Where do new words come from?

A) Introduction:
We all know languages are constantly changing. What new words, phrases or expressions have you noticed in your language in the past few years?

1. Do you know the meaning of the following expressions? Match them with their meanings (a-f).

Manspreading
Beer o'clock
Mic drop
Mx.
Hangry
asap

a. When you're in a bad mood because you need something to eat.
b. The phenomenon in public transport when a man sits when their legs wide apart and occupy more than one seat.
c. An alternative to Mr. and Ms. when you don't indicate gender.
d. To indicate the time of the day when you can start drinking (alcohol)
e. The moment after a speech or performance when the public is in silence because they are amazed.
f. As soon as possible.

B) Reading:
1. Read the text. How many different ways of making new words are mentioned?

900 new words in 3 months

Everyone knows the English language is changing. Every three months the *OED* (Oxford English Dictionary) publishes updates to its online dictionary. One recent update contained 900 new words, new expressions, or new meanings for existing words. But where do they all come from?

New words are created in many different ways. We can make a new word by combining two words, like **gastropub** (*gastronomy + pub*) or **vlog** (*video + blog*). Sometimes we put two words together in a new way, for example **road rage** or **selfie stick**.

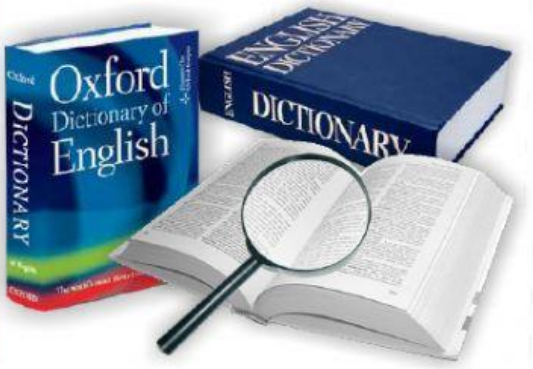
We also find that nouns can change into verbs. Take the word **text**. **Text** was always a noun (from about 1369, according to the *OED*), but it is now very common as a verb, **to text** somebody. Other new words already existed but with a different meaning. For example, **tweet** was the noise that a bird makes, but now we use it more often (as a verb or a noun) for a message that people put on the social networking site Twitter.

Another way in which we make new words is by 'adopting' words from foreign languages, like **barista** or **latte** (imported from Italian when coffee bars became really popular in the UK in the 1990s).

A lot of new words come from the names of brands or companies, for example we **Skype** each other and we **google** information. We also need more general words to describe new technology or new gadgets: **wi-fi**, **ringtone**, and **smartphone** are some examples.

The invention of new words is not a new phenomenon. The word **brunch** (*breakfast + lunch*) first appeared in 1896, **newspaper** (*news + paper*) in 1667, and English speakers started to use the word **café** (from French) in the late 19th century. The difference now is how quickly new words and expressions enter the language and how quickly we start to use and understand them.

2. Read the article again and answer:
a. How often does the *OED* add words to its online dictionary?
b. How was the word *vlog* created?
c. What part of speech was *text* until 20th century?
d. What language do *barista* and *latte* come from?
e. Why did we need to invent words like *wi-fi*?
f. Which came first: *brunch, newspaper,* or *café*?



C) Go ahead! Make up new words.

1. Watch the video and choose the correct answer.

1) A lexicographer is _
a. a person who teaches language
b. a person who makes dicitionaries
c. a person who has a collection of dictionaries

2) who decides what is a word and what isn't?
a. speakers of the language
b. lexicographers
c. government authorities

3) the experiment on the plural forms was...
a. designed by a professor
b. designed at an University in England
c. was designed in 1968

4) the speaker compares laws of grammar to...
a. traffic laws
b. laws of nature
c. law of gravity

5) people use grammar as an excuse to ...
a. decide if a word is good or not
b. encourage people to create new words.
c. discourage people to create new words.

2. Watch again. Which ways of making new words that were mentioned in the text are also mentioned in the video? Try to write down at least three examples of new words in the video.

3. Watch the first part of the video again and complete this extract:

"Every language is just a _____ who _____ to _____".

What do you think this means?

TED Ideas worth spreading