

Word of the month Exit

If you had said to me, a decade ago, that in the next 10 years we were going to see a new suffix arrive in the English language, I would have said “Don’t be silly!” Suffixes – word-endings such as in good-ness, move-ment, wonder-ful – don’t develop very often. Many have been in the language since Anglo-Saxon times. And if you had followed up your remark by saying “It will be -exit”, I would definitely have worried about your mental health.

But that is exactly what happened. The coinage *Brexit* is first recorded in 2012 – a lot earlier than you might have thought, because it didn’t become the chief topic of conversation until around 2016. There was something about the snappy sound of the new word that evidently appealed, because within days other coinages appeared based on the same blending strategy. I was amazed to see it spreading so quickly.

The first cluster of neologisms all followed in the semantic footsteps of *Brexit*, expressing the same notion of departure from a political entity. We heard of a possible *Frexit* (France), *Gexit* (Germany), *Swexit* (Sweden), *Mexit* (Mexico), and the weird-looking *Czechexit*. Foreign languages joined in: *Dexit* (Deutschland), *Espexit* (España). Groups which had been arguing for the independence of a part of a country seized on the usage. We saw *Yexit* (Yorkshire), *Texit* (Texas), *Wexit* (Western



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Canada), *Quexit* (Queensland), and *Scexit* (Scotland). This is by no means complete.

Then the pattern spread to people. *Bexit* was the headline when the Beckhams sold their house in France. *Mexit* headed an article on the retirement of footballer Leo Messi. The possibility of Trump not getting a second term? *Trexit*. When Meghan and Harry decided to leave the UK, the headline was ...? *Megxit*, of course.

Groups of people were labelled in the same way. Left wing Eurosceptics? *Lexit*. Jews leaving the US Democratic Party? *Jexit*. African-Americans doing the same thing? *Blexit*. And there was the very clever coinage captioning an article on why doctors were leaving the health service: *Drexit*.

And so the story continues. More recently I’ve seen *Pexit* for problems relating to pets leaving one country for another; *Kleenexit* for anyone out of tissues; *Whexit* for someone leaving a WhatsApp group; and *Twexit* for the same departure from Twitter. Sex has generated many *sexits*, too risqué for mention in a polite magazine. And of course there has to be *strexit* – raised anxiety over Brexit.

Other spellings aren’t immune. *Checksit*? A move that could end a game of chess. *Speksit*? The effect of using a clothes cleaning fluid. And a while back I saw a sticker on the back of a car, presumably driven by a Remainer: *Brexit wrecksit*.

Religion doesn’t seem to have been a fruitful source as yet. Perhaps the *Herald* should start a new trend. The end of a sermon? *Homilexit*. An end-of-Mass blessing? *Blexit*. A priest moving to a new parish? *Prexit*. The resignation of a pope? *Pontifexit*.