

8. There are many cases in English in which a noun can be used as a verb without any morphological change. This is called ‘zero-derivation’, since there is no derivational affix licensing the change in part of speech. We will restrict our attention to the following case, which can be divided into two subgroups, as follows:

Group I

to seed a lawn
to water a horse
to top a building
to wire a house
to oil a wheel
to carpet a room
to cap a bottle
to fence a yard
to roof a house
to wax a floor

Group II

to seed a pepper
to milk a cow
to top a tree
to peel an orange
to worm a dog
to core an apple
to skin a cat
to scalp a man
to bone a chicken
to husk corn

First, characterize the meaning of Group I vs Group II. In what precise way do all members of the two Groups differ? What is the relation between the verb and the noun in each case? Give enough examples to explain what you’re talking about (and show that you do know what you’re talking about).

Second, find two unambiguous paraphrases that will distinguish between uses of verbs homophonous between the two Groups, like *seed* and *top*. Should this be thought of as constituting (a) two senses of the zero-derived verb *seed*; (b) two different zero-derived verbs *seed* or (c) one sense of the zero-derived verb *seed*, with three pragmatic extensions? How would one decide?

Third, try to determine what other factors might allow us to determine whether a given zero-derived verb is in Group I or II. What do you need to know, in other words, about seeds, lawns, peppers, or Xs, to predict the meaning of the zero-derived verb *seed* in **any** phrase like *to seed an X* (or any other verb in any other context)? Are there any pervasive patterns? Do Group I and II strike you as being equally common and productive? Discuss.

These topics can be discussed in any useful order together or separately.
But be clear about saying what you mean and why you mean it.
Don’t neglect to give examples to make yourself clear.

- 2 pages maximum. Less is better, provided detail coverage is good
and all relevant generalizations are captured.