

# Keep your English up to date

## Alcopops

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One of the big questions always with a language is: “how do new words come into being?”. Well, you can borrow them from other languages of course; a lot of English words are like that. But one of the lesser-known ways of making new words is to form a blend – and a blend is when you run two words together to make a third word. And people have done it since the beginning of English actually. To take a recent example: alcopops – carbonated fruit flavoured drinks containing alcohol – a very controversial thing this was when they first came in a few years ago, because it was obviously being aimed at children, and people were very concerned that children would now have some alcohol introduced into them that they weren’t expecting.

But it’s the word I want to talk about today – a very interesting word indeed! Alco-pops. Alco is obviously the first part of the word, shortened version of “alcohol”. And pops is the second part of the word. Pop you might not know so much about. It has quite a long-standing usage. It’s basically the word for lemonade once upon a time. Pop bottles – because of the sound that’s made when a cork is drawn out of an effervescing drink – that sort of sound! – and pops suddenly became a very quick sound symbolic way of expressing that kind of notion; so the two words have come together: alcohol and pop ...and becomes alco-pops.

There are lots of words like this in English. Brunch is another one – for a mixture of breakfast and lunch, and you can actually have quite a fun game making these blends up yourself. For instance, if you decide that you want to invent a cross between a helicopter and a bicycle shall we say? Well, make a blend about it. You could call it a “helicycle” for instance, or maybe a “bicopter”.



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