

Root words

Many words cannot be broken down into parts, for example:

boy **yes** **person**

These consist of the root only.

Compound words

Roots may also combine to form compound words like *football*.

Affixes (prefixes and suffixes)

Other words contain a combination of the root and one or more affixes. Affixes are attachments at the beginning or end of a root word to modify its meaning. An affix **cannot stand alone**. For example,

pre + **script** + **ive**

contains the root *script* with a prefix *pre-* and a suffix *-ive*. Affixes can be prefixes or suffixes.

Prefixes

Many words contain a prefix. A prefix stands **before** the root word. For example,

prefix

contains *pre* (meaning 'before'), which is found in many other words such as:

pre-war, predetermine

Other common prefixes are *un* (or *in* or *im* or *ir*), *de*, *anti*, *re*, *co*, *sub*.

Suffixes

Suffixes stand **after** the root word.

There are two kinds of suffixes: derivational suffixes and inflectional suffixes

Derivational suffixes

These suffixes give **related words** different meanings and/or show that they belong to different word classes.

In this example,

prince - princess

the suffix *-ess* relates *princess* to *prince*, with a change of meaning indicating **gender**.

In this example,

derive - derivation - derivational

the suffixes *ation* (noun) and *al* (adjective) show that the words *derivation* and *derivational* are related to the verb *derive*, but are members of different word classes.

Other examples of derivational suffixes:

- *ism* forms nouns from other nouns (e.g. *organ/organism*);
- *ist* forms nouns or adjectives from nouns (e.g. *tour/tourist, Buddha/Buddhist*);
- *ful* forms nouns or adjectives from nouns (e.g. *spoon/spoonful, skill/skilful*);
- *ation* forms nouns from verbs (e.g. *emigrate/emigration, civilize/civilization*);
- *ity* forms nouns from adjectives (e.g. *moral/morality, able/ability, rapid/rapidity*);
- *ly* forms adverbs from adjectives, (e.g. *actual/actually, sincere/sincerely*);
- *ize* forms verbs from adjectives or nouns (e.g. *normal/normalize, synchrony/synchronize*).

Inflectional suffixes

These relate different forms of the same word.

In this example,

book - books,

The suffix *s* relates the plural *books* to the singular form of the same word.

The following are the regular inflectional suffixes:

- *s* marks a noun as plural, but marks a present tense verb as (third person) singular: e.g. *The books (noun) look interesting* but *The book looks (verb) interesting* (*s* changes to *es* after a hissing sound – for example: *hiss - hisses*)
- *ed* marks a verb as either a past tense or a past participle: e.g. *She walked* or *She has walked*.
- *ing* marks a verb as a present participle: e.g. *She is walking*.
- *er* marks an adjective or adverb as comparative: e.g. *quicker, sooner*.
- *est* marks an adjective or adverb as superlative: e.g. *quickest, soonest*.