

4 Word formation

Longman

dictionary

In English there are many word beginnings (prefixes) and word endings (suffixes) that can be added to a word to change its meaning or its word class. The most common ones are shown here, with examples of how they are used in the process of word formation. Many more are listed on the pages that follow.

Verb formation

The endings **-ize** and **-ify** can be added to many nouns and adjectives to form verbs, like this:

American		Americanize
legal	-ize	legalize
modern		modernize
popular		popularize

They want to make the factory more **modern**. They want to **modernize** the factory.

beauty		beautify
liquid	-ify	liquefy
pure		purify
simple		simplify

These tablets make the water **pure**. They **purify** the water.

Adverb formation

The ending **-ly** can be added to most adjectives to form adverbs, like this:

easy		easily
main	-ly	mainly
quick		quickly
stupid		stupidly

His behaviour was **stupid**. He behaved **stupidly**.

Noun formation

The endings **-er**, **-ment**, and **-ation** can be added to many verbs to form nouns like this:

drive		driver
fasten	-er	fastener
open		opener
teach		teacher

John **drives** a bus. He is a bus **driver**.
A can **opener** is a tool for **opening** cans.

amaze		amazement
develop	-ment	development
pay		payment
retire		retirement

Children **develop** very quickly. Their **development** is very quick.

admire		admiration
associate	-ation	association
examine		examination
organize		organization

The doctor **examined** me carefully. He gave me a careful **examination**.

The endings **-ity** and **-ness** can be added to many adjectives to form nouns, like this:

cruel		cruelty
odd	-ity	oddity
pure	-ty	purity
stupid		stupidity

Don't be so **cruel**. I hate **cruelty**.

dark		darkness
deaf	-ness	deafness
happy		happiness
kind		kindness

It was very **dark**. The **darkness** made it impossible to see.

Adjective formation

The endings **-y**, **-ic**, **-ical**, **-ful** and **-less** can be added to many nouns to form adjectives like this:

bush		bushy
dirt	-y	dirty
hair		hairy
smell		smelly

There was an awful **smell** in the room. The room was very **smelly**.

atom		atomic
biology	-ic	biological
grammar	-ical	grammatical
poetry		poetic

This book contains exercises on **grammar**. It contains **grammatical** exercises.

pain		painful
hope	-ful	hopeful
care		careful

His broken leg caused him a lot of **pain**. It was very **painful**.

pain		painless
hope	-less	hopeless
care		careless

The operation didn't cause her any **pain**. It was **painless**.

The ending **-able** can be added to many verbs to form adjectives, like this:

wash		washable
love	-able	lovable
debate		debatable
break		breakable

You can **wash** this coat. It's **washable**.

Opposites

The following prefixes can be used in front of many words to produce an opposite meaning. Note, however, that the words formed in this way are not always EXACT opposites, and may have a slightly different meaning.

un-	happy	unhappy
	fortunate	unfortunate
	wind block	unwind
		unblock

I'm not very **happy**. In fact I'm very **unhappy**.

in-	efficient	inefficient
im-	possible	impossible
il-	literate	illiterate
ir-	regular	irregular

It's just not **possible** to do that. It's **impossible**.

dis-	agree	disagree
	approve	disapprove
	honest	dishonest

I don't **agree** with everything you said. I **disagree** with the last part.

de-	centralize	decentralize
	increase	decrease
	ascend	descend
	inflate	deflate

Increase means to make or become larger in amount or number. **Decrease** means to make or become smaller in amount or number.

non-	sense	nonsense
	payment	nonpayment
	resident	nonresident
	conformist	nonconformist

The hotel serves meals to **residents** (= people who are staying in the hotel) only. **Nonresidents** are not allowed in.