

## NOUN SUFFIXES

### Verb + suffix

Many nouns are formed in this way.

<i>Verb</i>	<i>Suffix</i>	<i>Noun</i>
improve (= get better)	-ment	improvement
manage (e.g. a shop or business)	-ment	management
elect (= choose somebody by voting)	-ion	election
discuss (= talk about something seriously)	-ion	discussion
inform (= tell someone something)	-ation	information
organise	-ation	organisation
jog (= running to keep fit or for pleasure)	-ing	jogging
spell (e.g. S-P-E-L-L)	-ing	spelling

*Note:* Sometimes there is a spelling change. The most common is the omission of the final 'e' before the suffix **-ion** or **-ation**: translate/translation; organise/organisation

### Pronunciation

The addition of these suffixes may change the pronunciation.

Nouns ending **-ion** or **-ity** have the main stress on the syllable before, so the pronunciation may be different from the verb or adjective:

<i>Verb</i>	<i>Noun</i>	<i>Adjective</i>	<i>Noun</i>
<u>educate</u>	edu <u>ca</u> tion	<u>si</u> milar	simi <u>la</u> rity
<u>trans</u> late	trans <u>la</u> tion	<u>stu</u> pid	stu <u>pi</u> idity
<u>discuss</u>	disc <u>us</u> sion	<u>punc</u> tual	punc <u>tu</u> ality

### -er/-or and -ist

These are common noun suffixes added to existing nouns or verbs, and they describe people and their jobs.

<b>-er</b>	<b>-er</b>	<b>-or</b>	<b>-ist</b>
dancer	driver	actor	artist
singer	manager	director	economist
murderer	footballer	translator	psychologist
farmer	employer	operator	journalist

*Note:* Notice the common spelling changes:  
translate/translator, operate/operator, economy/economist, psychology/psychologist.

### Adjective + suffix

Nouns are also formed by adding a suffix to an adjective. Two suffixes often added to adjectives to form nouns are **-ness** and **-ity**.

<i>Adjective</i>	<i>Suffix</i>	<i>Noun</i>
weak (≠ strong)	-ness	weakness
happy	-ness	happiness
dark (e.g. at night, when you can't see)	-ness	darkness
stupid (≠ intelligent, clever)	-ity	stupidity
punctual (= always arrives at the right time)	-ity	punctuality
similar (= almost the same; ≠ different)	-ity	similarity

EXERCISES

➔ Complete the tables and mark the stress on each word. The last two in each column are not on the opposite page, but do you know or can you guess the noun formed from them?

Verb	Noun	Adjective	Noun
educate		stupid	
improve		dark	
jog		weak	
govern		similar	
spell		punctual	
hesitate		sad	
arrange		popular	

➔ Combine the suffixes on the right with the verbs or adjectives on the left, and then complete the text below. (Remember you may need to make a small spelling change.)

improve	televise	elect	-ment	-ity	-ion	-ation	-ness
educate	weak	manage					
govern	stupid						

In his first broadcast on <sup>(1)</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ since he won the <sup>(2)</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ last month, the Prime Minister promised to make health and <sup>(3)</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ two of his top priorities. And in a strong attack on the previous <sup>(4)</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, he said that the present <sup>(5)</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ of the British economy was caused entirely by their <sup>(6)</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ and bad <sup>(7)</sup> \_\_\_\_\_. He said he would act immediately and he hoped the British people would be able to see clear signs of an <sup>(8)</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ in the economy by the end of the year.

➔ Write down the name of the person who does these things.

Example: farm ...*farmer*.....

- |                  |                    |                   |
|------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| 1 act .....      | 4 sing .....       | 7 economics ..... |
| 2 employ .....   | 5 murder .....     | 8 translate ..... |
| 3 football ..... | 6 psychology ..... | 9 manage .....    |

➔ Look at the two examples and then complete the rest of the definitions.

Example: An actor is a person who ...*acts in films, plays and on TV*.....

A murderer is a person who ...*murders someone*.....

- A journalist is a person who .....
- A ballet dancer is a person who .....
- A film director is a person who .....
- A bank manager is a person who .....
- An employer is a person who .....
- A pop singer is a person who .....
- A translator is a person who .....
- A lorry driver is a person who .....
- A photographer is a person who .....
- An artist is a person who .....

⇒ Add the *-ness* suffix to these adjectives.

*Example:* tired: tiredness

- 1 sad
- 2 happy
- 3 crazy
- 4 hopeless
- 5 ready

⇒ Circle the correct suffixed form of these words.

*Example:* beautiful beautyise **beautify** beauticate

- |              |            |             |               |
|--------------|------------|-------------|---------------|
| 1 refuse     | refusation | refusal     | refusity      |
| 2 forget     | forgetful  | forgetty    | forgetish     |
| 3 commercial | commercify | commerciate | commercialise |
| 4 excite     | excital    | exciteship  | excitement    |
| 5 scarce     | scarcity   | scarcedom   | scarcement    |

⇒ Put *-er* or *-or* onto the endings of these words, as appropriate.

*Example:* read...**er**...

- |              |                        |
|--------------|------------------------|
| 1 paint..... | 6 work.....            |
| 2 doct .. .  | 7 supervis.....        |
| 3 act .....  | 8 project.....         |
| 4 sail.....  | 9 print.....           |
| 5 writ ..... | 10 pencil-sharpen..... |

⇒ Make nouns from these verbs using *-tion*, *-ion* or *-ssion*.

*Example:* permit: permission

- |              |            |
|--------------|------------|
| 1 pollute    | 6 reduce   |
| 2 impress    | 7 add      |
| 3 alter      | 8 donate   |
| 4 admit      | 9 explain  |
| 5 complicate | 10 promote |

# Adjective suffixes

Suffixes change word class, e.g. from verb to noun or noun to adjective, but they can also change meaning (see sections B and C below).

## Noun or verb + suffix

<i>Noun or Verb</i>	<i>Suffix</i>	<i>Adjectives</i>
danger, fame	-ous	dangerous, famous (= well-known)
music, politics industry, economics	-al	musical, political, industrial, economical (= saves you money)
cloud, fog, sun, dirt	-y	cloudy, foggy, sunny, dirty (≠ clean)
attract, create	-ive	attractive (= pretty, nice to look at); creative (= able to produce new ideas; with imagination)

*Note:* Sometimes there is a spelling change. Here are common examples:

double the consonant, e.g. sun/sunny, fog/foggy

leave out the final 'e', e.g. create/creative, fame/famous

leave out the final 's' before 'al', e.g. politics/political; economics/economical

change 'y' to 'i' before 'al', e.g. industry/industrial

## -able /əbl/

This suffix (also **-ible** in some words) is used to form many adjectives from nouns or verbs: **enjoyable**, **comfortable**, **knowledgeable** (= knows a lot), **suitable** (= right/correct for a particular situation).

Quite often, **-able** (and **-ible**) has the meaning 'can be done'. For example, something that is **washable** 'can be washed'. Other examples include:

**drinkable**, **comprehensible** (= can be comprehended or understood), **reliable** (= can be relied on or trusted, e.g. a car or other machine that never goes wrong or breaks down).

Words ending **-able** quite often express the opposite meaning by adding the prefix **un-**:

**undrinkable**, **unreliable**, **unbreakable** (= cannot be broken), **unsuitable**, **uncomfortable**

Words ending **-ible** add the prefix **in-**:

**incomprehensible**, **inflexible** (somebody who is **inflexible** has a fixed idea about something and cannot change quickly or easily; an **inflexible** timetable cannot be changed easily); **inedible** (= cannot be eaten).

## -ful and -less

The suffix **-ful** often means 'full of' + the meaning of the adjective: **careful**, you are full of care; if you are **helpful** you are full of help. Other examples are: **painful** (= hurts a lot), **useful**, and **thoughtful** (= someone who is **thoughtful** is kind and always thinks about others; a **thoughtful** action shows care for others)

The suffix **-less** means 'without' + the meaning of the adjective: if you are **careless**, you do something 'without care'. Other examples are: **painless**, **useless** (= has no use or function) **thoughtless**, **jobless** and **homeless** (= with nowhere to live)

*Note:* You can see that **-ful** and **-less** are often used with the same words to form opposites. This is not always true: a person with a home is NOT **homeful**.

EXERCISES

⇒ Write down an adjective (or adjectives) formed from these nouns or verbs. Cover the opposite page first.

- |         |          |           |         |
|---------|----------|-----------|---------|
| thought | dirt     | pain      | comfort |
| attract | care     | knowledge | fame    |
| create  | danger   | suit      | rely    |
| fog     | politics | sun       | wash    |
| home    | enjoy    | music     | break   |
| use     |          |           |         |

⇒ Fill the gaps with suitable adjectives from the opposite page.

- 1 You must be very ..... when you drive in wet weather.
- 2 It was so ..... this morning that I couldn't see more than twenty metres in front of me.
- 3 Everyone in my country has heard of her; she's very .....
- 4 The people in the tourist information office were very ..... and answered all our questions without any problems.
- 5 This is a very ..... road; there were at least three serious accidents on it last year.
- 6 It was very ..... when I hit my leg against the corner of the table.
- 7 This bag is very ..... because I can use it for work or when I go on holiday.
- 8 We've never had any problems with our TV in ten years; it's been very .....
- 9 The factory is in the middle of the ..... part of the city, surrounded by other factories.
- 10 I made some coffee but it was horrible. In fact, my sister said it was .....
- 11 I'm afraid my working hours are very .....; I have to start at exactly the same time every day and finish at the same time every day.
- 12 It seems terrible to me that there are so many ..... people living in a city with thousands of empty houses.

⇒ How many of these words can form opposites with the suffix -less?

- painful    wonderful    useful    careful  
 beautiful    tactful    awful    thoughtful

Can you think of words which mean the opposite of the other words (the ones without -less)?

⇒ From the adjectives on this page and the opposite page, choose three which could describe each of these people or things. (You can use the same adjective more than once.)

- 1 the weather .....
- 2 someone who is a very bad driver .....
- 3 Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart .....
- 4 a large city .....
- 5 Albert Einstein .....
- 6 a new car .....
- 7 a speech .....
- 8 yourself .....

Here, there's a list of the most common suffixes in English. They are added to other words to form **NOUNS, ADJECTIVES AND VERBS**

## Common noun suffixes

-er /ə/ is used for the person who does an activity, e.g. **writer, worker, shopper, teacher.**

You can use **-er** with a wide range of verbs to make them into nouns.

Sometimes, the /ə/ suffix is written as -or instead of **-er**. It is worth making a special list of these as you meet them, e.g. **actor, operator, sailor, supervisor.**

-er/-or are also used for things which do a particular job, e.g. **pencil-sharpener, bottle-opener, grater, projector.**

-er and -ee can contrast with each other meaning 'person who does something.' (**-er**) and 'person who receives or experiences the action' (**-ee**), e.g. **employer/employee, sender/addressee, payee** (e.g. of a cheque).

-(t)ion /f(ə)n/ is used to make nouns from verbs.

**complication    pollution    reduction    alteration    donation    admission**

-ist [person] and -ism [activity or ideology]: used for people's politics, beliefs and ideologies, and sometimes their profession (compare with **-er/-or** professions above), e.g. **Marxism, Buddhism, journalism, anarchist, physicist, terrorist.**

-ist is also often used for people who play musical instruments, e.g. **pianist, violinist, cellist.**

-ness is used to make nouns from adjectives. Note what happens to adjectives that end in **-y**: **goodness, readiness, forgetfulness, happiness, sadness, weakness.**

## Adjective suffix

-able/-ible /əbl/ with verbs, means 'can be done'.

**drinkable    washable    readable    recognizable    countable    forgivable**

Examples with -ible: **edible** (can be eaten)    **flexible** (can be bent)

## Verbs

-ise (or -ize) makes verbs from adjectives, e.g. **modernise, commercialise, industrialise.**

## Other suffixes that can help you recognise the word class

-ment: (nouns) **excitement    enjoyment    replacement**

-ity: (nouns) **flexibility    productivity    scarcity**

-hood: (abstract nouns especially family terms) **childhood    motherhood**

-ship: (abstract nouns especially status) **friendship    partnership    membership**

-ive: (adjectives) **passive    productive    active**

-al: (adjectives) **brutal    legal** (nouns) **refusal    arrival**

-ous: (adjectives) **delicious    outrageous    furious**

-ful: (adjectives) **forgetful    hopeful    useful**

-less: (adjectives) **useless    harmless    cloudless**

-ify: (verbs) **beautify    purify    terrify**

*Note:* the informal suffix **-ish**, which can be added to most common adjectives, ages and times to make them less precise, e.g. She's **thirtyish**. He has **reddish** hair. Come about **eightish**.