensate, overcomplicate, overconfident, overconsume, overcrowd, overdeliver, overdevelop, overdo, overdose, overdress, overdrive, overdue, overeat, overestimate, overexpand, overfarm, overfill, overfish, overflow, overgrown, overhang, overhaul, overhead, overhear, overheat, overhype, overinvolved, overjoyed, overkill, overland, overlay, overlearn, overload, overlook, overlord, overnight, over-parenting, overpass, overpay, overperform, overpopulation, overpower, overpriced, overpromise, overrated, overreact, override, over-ripe, overrule, overrun, oversee, overshadow, overshare, oversight, oversize, oversleep, oversold, overspend, overstate, overstay, overstep, overstock, overstretched, overstudy, overstuff, overtake, overtest, over-the-top, overthink, overthrow, overtime, overtip, overtop, overturn, overuse, overvalue, overview, overweight, overwhelm, overworked, overwrite, overtax, over-tourism, overturn, overuse, Passover, popover, pourover, pullover, spendover, takeover, turnover, voiceover*
under	*downunder, makeunder, popunder, underachieve, underact, underage, underarm, underbanked, underbelly, underbid, underbuyer, undercard, undercharge, underclassmen, underclothes, undercover, undercount, undercurrent, undercut, underdeliver, underdevelop, underdog, underemphasize, underestimate, underexpose, underfoot, underfund, undergird, undergo, undergraduate, underground, underhand, underlay, underlit, underlord, undermaid, undermatch, undermine, underpaid, underpass, underperform, underpin, underpriced, underprivileged, underrated, underreport, underrepresent, underresourced, underrun, undersea, undersecretary, underserved, undershirt, underside, undersize, underslept, understaff, understand, understate, understudy, undertake, undertip, undertone, undertrunks, underutilize, undervalue, underwater, underway, underwear, underweight, underworld* (Have students consider the pros and cons of the recommendation: **"underpromise** and **overdeliver**.")
up	*backup, buildup, cleanup, cutup, cover-up, crackup, dustup, foldup, heads-up, higher-up, hookup, getup, layup, letup, lineup, linkup, lookup, makeup, markup, mash-up, meetup, mix-up, mockup, popup, PowerUp, pickup, pileup, pinup, pullup, pushup, rollup, roundup, sendup, setup, shake-up, sit-up, slipup, stand-up, startup, sunup, tossup, tune-up, walkup, windup, workup, upbeat, upbuilding, upbringing, upchuck, upcoming, upcountry, update, updo, updosing, upend, upflow, upfront, upgrade, upheld, uphill, uphold, upkeep, upland, uplift, uplink, upload, upmarket, upright, uprising, uproar, uproot, upright, upriver, uprush, upscale, upsell, upset, upshot, upskill, upside, upstage, upstanding, upstairs, upstart, upstate, upstream, upstroke, upsurge, upswing, uptalk, uptake, uptempo, uptick, uptight, uptown, upturn, upvote, upward, upwind, warmup, workup*

***Not to be confused with the prefix in- which means "not," "opposite of," or "without" (The prefix might also be spelled im-, il-, or ir- by assimilation of the consonant which follows.) The prefix in- is seen words such as inaccurate, innumerable, and insubordination.

Working in pairs, students should research the origins, meanings and uses of the words they find. To get the class started, you might tell them that *undercurrent* is used both literally and figuratively, while o*verbooking* is a practice of some airlines that has resulted in public relations challenges for the companies. *Outmoded*, which may be a softer way to say old-fashioned, nonetheless has a negative connotation. Another interesting example is this online headline "America is *Over-Managed* and *Under-Lead,"* which includes two contrasting/related terms. (Italics added.)

9. Talk about the contemporary proliferation of compound words containing the word bar, such as *beauty bar*, *blow dry bar* (a.k.a. *blowout bar*), *braid bar, candy bar* (a.k.a. *candy buffet, candy station*), *coffee bar*, *crepe bar*, *dessert bar* (a.k.a. *dessert table*)*, genius bar*, *juice bar*, *nail bar, potato bar, salad bar, shampoo bar,* and *tech bar.* Traditionally, the term bar has been linked with alcohol. Ask students to reflect: What are the various meanings of the word bar as used in these compounds? What are the similarities and differences between these new types of bars and the traditional kind? How might people misinterpret some of these new compound terms?
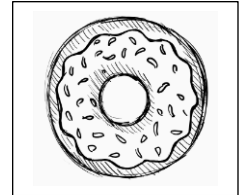
10. Invite students to take note of compound words that seem to be popping up today in lots of places. One "compound du jour" is *mindset*. Here are examples I've seen in the past few years: *abundance mindset, benefit mindset, digital mindset, entrepreneurial mindset, fixed mindset, growth mindset, leader mindset, leadership mindset, lean mindset, money mindset, perfectionist mindset, positive mindset, purpose-driven mindset, risk-averse mindset, scarcity mindset*, and *success mindset.* Ask the class to reflect on what might be contributing to the rise in popularity of this compound. For example, *mindset* seems to be on people's radar since the publication of Carol Dweck's book *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success* (Ballantine, 2007).

Blending   Mashing parts of two words together to form a new word is popular in American English. Below are some of the blended words I've seen or heard online since writing about this word formation process in the Viva Vocabulary! series mentioned at the beginning of this article:

barndominium = barn + condominium   ("A storage building or barn structure that has been repurposed by the addition of living areas to previously open space" (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/))

badjective = bad + adjective   (According to Joel Schwartzberg in Michaelhyatt.com/spell-out-the-organizations-purpose/, some adjectives are so broad and overused that they mean virtually nothing. Examples: awesome, great, interesting, important, good)

Begindergarten = begin + Kindergarten (School year preceding kindergarten that starts when a child is four- to five-years-old) (http://www.begindergarten.com/)

bluetiful = blue + beautiful   (This Crayola blue crayon debuted in 2917. It got its name through crowdsourcing. (news.artnet.com/art-world/crayola-bluetiful-1082369))

cakelustration = cake + illustration   (Akiko White is a master of this culinary artform, which is seen in her children's book illustrations. (akikowhite.com))
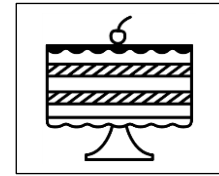
calmfidence = calm + confidence   (Facing difficulties and challenges in a manner that does not suggest anxiety or anger; This may be the secret of resilience. (psychologytoday.com))

cosplay = costume + play   (Activity in which participants dress up as and take on the persona of a specific character from a comic book, video game, or movie. Cosplay is a popular hobby in Japan and the U.S. and is used in schools for role playing historical figures and literary characters. (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cosplay))

diplobrat = diplomat + brat   (Foreign service member's child who flaunts a wild lifestyle in the host country and has no fear of repercussions because of diplomatic immunity (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Foreign_Service_brat))

flawsome = flawed + awesome   (According to [Trendwatching.com,](Trendwatching.com) "Consumers don't expect brands to be flawless. In fact, consumers will embrace brands that are *flawsome*: brands that are still brilliant despite having flaws; even being flawed (and being open about it) can be awesome. Brands that show empathy, generosity, humility, flexibility, maturity, humor, and (dare we say it) character and humanity.")

floordrobe = floor + wardrobe   ("An untidy pile of clothes that have been left on the floor" (dictionary.cambridge.org))

frow = front + row   (Line of seats that is closest to the catwalk at a fashion show)

funemployment = fun + unemployment   (Enjoying the free time of being jobless) (Thanks, Colin!)

fwaiver = fee + waiver   (Reciprocation for a favor or preferential treatment to counter a perceived or real disparity that is viewed as disadvantageous) (Thanks, JK!)

Galentine = girl + Valentine   (Coined by Leslie Knope, Amy Poehler's character on the TV show *Parks and Recreation* You can find ideas online for a Galentine's Get-Together, to wit those at apartmenttherapy.com.)

globish = global + English   ("Simplified version of Anglo-American English used as a worldwide lingua franca–a common language between speakers who native languages are different." (www.news.com.au))

grocerant = grocery + restaurant   (Supermarket that sells ready-to-eat meals to be consumed on site or reheated at home)

laze = lava + haze   (This is "a mix of hydrochloric acid fumes, steam, and fine volcanic glass specks created when erupting lava . . . reacts with sea water. . . . [P]otential hazards include lung damage as well as eye and skin irritation." (www.reuters.com)) (Thanks, Dr. R!)

lemoga = lemur + yoga   (Doing yoga with lemurs (thesun.co.uk))

liger = lion + tiger   (Offspring of a male lion and a female tiger (en.wikipedia.com); During the summer of 2017, Arby's sold an orange-and-brown-striped beverage called a Liger Shake (usatoday.com).)

mansplaining = man + explaining   (Male relaying facts about something in a condescending or patronizing manner, often to a woman or lower-level employee   Many people consider this behavior to be sexist, while others contend that the term itself is sexist. (en.wikipedia.com) Julia Baird offers her perspective and relevant research in *The New York Times* opinion piece ["How to Explain Mansplaining"](#))

mantique = man + antique   (Antique or collectible that appeals primarily to guys Examples: old fishing equipment, motorbikes, and tools of all types)

Marchuary = March + January/February   (March in which there is cold weather typical of the first two months of the year or January or February in which the weather is more like that of March)

mathlete = mathematics + athlete   (Person who excels at mathematics and possibly participates in math competitions)

mechatronics = mechanical engineering + electronics   (Multidisciplinary field of science; Mechatronics technicians build automated systems for industry.)

nappuccino = nap + cappuccino   (Coffee nap - drinking caffeine before snoozing for a bit so you are more invigorated when you wake up Dan Pink recommends this technique in his book *[When: The Scientific Secrets of Perfect Timing](#)*.)

nupkin = prenuptial agreement + napkin   (For various reasons, some people choose to write their own legally binding agreements on any available scrap of paper.)

permagrin = permanent + grin   (A smile that lasts a long time because the person is very happy or in front of a camera Permagrins are a wedding staple. See theskimm.com/archive/2018-05-17)

permalescent = permanent + adolescent   (Adult who is, and appears likely to remain, emotionally or intellectually immature (wordspy.com))

phubbing = phone + snubbing   (Ignoring your companion/s in favor of your phone More on this phenomenon is in *The New York Times* article ["The Phones We Love Too Much."](#) The origin and history of the word is at wikipedia.org/wiki/Phubbing.)

plarn = plastic + yarn   (Yarn made from plastic shopping bags (onlineslangdictionary.com) Plarn is used to make totes, rugs, and other upcycled items.)

plogging = "plocka upp" (which means "pick up" in Swedish) + jogging   (Picking up trash while jogging (www.nbcnews.com))

Pomsky = Pomeranian + Siberian Husky   (Mixed breed dog that has long fur and is medium sized   There are MANY types of hybrid dogs today.) (Thanks, Michael!)

procrastibaking = procrastination + baking   ("The practice of baking something completely unnecessary, with the intention of avoiding 'real' work" This behavior is discussed in *The New

Times piece ["Why Work When You Can Procrastibake?"](#) A similar work-avoidance technique is *procrasticleaning*.)

ringxiety = ring + anxiety   (Thinking your phone is vibrating when it's not. This stress condition can interfere with sleep and productivity.) (Thanks, Carrie and Danielle!)

sharrow = shared (lane) + arrow   (Road marking which consists of a bike and two chevrons and is used to indicate a bike lane ([blog.sfgate.com](#)))

skurfing = ski + surfing   (This hybrid sport has two forms: water *skurfing* and street *skurfing*. The former uses a surfboard, while the latter uses either a skateboard or freeline skates. ([wikipedia.com](#)))

squoval = square + oval   ("Nail shape that has rounded edges on a squarish nail" ([nailsmag.com](#)))

techspert = technology + expert   (Individual who knows a lot about a particular device or software and shares this knowledge with others. Example sentence: The high school teacher-librarian pointed out that student *techsperts* often teach their peers and teachers in makerspaces.)

textpectation = text + expectation   (Waiting for someone to text you back)

tradigital = traditional + digital   (Veteran teacher who integrates technology to support instruction and help students develop agency for their learning.)

TV-verse = TV + universe   (The field of television)

vog = volcanic + fog   (This is a form of air pollution created by gasses and particles from an erupting volcano. ([konaweb.com/vog/](#))) (Thanks, Evan!)

voluntourism = volunteering + tourism   (Doing meaningful volunteer work while also being a tourist – Downsides of this practice are discussed in *The New York Times* article ["The Voluntourist's Dilemma."](#))

wonderliscious = wonderful + delicious   (Wonderfully delicious – This word is used to describe a thing or person that is beyond great. There is also a [typeface](#) with this name.

zoodles = zucchini + noodles ("Thin strips of zucchini, which are used as an alternative to pasta" ([macmillan.com](#)) The strips are made by grating or spiralizing the zucchini.)(Thanks, Michael!)
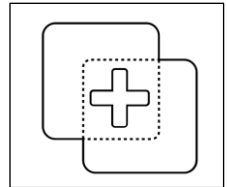
More Teaching Ideas:

1. Share some contemporary blended words (See the list above.) with the class and ask students to investigate a word that intrigues them. Have students identify situations where the word might be useful. Caution against using real names or identifying information which might embarrass someone.

2. Invite students to look into "hybrid foods," such as *Cronuts™* (croissant + donut) and *turducken* (turkey + duck + chicken), which were mentioned in the previous Viva Vocabulary! articles that address word blending [("New Words: Here Today, Gone Tomorrow?" Part Two](#) and ["Just Following Up: Lots of Additions" Part Two](#)). More examples:

brookie (brownie + cookie)
bronut (bacon + Cronut)
duffin (donut + muffin)
flagel (flatbread + bagel)
grapple (grape + apple)
tacho (tater tot + nacho)
wonut (waffle + donut)
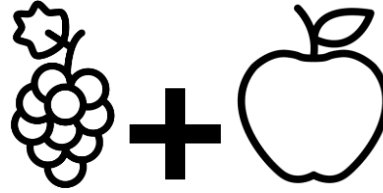
These words can be found at Mnn.com or in the June 2016 *PineStraw* article "Step Down with Dignity" by Deborah Salomon. Salomon maintains that these food mashups should "be put out to pasture." Ask students: Do you agree or disagree? What are your reasons? What is the appeal of hybrid foods? Are any of these hybrids likely to become staples in the American diet? Please explain.

3. Bring students' attention to the piece "24 Brilliant New Words That Must Be Added To A Dictionary." The post presents coined portmanteau words that are found on Urbandictionary.com, a satirical crowdsourced dictionary. The images that accompany the post are useful for understanding and remembering the new terms.

    Two of my favorites are *carcolepsy* (*n*. a condition where the passenger falls asleep as soon as the car starts running) and *internest* (*n.* the cocoon of blankets and pillows you gather around yourself while spending hours on the internet). Ask students to select their favorites and suggest situations in which the blended word might be useful. (Please note that some of the words and photos are not suitable for children or teens.)
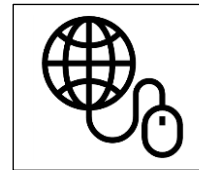
4. Make the "Crossword with Portmanteau Words" from the June 2016 issue of the *Reader's Digest* available to older learners. As the puzzle states, "a portmanteau is a large traveling bag that opens into two parts. A portmanteau word combines two (or more) familiar words into a delicious new creation like *brunch*, *funtabulous*, and *guesstimate*." Like the creator of the puzzle, I "hope you [and your students] find this crossword a nice bit of *edutainment*." (pp. 190-181) (Italics added.)

5. Let the class know that blended words may pose a challenge for machine translators. In "Translator Challenge: Blended Words," Dan Blottenberger states that humans can more easily translate new word combinations such as, *Brexit* (The United Kingdom's withdrawal from the European Union), *frenemy*, and *freemium*.

    Ask class members who are bilingual or multilingual to use various online translators (e.g., Bing Translator, Google Translate, PROMT) to translate several new blended English words to the other language(s) they know. Then have students analyze the results by addressing questions such as the following:

    - Are the free translations accurate?
      Are there differences among the free translators?

FREE

- What might contribute to differences between the translation capabilities of humans and computers? (Share Conrrado Saldivar's observation: "A good translator is able to convey the overall meaning of the expression without losing the author's intent, while also enticing readers to immerse themselves within the context of the book's unknown and foreign world.")

- How are the capabilities of machine translators being improved? Will they better accommodate neologisms (new words, including those formed by blending)? (Students might be interested in reading "Google Says Its New AI-Powered Translation Tool Scores Nearly Identical to Human Translators.")

*As with all Viva Vocabulary! articles, inclusion of any term is not an endorsement of its use, its creator (if known), or the action, person, place, or thing it describes.

Image Credits:
- Tree created by Humberto Cesar Pornaro from thenounproject.com/search/?q=tree&i=392970
- Hearts created by Miguel Carraca from thenounproject.com/search/?q=hearts&i=768667
- Shakespeare created by Daniel Turner from thenounproject.com/search/?q=shakespeare&i=50024
- Stones created by Ralf Schmitzer from thenounproject.com/search/?q=stone&i=1108038
- Earbuds created by Royyan Razka from thenounproject.com/search/?q=earbud&i=1069881
- World Map created by Ted Grajeda from thenounproject.com/search/?q=world%20map&i=22641
- Okra created by sai aditya from thenounproject.com/search/?q=okra&i=965242
- Great Britain created by Becky Warren from thenounproject.com/search/?q=Great%20Britain&i=24426
- Wind Power created by Jacqueline Fernandes from thenounproject.com/search/?q=wind+turbine&i=639186
- Dragonfly created by Matt Hawdon from thenounproject.com/search/?q=dragonfly&i=198534
- Headband created by Corie Johnson from thenounproject.com/search/?q=headband&i=32488
- Assembly created by Robert Bjurshagen from thenounproject.com/search/?q=groupthink&i=564913
- Volume created by Bhima from thenounproject.com/search/?q=off&i=1268892
- Box Up created by artworkbean from thenounproject.com/search/?q=this%20side%20up&i=682272
- Donut created by Denis Sazhin from thenounproject.com/search/?q=donut&i=781313
- Cake created by Florent from thenounproject.com/search/?q=cake&i=1084534
- Negotiations created by Gregor Črešnar from thenounproject.com/search/?q=talk&i=546966
- Bride created by Emily Keller from thenounproject.com/search/?q=bride&i=6822
- Combine image created by parjisun from thenounproject.com/search/?q=blend&i=221555
- Grapes created by Fernando Affonso from thenounproject.com/search/?q=grape&i=301543
- Apple created by Creative Stall from thenounproject.com/search/?q=apple&i=105065
- Internet created by Dinosoft Labs from thenounproject.com/search/?q=internet&i=808141

All opinions expressed in this article are solely those of the author and do not reflect any group or organization with which she is or has been affiliated.