A word blend is formed by combining two separate words with different meanings to form a new one. These words are often created to describe a new invention or phenomenon that combines the definitions or traits of two existing things.

Word Blends and Their Parts

Word blends are also known as [*portmanteau*](https://www.thoughtco.com/portmanteau-word-1691644)(pronunciation port-MAN-toe), a French word meaning "trunk" or "suitcase." Author Lewis Carroll is credited with coining this term in "Through the Looking-Glass," published in 1871. In that book, Humpty Dumpty tells Alice about making up new words from parts of existing ones:

"You see it's like a portmanteau—there are two meanings packed up into one word."

There are different ways of creating word blends. One way is to combine portions of two other words to make a new one. These word fragments are called [morphemes](https://www.thoughtco.com/what-is-a-morpheme-1691406), the smallest units of meaning in a language. The word "camcorder," for example," combines parts of "camera" and "recorder." Word blends can also be created by joining a full word with a portion of another word (called a [splinter](https://www.thoughtco.com/splinter-definition-1692126)). For example, the word "motorcade" combines "motor" plus a portion of "cavalcade."

Word blends can also be formed by overlapping or combining phonemes, which are parts of two words that sound alike. One example of an overlapping word blend is "Spanglish," which is an informal mix of spoken English and Spanish. Blends can also be formed through the omission of phonemes. Geographers sometimes refer to "Eurasia," the landmass that combines Europe and Asia. This blend is formed by taking the first syllable of "Europe" and adding it to the word "Asia."

The Blend Trend

English is a dynamic language that is constantly evolving. Many of the words in the English language are derived from ancient Latin and Greek or from other European languages such as German or French. But starting in the 20th century, blended words began to emerge to describe new technologies or cultural phenomena. For instance, as dining out became more popular, many restaurants began serving a new weekend meal in the late morning. It was too late for breakfast and too early for lunch, so someone decided to make a new word that described a meal that was a little bit of both. Thus, "[brunch](https://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/the-birth-of-brunch-where-did-this-meal-come-from-anyway-164187758/)" was born.

As new inventions changed the way people lived and worked, the practice of combining parts of words to make new ones became popular. In the 1920s, as traveling by car became more common, a new kind of hotel that catered to drivers emerged. These "motor hotels" quickly proliferated and became known as "motels." In 1994, when a rail tunnel beneath the English Channel opened, connecting France and Great Britain, it quickly became known as the "Chunnel," a word blend of "Channel" and "tunnel."

New word blends are being created all the time as cultural and technological trends emerge. In 2018, [Merriam-Webster](https://www.merriam-webster.com/words-at-play/mansplaining-definition-history) added the word "mansplaining" to their dictionary. This blended word, which combines "man" and "explaining," was coined to describe the habit that some men have of explaining things in a condescending manner.

Examples

Here are some examples of word blends and their roots:

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| **Blended word** | **Root word 1** | **Root word 2** |
| agitprop | agitation | propaganda |
| bash | bat | mash |
| biopic | biography | picture |
| Breathalyzer | breath | analyzer |
| clash | clap | crash |
| docudrama | documentary | drama |
| electrocute | electricity | execute |
| [emoticon](https://www.thoughtco.com/emoticons-and-emoji-1991412) | emotion | icon |
| fanzine | fan | magazine |
| frenemy | friend | enemy |
| [Globish](https://www.thoughtco.com/globish-english-language-1690818) | global | English |
| infotainment | information | entertainment |
| moped | motor | pedal |
| pulsar | pulse | quasar |
| sitcom | situation | comedy |
| sportscast | sports | broadcast |
| staycation | stay | vacation |
| telegenic | television | photogenic |
| workaholic | work | alcoholic |