

ACRONYMS: words composed of the initials of several words. For example, S.O.U. is an acronym for Southern Oregon University.

ANTONYMS: words that have opposite meanings. For example, pass/fail, hungry/stuffed, up/down.

AUTOANTONYM: a single word that has two opposite meanings. For example, “cleave” can mean “to split apart,” or “to cling together.” In another example, “Robert is bad” can mean Robert is not good, or “Robert is bad” can mean Robert is very good.

EPONYM: a word taken from a proper name. For example, in the sentence “I like 100-watt light bulbs,” watt is an eponym derived from the name of James Watt, the Scottish engineer who invented the steam engine.

HETERONYMS: words that are pronounced differently, and have different meanings, but are spelled the same. For example, “I like to fish for bass” compared to “I like to play the bass guitar.”

HOMONYMS: words that are pronounced the same, but have different meanings. Homonyms may or may not be spelled the same. For example, tale and tail are homonyms. The second word in “baseball bat” and vampire bat” are also homonyms.

HYPONYMS: words that share a semantic property. For example, the words purple, orange, and fuchsia all share the semantic property of “color,” thus they are hyponyms.

METONYMS: a word or phrase that can substitute for another word, often in an abstract way. For example, “White House” and “feds” are metonyms in the sentence “I wish the White House would stop raising my taxes; it’s like the feds are out to get me.”

RETRONYM: a term coined as a modification of a word originally used alone, to distinguish it from a later contrastive development. For example, at one time all guitars were simply guitars, then somebody invented the electric guitar; this made the word guitar ambiguous, so acoustic guitar was a retronym invented to describe the older form.

SYNONYMS: words that have approximately the same meaning. For example, teacher/professor, cat/feline, rowdy/unruly.