



Glossary of Fireworks Terms

Aerial

A fireworks item that shoots flaming balls into the air, such as a cake or mortar; a device that propels multiple, repetitive pyrotechnic charges into the air. The charges produce various colors, noises and effects; some break into color bursts in the air and some display colors going up. Aerial repeaters, among the most beautiful "show pieces" of the consumer fireworks, are also called cakes or repeaters.

Artillery Shells

Artillery Shells are fireworks shells that range in size and effect. All reloadable shells come with their own tubes that are made of cardboard, fiberglass or H.D.P.E (High Density Poly-Ethylene). The larger reloadable canister shaped shells are 1.75" wide and contain 60 grams of powder to make them the equivalent of a preloaded 3" shell. They are propelled out of a mortar and may have single or multiple breaks. Artillery Shells are sometimes referred to as Mortars, Reloadables or Festival Balls.

Assortment/Family Package

A collection of fireworks items, generally consisting of fountains, sparklers, rockets, and firecrackers.

Barrage

A rapidly fired sequence of aerial fireworks.

Beehive Effect

A visual effect appearing as if the color stars are very actively "swarming" around. A unique effect.

Bombette

A Bombette is an exploding star, usually ejected from a roman candle or fountain. Bombettes are limited to a maximum charge of 130 milligrams of flash powder in legal consumer fireworks.

Bottle Rocket

A small tube (generally no larger than 1/4 inch in diameter) attached to a thin bamboo stick. The smallest rocket available.

Break

The aerial burst of a shell that produces the color and other effects.

Brocade

A spider like effect in the sky, much like fine lace. The brocade effect is generally a silver tail effect, and is brighter than the willow or tiger tail effect. Most brocade effects use glitter to produce the long brocade tails.



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Bursting Charge

The internal pyrotechnic load in a shell designed to break or burst the shell at a predetermined time and height, igniting and spreading the contents of the shell.

Cake (Multi-Item)

Also called a Multi-Shot. A chain-fused firework that propels a series of aerial shell, comet or mine effects into the air from collectively attached tubes

Candle

Another name for roman candle (see definition below).

Chrysanthemum Effect

The round effect created when the stars of an aerial break burst out from a center leaving trails or spokes as it bursts out from a center. This is compared to the Peony effect of an aerial shell that does not produce trails as the shell bursts out.

Comet

Rising star with a tail.

Cone

A type of fountain in the shape of a cone and usually emits sparks and color.

Crackle

A fireworks effects that sounds like hundred of snaps or crackles, usually accompanied by an aerial gold lace visual effect.

Firecracker

A small paper cylinder (usually no more than 1½" in length) containing pyrotechnic composition that produces a bang or report. Firecrackers generally are purchased by the roll, brick or partial brick. Usually firecrackers today are strung together and fused consecutively.

Floral

An aerial pattern that resembles a flower with points of light that streak outward from the center of the break.

Fountain

A stationary device from which a shower of sparks erupts upward from the device into a spring or fountain-like effect. The fountains may vary in color of sparks, noise and effects. A cone or cone fountain is a fountain in a conical shape.

Glitter

A sparkling or multiple small flashing effect; much less distinct than a strobe.

Ground Spinner

A small device that spins on the ground producing a color effect. Some may have other effects.

Jumping Jacks

A connected string of small firecrackers that "bounce" and move on the ground when ignited.

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Lady Finger

A small (usually 3/4 inch) firecracker.

Lantern

A very attractive device that is suspended from a tree or pole. Upon ignition the device is driven into a spin by a spray of sparks that often change color. At the end the device drops open into a tasseled, rice paper Japanese or Chinese lantern. Also called Happy Lantern and Chinese Lantern.

Lifting Charge

The pyrotechnic load designed to lift the shell into the sky to the desired height for the break or burst to occur.

Mine

Another type of tube device that propels single or multiple shells into the air that break into varying colors, effects and noises.

Missile

A tube containing a propelling pyrotechnic charge with fins attached to one end. When ignited, the expelling combustion from the tube propels the missile into the air. Some missiles have color stars, report or whistle.

Morning Glory

A sparkler variation of looser pyrotechnic composition on a wooden stick covered with paper.

Mortar

A tube loaded with a shell that is propelled from the tube into the air that produces a break with varying colors, effects and noises. Also called tube, mine or gun.

Multi-Shot Aerial

This is another name for a cake or repeater.

Novelty

Fireworks that are shaped like a toy, animal, or vehicle that are ground fireworks and they emit sparks & whistles.

Parachute

An aerial tube device that propels a charge into the air that spreads one or more parachutes that float to the ground. The parachutes may contain flares, firecrackers, reports or other effects.

Party Popper

A hand held device loaded with a cap that produces a small report and propels confetti or crepe streamers into the air. The party popper has traditionally been associated with New Year's Eve parties.

Pearl

Star that burns with a color as it is propelled into the air.

Peony effect

The round effect created when the stars of an aerial break burst out from a center without leaving trails. This is compared to the Chrysanthemum effect of an aerial shell that does leave trails or spokes as it bursts out from a center to a round effect.

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Plane

A small device with wings that spins and rises into the air. Variations include helicopters, jets and UFOs. Some have nice color or audible effects.

Punk

A slow burning wick for lighting the fireworks.

Pyro Torch

A pencil sized lighting device that burns like a small flare for approximately five minutes. To be used to light the fireworks items like a punk.

Rack

Two or more tubes attached to a wooden base, fused together to operate sequentially.

Reloadable Shells

A kit containing a mortar tube and 6 or more separate shells. The device is designed to fire one shell at a time. After a shell is fired, it can be reloaded with another shell, hence the name "re-loadable".

Repeater

Sometimes referred to as "cakes" or "multi-shot aerials", a repeater is a cluster of aerial tubes with a single fuse. The name "cake" was attributed to these because the cluster of tubes looks similar to a cake in size and shape. Once the fuse is lit, each of the tubes is fired in sequence. Cakes can have a variety of intricate aerial effects, including spinners, fish, flower bouquets, comets, crossettes, reports, and other aerial effects. Cakes are the most popular consumer fireworks items outside of sparklers and firecrackers.

Report

A report is another name for a bang. Items with reports explode with a bang. This term is most often used with rockets and cakes.

Rocket

A tube or cylinder, with a cone-shaped front, containing a propelling pyrotechnic charge attached to a rigid, guiding stick. When ignited, the expelling combustion from the tube propels the tube and attached stick into the air. Some rockets are designed to produce some color, whistle, report or other minor effect at the highest point of the flight path.

Roman Candle

A narrow cardboard tube or cylinder that propels intermittent single flaming balls or stars 15-50 feet into the air. Colors, effects and noise vary.

Shell

A circular or cylindrical shaped paper casing propelled into the air from a mortar or tube that produces a color break with varying colors, effects and noise. Traditionally, circular shells are of Oriental design and cylindrical shells are of European or American design.

Smoke Item

Any item that produces a smoke effect, including smoke balls and aerial items that produce smoke instead of light or noise. Smoke items are generally used during the daytime.

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Snakes

A pellet that when lit produces an ash in a long, snake-like effect. These are the items that leave dark spots on the driveway.

Snaps

Also called snappers and bang snaps. Small pellets are thrown on a hard surface producing a cap-like popping report.

Sparkler

A wire (sometimes wooden) stick coated with pyrotechnic composition that burns down from the top emitting showers of small sparks. Sparklers burn very hot and can easily burn the user if not handled carefully.

Spinning Items

A spinner is a type of star that spins in the sky and gives off large quantities of white light. Another name for spinner is tourbillion.

Star

A small pellet of composition that produces a pyrotechnic effect. Stars are used in aerial shells, rockets, roman candles, cakes, and fountains to produce streaks or light, pulses, long golden tails, and other aerial effects. A single shell could contain several hundred stars.

Strobe

A sharp pulsing, flashing visual effect; mostly white or silver.

Tube

A cardboard cylinder pre-loaded with a pyrotechnic charge that propels a shell into the air that breaks into a color effect. Tubes can be loaded with multiple charges with varying visual and audible effects.

Wheel

A device attached to a pole or tree with a nail that propels itself via small jets in a circular motion. Colors, effects and noise vary.

Whistle

A mild high pitched, shrieking noise.

Willow Effect

The effect created when the stars of an aerial burst burn longer, producing the graceful, drooping form of weeping willow branches.

Winged Items

A device that has some type of wings and flies into the air.

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