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6 Minute Vocabulary

Eponyms as nouns and verbs



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This is not a word-for-word transcript

Callum

Hello and welcome to 6 Minute Vocabulary with me Callum.

Finn

And me Finn. Today we're talking about words like Hoover and Xerox, which started as brand names of particular products, but now are often used to refer to other similar products.

Callum

And some of them are also used as verbs. Words like these are called eponyms.

Finn

There will be a quiz; and of course we'll bring you a top tip for learning vocabulary.

Callum

But first let's listen to Cath. She's chatting a bit about brand names that have become part of the language.

Finn

And while you listen, think about this question: how does Cath say **do you use Facebook?**

INSERT

Cath

'I'll **google** it.' How many times a day do you think or say that? **Google** is the number one search engine today and people sometimes talk about **googling** even when they're using a different search engine, like Bing or Yahoo. In the same way **Facebook** is number one for social networking and **Skype** for web chats. So do you **facebook** or **skype** your friends? And how often do you **xerox** a document or go **rollerblading**?

STING

Callum

Right, that was Cath. And we asked: how does she say **do you use Facebook?**

Finn

And the answer is she said ‘**do you facebook your friends?**’

Callum

That’s right. Cath uses **facebook** as a verb because **Facebook** has become so much a part of our lives that we need a verb to talk about using it.

Finn

So that’s a bit like the word **Hoover**, isn’t it?

Callum

Exactly. Until the middle of the twentieth century, the **Hoover** brand was the biggest name among vacuum cleaners. That’s why we say that we **hoover** our carpets.

Finn

But today that means ‘use any vacuum cleaner’, doesn’t it? Not just the **Hoover** brand.

Callum

It does. So in fact that’s a bit different from the verb to **facebook**. That only means to use the **Facebook** site. But who knows? It might change and be used more generally in the future to refer to other social media sites. Now let’s have our first clip?

INSERT | CLIP 1

‘I’ll **google** it.’ How many times a day do you think or say that? **Google** is the number one search engine today and people talk about **googling** even when they’re using a different search engine like Bing or Yahoo.

Finn

So, that’s another example, a bit like **Hoover**. There’s the verb to **google**, the brand name **Google**, and the noun **googling** to talk about the activity of using **Google**.

Callum

Yes, and like **hoover** and **hoovering** are good for other vacuum cleaner brands, people can be using any search engine when they use the verb **google** and the noun **googling**.

Finn

One thing to remember is that trademark names like **Google**, **Facebook** and **Hoover** should have a capital letter. But the verbs and nouns that come from these names don’t.

Callum

Mmm. On to clip 2.

INSERT | CLIP 2

In the same way **Facebook** is number one for social networking and **Skype** for web chats. So do you **facebook** or **skype** your friends? And how often do you **xerox** a document or go **rollerblading**?

Finn

So, Callum, what do we do when we use **Skype**?

Callum

Well, we **skype**!

Finn

We do. **Skyping** is a popular way to contact friends and business colleagues around the world. And this software has given up this new verb, **to skype**. And then Cath threw in a couple of other examples of this type of word, didn't she?

Callum

Yes, she talked about **xeroxing** a document. **Xerox** is often used to mean **photocopy**, both noun and verb, and it comes from the company **Xerox**, which produced the first plain paper photocopier.

Finn

But we should mention that this is an American English expression, it's not one we use very often in British English.

Callum

She also mentioned going **rollerblading**. **Rollerblade** is a brand of inline skates that became so popular that we now have the verb to **rollerblade** and the noun **rollerblading**.

Finn

And today they're used whatever brand of inline skates we're using.

Callum

Other common words like these are **Kleenex** meaning any kind of paper tissue and **Aspirin** for painkillers. But they don't have verbs to go with them.

IDENT

You're listening to BBC Learning English.

Callum

And we're talking about eponyms as nouns and verbs.

Finn

And time for the quiz! Number one: How else can I say **do the vacuuming**?

Callum

It's **do the hoovering**.

Finn

It is! Number two: What's another way of saying: **I often talk to my friends on Skype?**

Callum

It's **I often skype my friends**.

Finn

Excellent! Number three: What does: **Would you like a Kleenex** mean?

Callum

It means: **Would you like a tissue?**

Callum

Correct! And that's the end of the quiz. **Facebook** your friends if you got them all right!

Callum

But before we go, here's today's top tip. If the name of an object has a capital letter, it's probably because it's an eponym from a brand. Look it up in a dictionary, where it should be labelled 'trademark', and check whether there are useful verbs or nouns that come from it. Practise making new sentences with those words.

Finn

There's more about this at bbclearningenglish.com. Join us again for more 6 Minute Vocabulary.

Both

Bye!

Vocabulary points to take away:

Some brand names become part of the language:

Are you on **Skype**?

Some of these brand names are then used as verbs and other nouns:

I'll **facebook** you about it tonight.

I sometimes spend hours just **googling**.

The brand name has a capital letter but the verb and noun derivatives do not:

Are you on **Skype**?

Let's **skype**.

Common brand names that are part of the language are:

Hoover/to Hoover/ do the Hoovering

Xerox/to xerox/a xeroxed document

Facebook/to facebook/facebooking

Skype/to skype/skyping

Google/to google/googling

Rollerblade/to rollerblade/rollerblading

Kleenex

Nescafe

Jacuzzi

Levis

Ping Pong