

English Grammar: Denominal Verbs

A “denominal” verb is a verb that is derived from a noun. Here are some examples:

- The little old lady **turtled** along the road. (from the noun “turtle”)
- I always **bike** to work. (from the noun “bike”)
- Mummy - can you please **butter** my bread for me? (from the noun “butter”)

A consequence of this is that many English words are both a noun and a verb. These verbs are always regular. For example:

- I like to read when it **rains**. (from the noun “rain”)
- I always have difficulty **lacing** my shoes. (from the noun “lace”)
- He **elbowed** his way into the crowd. (from the noun “elbow”)
- I **leveled** the path with grit. (from the noun/adjective “level”)
- The Germans **bombed** London many times during the war. (from the noun “bomb”)
- I need to **book** a flight to Las Vegas. (from the noun “book”)
- Let me **key** that for you. (from the noun “key”)

Thanks to the internet and modern technology, we now have many more denominal verbs, such as “to email”, “to text”, “to friend”, “to blog”, “to google” and “to brick”. For example:

- Please **email** the report to me when it is finished.
- My girlfriend **texts** me 100 times a day!
- Can you please **friend** me, because I’m trying to reach a target of 1000 friends!
- I’ve been **blogging** all day – I’m exhausted!
- What does this word mean? Let me **google** it.
- I accidentally **bricked** my phone last week.

Denominal verbs are fascinating because they act as vivid linguistic shortcuts. By converting a noun to a verb, we can pass information in fewer words and we enrich the language. It works well because if you know the noun, you can quickly understand the “verb”. For example:

- I **bike** to work.
- Please **fund** me when I go to New York.
- We **elbowed** our way out of the crowd.

Some denominal verbs are interesting and innovative. One amazing feature of language innovation is our ability to invent and understand words that we’ve never heard before. Many denominal verbs are created “on the fly” and can be understood immediately. For example:

“Will you **cigarette** me?” (Mae West, 1961)

Source: <https://daily.jstor.org/in-which-we-science-why-nouns-become-verbs-because-language/>

Body nouns as verbs or phrasal verbs

Verb

to knee = dar uma joelhada
to elbow = dar uma cotovelada
to butt in = interromper
to butt out = sair fora
to hand = dar
to hand in = entregar
to hand out = distribuir
to head = ir na direção de
to head back = voltar
to head in = entrar
to head out = sair
to leg it = sair correndo
to stomach = aguentar

Example

He **kneed** another player during the game.
He **elbowed** another player during the game.
Can I **butt in**? I have a question.
Why don't you **butt out**?
Can you please **hand** me a pen?
Please **hand in** your tests to the teacher.
The teacher **handed out** the tests to the students.
I'm **heading** to town, now. Bye!
It's late – I'll **head back** soon.
It's going to rain, let's **head in**.
It's time for me to **head out**. I'm going to meet a client.
Quick – **leg it!** Here come the police!
I can't **stomach** this film any more – let's go home.

Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cZPY-dgGMl>

