

# Noises things make

## Game

We frequently find it difficult to describe a sound precisely. Notice how often English speakers say: *There was a sort of bang* or *I heard a kind of crack*. However, there is clearly a difference between a **thud** and a **squeak**, a **rattle** and a **roar**. One thing which will also help you is that most of the words of this kind can act as both a noun and a verb.

Try, in each section of ten items below, to find a sound on the right that can be caused by each item in the left-hand column. (Most of these words can be used as nouns and verbs, which is something!)

- 1 sack of potatoes falling from a great height
- 2 bacon frying in the pan
- 3 a loose floorboard or door that needs oiling
- 4 leaves in the breeze
- 5 a clock
- 6 keys in a pocket
- 7 a bomb
- 8 wind through the trees
- 9 a well-tuned Rolls Royce engine
- 10 tyres when one brakes suddenly

**creak**  
**rustle**  
**bang**  
**screech**  
**thud**  
**tick**  
**sizzle**  
**purr**  
**jingle**  
**whistle**

- 11 kettle boiling
- 12 wine glasses or little bells
- 13 knives being scraped together
- 14 a sugar lump dropped into the tea
- 15 something heavy dropping into the sea
- 16 something's loose under the car bonnet
- 17 the quiet, background sound of a fridge
- 18 the old jailer's keys
- 19 champagne corks coming out
- 20 a light being switched on

**plop**  
**grate**  
**hum**  
**splash**  
**pop**  
**jangle**  
**click**  
**tinkle**  
**rattle**  
**hiss**

- 21 the high-pitched sound of a factory machine
- 22 rain on the roof
- 23 wood burning on the fire
- 24 a tap that can't be turned right off
- 25 a whip or a bone breaking
- 26 curtains in a draught
- 27 little pigs or again tyres after sudden braking
- 28 lions or a powerful engine
- 29 mice or the chair leg moving on the floor
- 30 a car going into a wall

**crackle**  
**squeak**  
**swish**  
**squeal**  
**crash**  
**whine**  
**roar**  
**crack**  
**drip**  
**patter**

## Practice

- 1 List other things or events which might cause each of the noises and sounds listed above.
- 2 Explain what causes noise pollution in our society and suggest some remedies if you can.

# Sounds people make

## Reading

In the following passages, you will meet about fifty of the noises we humans make, many of them without producing words. Read the passages and then do the exercises that follow.

- 1 Read the passage and decide whose thoughts are being described.

I'm awake, lying here **moaning**, and nothing's happening at all. Oh well, better start **crying** properly. Still no reaction. Right, they've asked for it. Here we go with a real **scream**. Ah, now I hear something next door. Must go on **sobbing**, so they realise it's serious. Here she comes, **muttering** to herself. Why is it always her? Never him? Ah, a bottle. Excuse me, but it's difficult to **suck** a bottle without making **sucking** noises, you know. Oh no, I've got **hiccups** again. Sometimes I seem to spend half my day **hiccupping**. Over the shoulder I go again. Oh dear, a **burp**. Pardon. Back to bed. Ah, I like it when she **hums** that song to me. Oh dear, we're both **yawning**. Time to sleep again. I can hear him **snoring** next door. 'Not a **murmur** now', she says to me, the same as always. There's no need to **sigh** like that, you know. You were a baby once.

- 2 It's been a hard day's night, as they used to say. My boss made my life hell today. Read the passage and find out what my job is.

I've never known a boss like him; you hardly ever hear him talking normally. He starts as soon as he comes into the office in the morning. If I'm two minutes late, he starts **shouting** at me. And you should hear him on the phone, **yelling** at some poor junior. When he asks you to do something, he just **barks** – like a fierce dog. And when he finds a mistake in your work, he **roars** like a lion. When someone asks him a question, he nearly always just **grunts**, like that. He'll sit for hours **grumbling** about the weather, the business, his colleagues, the market. And he will **mutter**! Half the time you can't understand a word he's saying. The worst thing is his dictation. He just **mumbles** all the way through the letter; I have to guess every other word. Then he **bites my head off** when I've written something he didn't want. I just start **stammering** and **stuttering**, and get out of the room as soon as possible.

- 3 The third group of noises come from a theatre. Read the text and find out what is happening on stage.

You can hear the audience **whispering** excitedly. Some of them are **clearing their throats**. Could they be nervous? Something's happening. The audience are **clapping**; polite **applause** at the moment. Two of the audience are being invited onto the stage. The rest of them are **cheering** and **calling out** things. Now something is happening on stage; you could hear a pin drop. The two members of the audience are doing exactly what they are told and the chairs they are sitting on are beginning to rise into the air. The audience are **gasping**. Oh dear, what's happened? They've suddenly fallen to the ground and look most upset. The audience are **booing** loudly. It hasn't worked. Now they're **whistling**. The whistling has changed to **hissing**, but there's nobody on stage except the two members of the audience. Now they're **chanting** that they want their money back. The manager's coming out on stage. Listen to them **groaning**.



- 4 The fourth group of sounds comes from when I was ill last week. I really wasn't well at all. Find out what was wrong with me.

It started on Monday. I really wasn't well at all. I was **sniffing** all day. On Tuesday I hardly stopped **blowing my nose** and **sneezing**. By Wednesday I had a pretty bad **cough**. I tried **gargling** with salt water but it didn't seem to do much good. If I had to go upstairs, I'd reach the top stair **panting** like a thirsty dog, and I'd still be **wheezing** five or ten minutes later. By Friday I'd **lost my voice** almost completely. I was **croaking** like a frog all day at the office.

- 5 The fifth group of sound-words, shows how different people reacted to the same joke.

Lady Thackeray-Smythe **laughed** politely. Her husband was **chuckling** minutes afterwards. A class of schoolgirls **giggled**. A class of schoolboys **sniggered**. An American TV audience **shrieked** and **howled with laughter**. Lady Thackeray-Smythe's maid **tittered**. Billy Bloggs **laughed like a drain**.

## Practice

- 1 To see how many of these words you have remembered, arrange the verbs in each of the columns below according to how loud they normally are: the loudest number 1, the softest number 6. Then write a sentence of your own for each verb to show what it means, or discuss your lists with a partner.

mutter  
sigh  
scream  
yell  
whistle  
gasp

hum  
groan  
boo  
whisper  
roar  
mumble

hiss  
pant  
howl  
chuckle  
sob  
sniff

- 2 What noises made by other people annoy you most, and in what situations? If you think of other noises which have not been mentioned in this unit, try to find the words for them in a dictionary and write them in the space provided for your notes at the end of the unit. For example, I hate the sound of people making the bones in their fingers **click** and people **singing out of tune**.

- 3 List the sounds you would expect to hear in the situations below.

- 1 in a football stadium on a Saturday afternoon
- 2 on a crowded beach in summer
- 3 in the maternity ward of a hospital during the evening
- 4 at the scene of a major disaster

- 4 Write or act out your commentary for Radio South as you report on the tour of your town by members of the British royal family.

- 5 Write the middle paragraph of an article for the Daily Sensation. Describe the scene outside the tower block in which a terrorist bomb has just gone off.

- Add any other words describing the noises we make.

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## 7.2. Quelques champs sémantiques particulièrement riches en anglais

### 7.2.1. Bruits

Le champ sémantique des bruits est beaucoup plus riche en anglais qu'en français. Il est donc souvent nécessaire d'utiliser un mot plus précis en anglais.

● Un mot aussi vague que le mot "bruit" peut certes se traduire par **noise** ou **sound**, le mot **sound** étant plus neutre que le mot **noise** qui évoque un bruit gênant ou désagréable :

- *Her watch had stopped but she knew from the sounds outside that it must be late.*
- *There's too much noise in here; let's go and find a quiet place to talk.*

mais il est souvent préférable d'utiliser un mot spécialisé :

- le bruit d'une chaise que l'on remue     *the scraping of a chair*
- le bruit de bouchons qui sautent     *the popping of corks*
- Il plongeait dans un grand bruit d'eau.     *He dived with a loud splash.*

● Il faudra souvent choisir entre plusieurs mots anglais pour traduire le français.

#### BATTRE

- Le volet battait contre le mur.     *The shutter was rattling against the wall.*
- Il battait des mains.     *He clapped his hands.*
- Il croyait entendre son cœur battre à grands coups.     *He thought he could hear his heart thumping.*
- La porte du hangar battait dans le vent.     *The barn door was banging in the wind.*
- Il battait du pied pour se réchauffer.     *He stamped his feet to get warmer.*
- La voile battait dans le vent.     *The sail flapped in the wind.*
- Le cheval battait l'air de sa queue.     *The horse swished its tail.*

#### SIFFLER

- Les spectateurs ont sifflé à la fin de la pièce.     *The audience booed at the end of the play.*
- Il regardait par la fenêtre en sifflant un air triste.     *He was staring out of the window, whistling a sad tune.*
- J'entendis la balle passer en sifflant.     *I heard the ball whizzing past.*
- Les serpents sifflent.     *Snakes hiss.*
- C'est triste de le voir respirer si difficilement, en sifflant.     *It is sad to see him wheezing so.*



**1.** On utilise très souvent des gérondifs en anglais pour décrire des bruits, surtout lorsque ceux-ci sont répétés. Comparez :

- "Didn't you hear anything during the night? No shots? No shouting or screaming?" (M. Spark) (= no shouts or screams)
- I heard a shot and then a scream.

Ceci ne s'applique pas aux mots finissant en "-ter" ("chatter", "clatter"...), qui impliquent déjà une répétition.

Complétez les phrases qui suivent en utilisant des gérondifs.

1. *She lay for only a few minutes listening to the ... of her watch.* (P.D. James)
2. *Cordelia was awakened early next morning by the discordant ... of the birds.* (Ibid.)
3. *There was little sound except the ... of crickets in the grass and from time to time the nearby ... of a railway level-crossing bell.* (Ibid.)
4. *The silence was broken only by the furtive ... of some small night prowler in the grass.* (Ibid.)
5. *It was raining. (...) The house hummed like a machine with the steady sound of ...* (I. Murdoch)
6. *There was a faint ... and ... of the wavelets touching the foot of the little cliff.* (Ibid.)
7. *These sounds reminded me of the faint ... of my bead curtain at Shruff End.* (Ibid.)
8. *The hot stuffy weather continued, with a few distant ... of thunder now.* (Ibid.)
9. *Then I heard screaming, not near by, perhaps two hundred yards away, but very clear in the utter silence, and very loud, and accompanied by another sound, also loud, a ... or an unsteady ..., (...) like a high wind, through trees.* (K. Amis)
10. *Nothing was to be heard except the ... of morse as the signalmen sent out their calls for help.* (E. Waugh)
11. *"I can hear the ... at the gate," she says in a loud voice – "Don't you hear her sounding the horn?"*
12. *"Here they come," says Hadrian, at the window, and presently a car bumps up the drive. Presently again, a ... at the back door.*  
"Let them in," says Lister. (M. Spark)

**2.** Traduisez les phrases suivantes.

1. Son rire franc, sonore, se mêla au grésillement de la viande dans la poêle.  
(F. Mallet-Joris)
2. Les pneus de la voiture crissèrent sur l'asphalte de cette paisible rue de banlieue. (B. Pronzini)
3. Il percevait des froissements d'étoffe, entendait le lit craquer. (Y. Queffélec)
4. Des rafales faisaient vibrer un panneau de bois rectangulaire dressé sur deux poteaux. (M. Tournier)
5. Un cochon grognait dans son têt. Au bruit des pas sur la terre gelée, un chien se mit à aboyer avec fureur. (H. Alain-Fournier)
6. Le frou-frou de chaque obus s'achevait en une grosse détonation sourde, très loin derrière la barrière sombre de la forêt. (H. Thomas)
7. Les quatre fusils-mitrailleurs de la compagnie mêlaient leurs bruits en une pétarade continue. (H. Thomas)

8. Tout le monde garda le silence. La pluie crépitait toujours, mais les bruits des autos devenaient plus rares. (C. Aveline)
9. Un pas lourd avait ébranlé un escalier, puis il y eut comme une chute molle, suivie d'un soupir d'aise. (É. Zola)
10. On entendait [le vent] gronder comme un torrent ou passer avec le sifflement appuyé d'une chute d'eau. Le tablier de la cheminée battait de temps à autre. (H. Alain-Fournier)
11. Et c'étaient autour d'elle des rires, des cris et des coin-coin, comme dans un troupeau d'oies que pourchasse un épagneul ! (H. Alain-Fournier)
12. On dit qu'il faut hurler avec les loups : je crois tout aussi nécessaire de bêler avec les moutons, quand on fait partie du troupeau. (M. Pagnol)
13. Sa gaieté redoubla, un grincement de poulie mal graissée, qui finit par dégénérer en un accès terrible de toux. (É. Zola)
14. Le docteur, s'étant rapproché de la fenêtre et penché dans la demi-ténèbre, occupa son esprit à décomposer la rumeur nocturne : un crissement continu de grillons et de sauterelles, une mare coassante, deux crapauds, les notes interrompues d'un oiseau qui n'était peut-être pas un rossignol, le dernier tram. (F. Mauriac)
15. Le silence n'était troublé que par le grésillement de mille cris d'oiseaux ; mais, en approchant des maisons, Angelo commença à entendre un concert très épais de braiements d'ânes, de hennissements de chevaux et de bêlements de moutons. "Il doit se passer quelque chose ici, se dit Angelo. Ceci n'est pas naturel. Toutes ces bêtes crient comme si on les égorgeait." (J. Giono)
16. L'immense bourdonnement des abeilles pillant un champ de colza en fleur, le ronronnement paisible d'une batteuse dans une cour de ferme, le tintement d'une enclume de forgeron, et jusqu'au martèlement d'un pivot sur un tronc de mélèze formaient un cortège allègre et paisible qui le suivait, l'entourait et le précédait. (M. Tournier)

### 7.2.2. Lumière

Voici le sens des principaux verbes de ce champ sémantique particulièrement riche :

#### ● Lumière intermittente ou brève

Type : D = directe, R = réfléchie

<i>to FLASH: very strong and sudden light (e.g. torch)</i>	D / R	→ <i>He was to flash his torch twice as a signal.</i>
<i>to FLARE: sudden and intense outburst of flame (e.g. fire suddenly revived)</i>	D	→ <i>The lamp flared up, then went out.</i> (I. Murdoch)
<i>to GLINT: sudden, brief and hard light (often on metallic object)</i>	R	→ <i>Her hands were covered with rings, her wrists with bracelets, which were glinting as she lightly tapped her fingers together.</i> (Ibid.)
<i>to SPARKLE: series of brief and bright flashes of light (e.g. diamond, water under the sun)</i>	R	→ <i>The sea sparkled in the sun.</i>



### 7.2.5. Parole

Voici les principaux verbes appartenant à ce champ sémantique :

#### 1. Verbes décrivant une façon de parler ou d'articuler

<i>to UTTER:</i>	<i>you insist on the use of the voice, on the fact of making sounds.</i>
<i>to WHISPER, to MURMUR:</i>	<i>"murmur" is more intimate or affectionate; "whisper" has connotations of secrecy.</i>
<i>to MUMBLE:</i>	<i>to speak indistinctly.</i>
<i>to DRAWL:</i>	<i>to speak slowly and not very clearly.</i>
<i>to SLUR one's words:</i>	<i>to speak indistinctly (through carelessness).</i>
<i>to RATTLE off:</i>	<i>to speak quickly and effortlessly.</i>
<i>to STAMMER:</i>	<i>to speak hesitatingly, repeating the same words or syllables (because of fear, shyness).</i>
<i>to STUTTER:</i>	<i>to stammer because of anger. It can also be a characteristic of speech, a habitual problem.</i>
<i>to LISP:</i>	<i>people who lisp cannot pronounce the sounds [s] and [z] correctly.</i>
<i>to BABBLE, to GABBLE:</i>	<i>to speak too quickly and in a confused way so that it is difficult to understand what is said.</i>
<i>to PRATTLE:</i>	<i>to talk like a child, freely, without much sense.</i>
<i>to JABBER, to GIBBER:</i>	<i>to talk without clear articulation or content.</i>
<i>to QUAVER:</i>	<i>to speak in an unsteady voice (often characteristic of old people.)</i>
<i>to HAVE A BURR:</i>	<i>to pronounce the "r" sounds more noticeably than in standard English.</i>
<i>to HAVE A LILT:</i>	<i>to speak in a singing way.</i>

#### 2. Verbes impliquant un locuteur (discussion ou conversation)

<i>to DISCUSS</i>	
<i>to STATE:</i>	<i>idea of clearness and precision.</i>
<i>to ARGUE:</i>	<i>implies conviction, defending one's cause.</i>
<i>to DEBATE:</i>	<i>formal public discussion.</i>
<i>to REMARK:</i>	<i>to call attention to something.</i>
<i>to COMMENT ON / UPON</i>	
<i>to CHAT:</i>	<i>to talk in a light and easy way.</i>
<i>to CHATTER:</i>	<i>to chat + idea of rapidity, of incessant talk.</i>
<i>to MAKE SMALL TALK, to TITTLE-TATTLE, to NATTER:</i>	<i>to talk about unimportant things.</i>
<i>to GOSSIP:</i>	<i>to talk about the private affairs of others; often unkind.</i>

## Le lexique

<i>to BLAB:</i>	<i>to disclose a secret.</i>
<i>to BLURT sthg OUT:</i>	<i>to say something that you had kept to yourself before, or to say something involuntarily, without thinking.</i>

### 3. Façons de parler révélant une attitude

<i>to MUMBLE:</i>	<i>to speak indistinctly because one is embarrassed or ashamed.</i>
<i>to MUTTER:</i>	<i>to speak to oneself or to complain in a low voice.</i>
<i>to GRUMBLE:</i>	<i>to speak in a low voice, usually to complain in a bad tempered way.</i>
<i>to GROWL:</i>	<i>to speak in a low and angry voice.</i>
<i>to BARK:</i>	<i>to shout at someone.</i>
<i>to SNARL:</i>	<i>to speak in an unpleasant, aggressive tone of voice (due to spite or bad temper).</i>
<i>to SNORT:</i>	<i>to speak while breathing noisily, to express contempt or disapproval.</i>
<i>to PRATTLE, to PRATE:</i>	<i>to talk too much, without saying anything important (often used pejoratively).</i>
<i>to YAP:</i>	<i>to talk endlessly, in a way that is annoying.</i>
<i>to RAVE:</i>	<i>to talk in an excited and uncontrolled way.</i>
<i>to RAMBLE ON, to DRIVEL ON:</i>	<i>to talk on and on in a disordered way.</i>
<i>to DRONE ON:</i>	<i>to talk on in a dull and boring way.</i>

### 4. Verbes décrivant des cris

<i>to CRY:</i>	<i>to call out in a loud voice.</i>
<i>to SHOUT:</i>	<i>to call or cry in a loud voice (implies words spoken).</i>
<i>to YELL:</i>	<i>to shout, but more piercing.</i>
<i>to SCREAM, to SHRIEK:</i>	<i>very shrill piercing sound.</i>
<i>to SCREECH:</i>	<i>prolonged and discordant shriek.</i>
<i>to SQUEAL:</i>	<i>sharp, shrill cry, similar to the noise made by a pig.</i>
<i>to YELP:</i>	<i>to give a sudden, short cry of fear or pain.</i>
<i>to ROAR, to THUNDER:</i>	<i>to shout something in a very loud voice.</i>
<i>to BAWL:</i>	<i>to shout in anger / or to wail.</i>
<i>to HOWL:</i>	<i>to produce long, loud cries of anger, pain or unhappiness (often felt as vulgar).</i>
<i>to WAIL:</i>	<i>long drawn-out cries of grief.</i>
<i>to BELLOW:</i>	<i>to shout in a deep, hollow voice.</i>
<i>to CHEER:</i>	<i>to make sounds of encouragement or approval.</i>
<i>to WHOOP:</i>	<i>shouts of enthusiasm or triumph.</i>



**1.** Trouvez un ou plusieurs équivalents anglais des verbes suivants. Il s'agira bien sûr d'approximations en l'absence de contexte.

- |                     |                |                                 |
|---------------------|----------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. zézayer          | 8. bavarder    | 15. potiner                     |
| 2. baragouiner      | 9. grogner     | 16. affirmer                    |
| 3. cancaner         | 10. jaser      | 17. lancer d'un ton hargneux    |
| 4. jacasser         | 11. bafouiller | 18. lancer un cri perçant       |
| 5. chevroter        | 12. balbutier  | 19. faire observer              |
| 6. laisser échapper | 13. dégoiser   | 20. parler d'une voix traînante |
| 7. divaguer         | 14. radoter    |                                 |

**2.** Traduisez les phrases suivantes.

1. Il marmonnait dans sa barbe, comme s'il eût été seul. (F. Mauriac)
2. La vue de plusieurs personnes qui le regardaient en silence le paralysait. Il disait : "Ça m'embrouille les idées, ça me fait bégayer du cerveau."  
(M. Pagnol)
3. Derrière elle, Gilbert marmotte des fadaises... (S. de Beauvoir)
4. Mais elle criait comme une bête, avec des gestes de folle, si bien que les trois chiens l'entouraient d'aboiements furieux... (M. Pagnol)
5. "De l'encre aux doigts, ruminait le père, et la voilà grosse..." (Y. Queffélec)
6. Un hurlement soudain : "Salaud ! Le salaud !" Laurence prend sa mère aux épaules :  
"Ne crie pas."  
- Je crierai tant qu'il me plaira. Salaud, salaud !" (S. de Beauvoir)
7. Ah si ! ... T'as raison..., ricana bêtement Nicole. (Y. Queffélec)
8. Mon grand-père est resté sur sa chaise, il grommelle ; ma mère vient me souffler à l'oreille qu'il faut quitter la fenêtre. (J.-P. Sartre)
9. Heureusement, les applaudissements ne manquent pas : qu'ils écoutent mon babillage ou l'Art de la Fugue, les adultes ont le même sourire...  
(J.-P. Sartre)
10. "Même que t'as oublié combien deux et deux ça fait."  
- Quatre, hésita une voix mal posée.  
- Et quel âge que t'as ?  
- ...Sept, balbutia l'enfant." (Y. Queffélec)
11. C'est alors que je sentis sur ma figure le contact d'un objet si répugnant que je bondis en poussant des hurlements frénétiques, les yeux exorbités.  
(A. Gerber)
12. "Voici le héros du jour !" s'égosillait mon père. Yagel hululait. (A. Gerber)
13. Vous voudriez m'entraîner dans une vie où je ne me ferais que de la peine, où tout le monde potine sur tout le monde... (Colette)
14. Il frappa sauvagement du poing contre la cloison qui sépare nos chambres et rugit : "Fils, notre aubépine est la racine d'un nouveau monde !" (A. Gerber)
15. Le vieux, dès qu'il l'eut reconnu, écuma ainsi qu'une bête enragée. Il bredouillait : "Ah ! Cochon ! Cochon ! t'es pas mort..." (G. de Maupassant)