

## 4. WORD BUILDING

### 4.1 COMMON SUFFIXES

Remember that we use most suffixes to refer a word to some part of speech.

The following suffixes are used to form **nouns**

Suffix	Meaning/Formation	Example
<b>-er/or</b>	person who does the activity	healer, reader, observer, doctor, tutor, etc.
<b>-ee</b>	person who receives the action	employee, trainee, addressee, etc.
<b>-er/or</b>	things which do a particular job	projector, protractor, eraser, laser, scanner, etc.
<b>-ist /-ian</b>	is used for people's politics, beliefs, professions/occupations	scientist, epidemiologist, internist, psychologist, pharmacologist, physicist, gynaecologist, ecologist, physician, paediatrician, obstetrician, etc.
<b>-ment</b>	to make verbs into abstract nouns	management, treatment, movement, development, etc.
<b>-ation, -(t)ion, -sion,</b>	to make verbs into abstract nouns	circulation, remission, coagulation, secretion, infection, incision, precision, lesion, etc.
<b>-ness, -ity</b>	added to adjectives	consciousness, tiredness, illness, drowsiness, sleeplessness, sensitivity, disability, activity, suitability, etc.
<b>-ance, -ence</b>	added either to a verb or an adjective	performance, entrance, disappearance, difference, reference, etc.
<b>-age</b>	added to adjectives or nouns	shortage, storage, bandage, haemorrhage, usage, etc.
<b>-ure</b>	added to a verb	failure, procedure, mixture, lecture, flexure, etc.
<b>-al, -th</b>	combine with an adjective or a verb	refusal, removal, approval, length, width, growth, depth, etc.
<b>-ing</b>	added to a verb	beginning, being, growing, comforting, etc.
<b>-y</b>	added to a verb or an adjective	delivery, surgery, bronchoscopy, atrophy, etc.
<b>-cy</b>	added to an adjective	accuracy, privacy, emergency, policy, inadequacy, etc.
<b>-ship, -hood</b>	added to other nouns to make new derivatives	relationship, scholarship, internship, hardship, childhood, motherhood, etc.

The following suffixes are used to form **adjectives**

Suffix	Formation/Meaning	Example
<b>-able, -ible</b>	added to a verb to form an adjective which shows that something can be done	applicable, unable, preferable, flexible, sensible, responsible, etc.
<b>-ful</b>	added to a noun to show that the quality exists	useful, harmful, painful, stressful, colourful, etc.
<b>-less</b>	added to a noun to show that the quality is lacking	harmless, hopeless, painless, needless, etc.
<b>-ive</b>	added to a verb or a noun to form an adjective	productive, effective, invasive, passive, reactive, etc.
<b>-ous</b>	added to nouns to form adjectives	famous, dangerous, osseous, infectious, nauseous, poisonous, hazardous, etc.
<b>-y</b>	added to nouns to form adjectives	bony, sleepy, fatty, heavy, dizzy, skinny, noisy, etc.
<b>-ic, -ical</b>	added to nouns to form adjectives	scientific, allergic, basic, generic, medical, clinical, critical, etc.
<b>-al</b>	added to a noun to form adjectives	legal, accidental, fatal, rational, logical, typical, etc.
<b>-ant, -ent</b>	added to verbs to form adjectives	ignorant, pleasant, tolerant, important, dependent, fluorescent, translucent, etc.

Suffixes used to form **verbs**

Suffix	Formation	Example
<b>-ise</b> (GB spelling)	modern + ise	modernise, immunise, sterilise, specialise, criticize, standardise, equalise, cauterise/cauterize, etc.
<b>-ize</b> (Am spelling)	advert + ise	
<b>-en</b>	length + en broad + en	lengthen, broaden, shorten, strengthen, fasten, weaken, etc.
<b>-ify</b>	quali(ty) + fy	magnify, qualify, specify, identify, simplify, etc.

The suffix used to form **adverbs**

Suffix	Formation	Example
<b>-ly</b>	the suffix is added to adjectives to form adverbs	ecologically, efficiently, successfully, radically, etc.

**Note:** The words *rate, control, influence, supply, credit, exchange, target, level, cost, import, export, purchase*, are both verbs and nouns with no change.

## 4.2 COMMON PREFIXES

Prefixes are often used to give adjectives a negative meaning. The most common are:

**un-, in-, dis-**, (unfortunately, there is no easy way of knowing which prefix any adjective will use to form its opposite), e.g. *unjust, unemployed, disloyal, inconvenient, inefficient, etc.*

### Note:

**in-** becomes **im-** before a root beginning with **m** or **p**, e.g. *immature, impatient, impolite, immoral, immigrant, impossible*

**in-** becomes **ir-** before a word beginning with **r** e.g. *irreplaceable, irresponsible, irregular, irrelevant*

**in-** becomes **il-** before a word beginning with **l**, e.g. *illegal, illiterate, illogical, illegible, etc.*  
Prefix **in-** does not always have a negative meaning. It often gives the idea of inside or into, e.g. *import, internal, income, etc.*

Prefixes **un-** and **dis-** can also form opposites of verbs, e.g. *undo, unload, discredit, disconnect, etc.*

### Other prefixes used in English are:

Prefix	Meaning	Example
<b>anti -</b>	against	antidepressant, anticoagulant, antibiotic, antibacterial
<b>bi -</b>	two	bilingual, bisexual, bisect
<b>co-</b>	with	cooperate, coagulate, cohabitate
<b>de-</b>	down	decrease, delay, degenerate, deduct, depress, demolish
<b>ex-</b>	out of, former	export, ex-president, external, excrete, excise, examine
<b>in-</b>	in, not	incomplete, internal, inject, invent
<b>inter-</b>	between/among	international, intercostal, intermediate, intervertebrate
<b>pro-</b>	in favour of	pro-government, pro and con
<b>mis-</b>	badly/wrongly	misunderstand, mismanage, misuse, mistreat
<b>multi-</b>	many	multi-purpose, multilingual, multifunctional, multivitamin
<b>re-</b>	again/back	retype, regain, retry, reassure, remove, recover
<b>out-</b>	more than	outnumber, outdo, outlive, outpace, outrun

<b>over-</b>	too much	overdo, overcrowded, overweight, overload
<b>under-</b>	not enough	underweight, undernourished, undergraduate
<b>post-</b>	after	postgraduate, postoperative, postnasal, post-mortem, post-traumatic, posthumous, postnatal
<b>sub-</b>	under	substratum, subdivision, sublingual, subcutaneous, substitute
<b>super-</b>	higher, superior	supermarket, superficial, superhero, superhuman, superfluous
<b>trans-</b>	across	transatlantic, transurethral, transverse, transmit, transplant, transsexual

**Note :** Some of these words are used with a hyphen. For example:

anticyclone, anti-**government**, anti-**inflation**, antiparticle, biangular, co-**author**, co-**worker**, co-**property**, co-**partner**, ex-**director**, inter-**city**, misprint, misinform, multi-**talented**, overcrowd, overdrawn, outlive, overflow, outgrow, post-**graduate**, post-**war**, rebuild, subcontinent, subalpine, subspecies, subsoil, superheat, sub-**standard**, transaction, undercurrent, underground, undersoil