

Noun + noun (a **bus driver** / a **headache**)

A You can use two nouns together (*noun + noun*) to mean *one* thing/person/idea etc. :
a **bus driver** **income tax** the **city centre** an **apple tree**

The first noun is like an adjective. It tells us what kind of thing/person/idea etc. :

a **bus driver** = the driver of a bus
income tax = tax that you pay on your income
 the **city centre** = the centre of the city
 an **apple tree** = a tree that has apples
 a **Paris hotel** = a hotel in Paris
 my **life story** = the story of my life

So you can say:

a **television** camera a **television** programme a **television** studio a **television** producer
 (things or people to do with television)
 language **problems** marriage **problems** health **problems** work **problems**
 (different kinds of problems)

Sometimes the first word ends in **-ing**:

a **frying** pan (= a pan for frying)
 a **washing** machine
 a **swimming** pool

B Sometimes there are more than two nouns together:

- ☐ I waited at the **hotel reception desk**.
- ☐ We watched the **World Swimming Championships** on TV.
- ☐ If you want to play table tennis (= a game), you need a **table tennis table** (= a table).

C When two nouns are together like this, sometimes we write them as one word and sometimes as two separate words. For example:

a **headache** **toothpaste** a **weekend** a **car park** a **road sign**

There are no clear rules for this. If you are not sure, write two words.

D Note the difference between:

a **coffee cup** (maybe empty) and a **cup of coffee** (= a cup with coffee in it)
 a **shopping bag** (maybe empty) and a **bag of shopping** (= a bag full of shopping)

E When we use *noun + noun*, the first noun is like an *adjective*. It is normally singular, but the meaning is often plural.

For example: a **car park** is a place to park **cars**, an **apple tree** is a tree that has **apples**.

In the same way we say:

a **three-hour** journey (= a journey that takes three **hours**)
 a **ten-pound** note (= a note with the value of ten **pounds**)
 a **four-week** course
 a **six-mile** walk
 two **14-year-old** girls

Compare:

☐ It was a **four-week** course. (*not* a four weeks course)
 but The course lasted four **weeks**.

Exercises

80.1 What do we call these things and people?

- 1 Someone who drives a bus is a bus driver
- 2 Problems concerning health are health problems
- 3 A ticket to travel by train is a
- 4 A machine you use to get a ticket is a
- 5 The staff at a hotel are the
- 6 The results of your exams are your
- 7 A horse that runs in races is a
- 8 A race for horses is a
- 9 Shoes for running are
- 10 A shop that sells shoes is a
- 11 The window of a shop is a
- 12 A person who cleans windows is a
- 13 A scandal involving a construction company is
- 14 Workers at a car factory are
- 15 A scheme for the improvement of a road is a
- 16 A department store in New York is a

80.2 Answer the questions using two of the following words each time:

accident	belt	birthday	card	credit	driver
forecast	machine	number	party	ring	road
room	seat	truck	washing	weather	wedding

- 1 This could be caused by bad driving. a road accident
- 2 You should wear this when you're driving. a
- 3 You can use this to pay for things. a
- 4 This will tell you if it's going to rain or not. the
- 5 This is useful if you have a lot of dirty clothes. a
- 6 This is something you might wear if you're married. a
- 7 If you're staying at a hotel, you need to remember this. your
- 8 This is a way to celebrate getting older. a
- 9 This person transports things by road. a

80.3 Put the words in the right order.

- 1 I spilt coffee on the living room carpet. (room / carpet / living)
- 2 Jack likes sport. He plays for his (team / school / football)
- 3 Anna works for a (company / production / film)
- 4 Many people invest in a (life / policy / insurance)
- 5 You can get a map at the (information / office / tourist)

80.4 Which is correct?

- 1 It's quite a big book. There are more than 500 page / 500 pages. (500 pages is correct)
- 2 It's only a two-hour / two hours flight from London to Madrid.
- 3 It took only two hour / two hours to fly to Madrid.
- 4 I don't have any change. I only have a twenty-pound / twenty pounds note.
- 5 I looked down and there were two ten-pound / ten pounds notes on the ground.
- 6 At work in the morning we usually have a 15-minute / 15 minutes break for coffee.
- 7 There are 60-minute / 60 minutes in an hour.
- 8 My office is on the tenth floor of a twelve-storey / twelve storeys building.
- 9 I work five-day / five days a week. Saturday and Sunday are free.
- 10 Five-star / Five stars hotels are the most expensive.
- 11 Sam's daughter is six-year-old / six years old.
- 12 Sam has a six-year-old / six-years-old daughter.