

## ENGLISH TIP

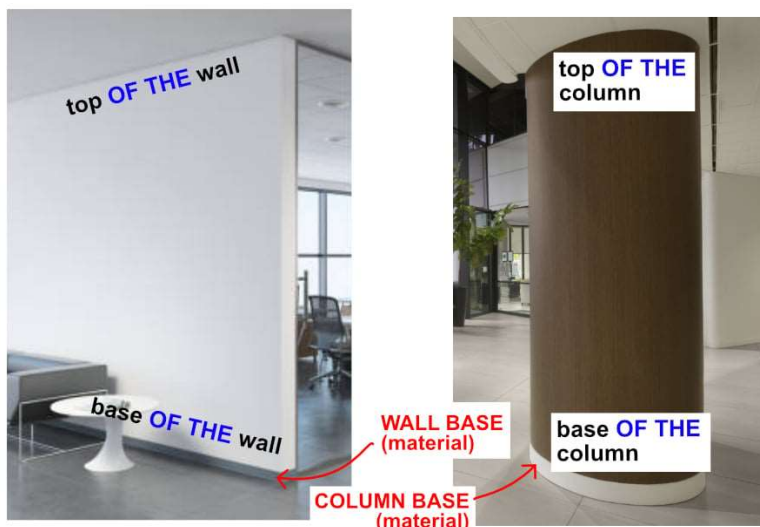
[link to video lesson](#)

### Compound Nouns vs. Prepositional Phrases in Construction English

#### Key Point

*Compound nouns* ( **NOUN + NOUN** ) describe specific **technical things, systems and materials**

*Prepositional phrases* ( **\_OF THE** ) describe positions and locations.



Let's look at two ways to describe the same thing: **slab edge** and **edge of the slab**. Both are correct, but we use them differently.

#### Edge of the Slab (Prepositional Phrase)

When we say "edge **of the** slab," we're focusing on **the slab** and describing **which part** of it. This phrase answers the question: "Where on the slab?" The word "of" is a preposition that helps us be specific about location.

We commonly use this form for **dimensioning**. For example: "The edge of the slab is 400mm from the gridline." In casual speech, native speakers often drop "the" and say "edge of slab."

#### Slab Edge (Compound Noun)

When we say "slab edge," we're focusing on **the edge** and describing **what type** of edge it is. This compound noun answers the question: "Which edge? What kind of edge?" Here, "slab" works like an adjective to make "edge" more specific.

We typically use this form for **technical terms** – specific systems, materials, or components. For example: "The slab edge has a steel embed."

## Other Examples

The same pattern applies to other construction terms:

**Door bottom** (compound noun) = a specific component: "There's an automatic door bottom for soundproofing"

**Bottom of the door** (prepositional phrase) = location/position: "The bottom of the door is 2cm above the floor"

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## PRACTICE ACTIVITY: Compound Nouns vs. Prepositional Phrases

### PART 1: Multiple Choice

Choose the correct option for each sentence.

1. The \_\_\_\_\_ (roof edge / edge of the roof) is 1500mm from the property line.
2. We need to install a \_\_\_\_\_ (wall base / base of the wall) to protect it from floor maintenance equipment.
3. The \_\_\_\_\_ (bottom of the cabinet / cabinet bottom) is 20cm above the floor.
4. The \_\_\_\_\_ (ceiling surface / surface of the ceiling) in the kitchen area must be made from non-combustible materials.
5. The \_\_\_\_\_ (surface of the wall / wall surface) is recessed to accommodate a light fixture.

### PART 2: Fill in the Blank

Write the correct expression using the words provided in parentheses.

6. The \_\_\_\_\_ has a steel embed plate attached. (slab / edge)
7. Measure from the \_\_\_\_\_ to the column centerline. (beam / edge)
8. The \_\_\_\_\_ must have the appropriate clearance. (stair / bottom)
9. The \_\_\_\_\_ is 150mm below the finished floor level. (foundation / top)
10. The \_\_\_\_\_ is made of aluminum. (frame / door)

## ANSWER KEY

### PART 1: Multiple Choice

1. edge of the roof (dimensioning/location) 2. Wall base (technical component) 3. bottom of the cabinet (dimensioning/location) 4. Ceiling surface (technical term/material) 5. surface of the wall (dimensioning/location)

### PART 2: Fill in the Blank

6. slab edge (technical component) 7. edge of the beam (dimensioning/location) 8. Bottom of the stair (dimensioning/location) 9. top of the foundation (dimensioning/location) 10. Door frame (technical system/material)