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), Grexit (Germany), Swexit (Sweden), Mexit (Mexico), and the weird-looking Czechxit. Foreign languages joined in: Dexit (Deutschland), Espanexit (Espana). 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 Canada), Quexit (Queensland), and Scoxit (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 …? Megexit, of course.

Groups of people were labelled in the same way. Left wing Euro sceptics? 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. Checkxit? A move that could end a game of chess. Specksit? 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.