

PREFIXES AND SUFFIXES

Some words are very short and simple. They are self-contained, so we use them without modifying them. Others have roots to which we can add prefixes and suffixes to change the meaning and make words in different grammatical categories: nouns from adjectives for example, or adjectives from nouns.

Mastering this area of language is a good idea, as it will give you a better understanding of the relationship between nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs, and will increase your vocabulary.

Prefixes and suffixes are added to the roots of words. (See the tables below for some examples.) It is common in English to start sentences, especially in writing, with adverbs containing prefixes and suffixes:

Incredibly, no-one was hurt in the accident.

Undeniably, it was a turning point in history.

A few suffixes have very specific, or limited, contexts:

+**'ish'** is used in the word 'childish' and added to some adjectives and numbers to give an idea of 'approximately' or 'quite' (reddish, tallish, fortyish etc.)

+**'like'** is used in the word 'childlike' (a good quality) and can be added to certain animal names to mean 'resembling' (snake-like etc.)

+**'worthy'** is added to a limited number of abstract nouns to mean 'meriting' (praiseworthy, trustworthy, creditworthy etc.), also the word 'seaworthy'.

Some words which appear to have prefixes and suffixes do not have a root which is used: ruthless, unassuming, unkempt etc. (not 'ruth'* , 'assuming'* or 'kempt'*)

PREFIX	ADDED TO...	MAKES...	GENERAL MEANING
un / in / im	adjectives (verbs)*	adjectives (verbs) *	not, negative,
dis	verbs	verbs (nouns)**	negative, opposite
mis	verbs	verbs (nouns)**	fail, do badly
under	verbs	verbs	not enough
over	verbs	verbs	too much

Examples:

uncertain...unsafe...insecure...intolerant...improbable...

disappear... disobey... disagree... distrust ...displace...

mistake... misunderstand... mishear... misspell... misbehave...

undervalue... underestimate... undercook... underrate... underpay...

overcharge... overbook... overstate... overflow... overheat...

* There is no real rule about when to use '+un' or '+in'; '+im' is used before adjectives beginning with 'p': **imp**erturbable (but **un**perturbed'). A few verbs have the '+un' prefix: undo, undress, untie etc. A lot of verbs have an 'un' participle form, but not an 'un' infinitive: unwashed, untried, unwanted, uncaring etc.

** Nouns: disappearance...disobedience... disagreement... etc. The suffixes vary.

SUFFIX	ADDED TO...	MAKES...	GENERAL MEANING
ful	nouns	adjectives	has this quality
less	nouns	adjectives	does not have this quality
ible	nouns / verbs	adjectives	is / can become this
able	verbs	adjectives	is / can become this

Examples:

**wonderful... thankful... useful... colourful... powerful...
careless... homeless... useless ...hopeless... flightless...
convertible... edible... responsible... contemptible... credible...
believable... reliable... adaptable... manageable... usable...**

To make the corresponding adverbs, add 'ly' (wonderfully etc.), or change a final 'e' to 'y' (reliably etc.). Not all of the adjectives have useful corresponding adverbs.

SUFFIX	ADDED TO...	MAKES...	GENERAL MEANING
ship	nouns	abstract nouns	sharing, participating
hood	nouns	abstract nouns	is in this state
ness	adjectives	abstract nouns	has this quality
ity	adjectives	abstract nouns	has this quality

Examples:

**friendship... membership... sportsmanship... citizenship... sponsorship...
parenthood... childhood... adulthood... manhood... motherhood...
goodness... lateness... kindness... darkness... madness...
ability... capability... purity... facility... inevitability...**

Exercise 1

Add the prefixes on the left to the words on the right to make new words.

un +	efficient
in +	heat
mis +	certain
over +	understand

Add the suffixes on the right to the words on the left.

help +	able
tire +	worthy
trust +	ful
impression +	lessly

Add the suffixes to make abstract nouns.

complex +	hood
state +	ship
late +	ity
partner +	ness

Exercise 2

Use ten of the words in the table to complete the sentences.

childhood	dissimilarity	effortlessly	environmentally	impractical
inability	ineffective	membership	misunderstanding	overrated
successful	underestimated	understandable	unreliable	willingness

1. The meeting was well-organized and everybody agreed that it was.....
2. It's a green product, so it's friendly.
3. A about the customer's requirements has caused the project to be held up.
4. Many people love her novels, but some critics think her writing is.....
5. It is to expect everyone to clear out their offices in twenty-four hours.
6. These old photos bring back happy memories.
7. The society's future depends on the of its sponsors to continue funding it.
8. It is that our readers are upset by the closure of the magazine.
9. We changed the photocopier because the old one was
10. Your of the book club will give you access to a world of literature.

PARTS OF SPEECH

Is 'since' an adverb or a preposition? There is no problem with not knowing the answer to this question if you are confident that you can use 'since' correctly.

What is the difference between an adjective and an adverb? This question is more fundamental.

While learning, you will almost certainly encounter dictionaries and grammar books which classify words and presume that you understand the classifications. It is important to have at least *some* idea of what is meant by 'conjunctions', 'pronouns' etc.

Also, some well-known international tests of English have sections which test your knowledge of parts of speech. You might, for example, have to fill a gap in a text correctly with a noun, a verb, an adjective, or an adverb.

Finally, if you can master this area of English, it will increase your vocabulary and improve your understanding of the language.

CATEGORIES

Here is one possible classification of parts of speech in alphabetical order:

ADJECTIVE

large, polite, red ...

ADVERB

often, slightly, up ...

CONJUNCTION

although, but, unless ...

DETERMINER

any, both, the ...

INTERJECTION / EXCLAMATION

hello, ouch!, yes ...

NOUN

book, mystery, tennis

PREPOSITION

at, from, into ...

PRONOUN

hers, who, you ...

VERB

be, get, run ...

WORD CLASS CHANGES

Many words with the same form are classified differently according to the context in which they are used :

*Can I have a drink of **water**?* (noun)

*It's time to **water** the plants.* (verb)

*We've lived here **since** 2006.* (preposition)

*I saw her a year ago, but haven't heard from her **since**.* (adverb)

Is **this** what you want? (pronoun)
What do you think of **this** dress? (determiner)

We had a **late** lunch. (adjective)
I arrived **late** for the meeting. (adverb)

ADDITIONAL POINTS

When a compound noun is formed, the first noun functions as an adjective. As an adjective does not have a plural, 's' is not applied to the first noun:

shoe shops (not 'shoes shops')

Gerunds are verbal forms which act as nouns. This can be seen if they are replaced by a noun:

Giving to charity has increased. (Donations have increased.)

Some 'phrasal verbs' contain adverb particles, while others contain prepositions. The difference can be seen in:

I gave **it** back. ('back' is an adverb)

I was looking **for it**. ('for' is a preposition)

ADJECTIVES AND ADVERBS

Adjectives qualify nouns (*a beautiful day ...*)

Adverbs may:

- qualify verbs (*behave carelessly ...*)
- modify adjectives (*ridiculously expensive ...*)
- intensify other adverbs (*incredibly quickly ...*)

Adverbs are often 'formed' from adjectives:

quick → quick + **ly**

beautiful → beautiful + **ly**

full → full+ **ly**

easy → eas+ **ily**

However, some very common adjectives and adverbs have the same form:

close, daily, early, fast, late, long, hard, well ...

The difference between *I'm not very well* and *He did that well* should be clear. The difference between *It is close* and *It came very close* is not so obvious. The verb 'be' and a few others are usually associated with adjectives, not adverbs.

POINTS TO REMEMBER AND ERRORS TO AVOID

Many errors of form and spelling are caused by knowing one word class and not another. Here are a few common problems:

advice (noun), advise (verb)

disappearance (noun), disappear (verb)

height (noun), high (adjective)

loss (noun), lose (verb)

success (noun), succeed (verb)

weight (noun), weigh (verb)

Note the difference between:

*We got there **late**.*

*What have you been doing **lately**?*

*He works much too **hard**.*

*There were **hardly** any people at the meeting.*

Words such as '~~oftenly~~' and '~~fastly~~' do not exist.

Exercise 1

Think of one word to fill the gap in each sentence. Which part of speech is the word?

1.

The today is 18°.

noun

verb

adjective

adverb

2.

It's cold in here, don't you?

noun

verb

adjective

adverb

3.

You can't go in you are a member.

conjunction

adverb

preposition

pronoun

4.

It wasn't intelligent to say what you said.

conjunction

adverb

preposition

pronoun

5.

I know some people can help you.

conjunction

adverb

preposition

pronoun

6.

I've just cut Do you have a bandage?

conjunction

adverb

preposition

pronoun

7.

A woman got into the car and drove it quite slowly.

noun

adjective

adverb

conjunction

8.

Don't drive so ! You'll cause an accident!

noun

adjective

adverb

conjunction

9.

Can you help me to translate my CV English?

conjunction

adverb

preposition

pronoun

10.

The event was a disaster! Almost came to it, because everyone had caught the virus.

conjunction

adverb

preposition

pronoun

Exercise 2

Which words complete the sentences correctly?

1. Mr Cho is known as a very manager.

a) competent

b) competently

2. Our sales team has flown 25,000 miles on business in the last three months.

a) near

b) nearly

3. We understand the market as as anyone.

a) good

b) well

4. It is departmental to insure all laboratory equipment.

a) policy

b) politic

5. We are to making an overseas investment.

a) close

b) closely

6. Traffic is likely to be diverted for the rest of the week, causing some to drivers.

- a) inconvenient
- b) inconvenience

7. The increase in parking fees has attracted from residents and store owners.

- a) critics
- b) criticism

8. The doctor prescribed medication to the pain.

- a) ease
- b) easier

9. Ms Philips has served the department for a number of years.

- a) reliable
- b) reliably

10. The device is so tiny that it only a few grams.

- a) weighs
- b) weights

Exercise 3

1. We want the new brochure to be attractive, so it must have a design.

- a) coloration
- b) colorful
- c) color
- d) coloring

2. The company's constant with the product have caused it to lose its identity.

- a) experiments
- b) experimented
- c) experimental
- d) experimentally

3. last month, the new art gallery is light and airy.

- a) Open
- b) Opened
- c) Opening
- d) Openly

4. It is that the award should be named after Mr Turner, who founded the association.

- a) fit
- b) fitted
- c) fitting
- d) fittingly

5. from a distance, the old harbour seems like a mysteriously charming model.

- a) View
- b) Viewed
- c) Viewing
- d) Viewable

6. The city administration remains..... opposed to any unnecessary expenditure.
- a) resolute
 - b) resolutely
 - c) resolving
 - d) resolution
7. Ms Lim acquired a broad knowledge of management through her MBA course.
- a) theoretical
 - b) theorizes
 - c) theorizing
 - d) theory
8. There is widespread for the way in which the company has revived its fortunes.
- a) admires
 - b) admiring
 - c) admirable
 - d) admiration
9. We should take advantage of the opportunities by the current state of the market.
- a) present
 - b) presented
 - c) presenting
 - d) presentable
10. The new oriental restaurant on Main Street has received reviews from the local press.
- a) enthusiast
 - b) enthusiasm
 - c) enthusiastic
 - d) enthusiastically
11. Smart home technology lets you control doors, lights and alarms
- a) automated
 - b) automation
 - c) automatic
 - d) automatically
12. This part of the plant is only with a security pass.
- a) access
 - b) accessing
 - c) accessible
 - d) accessibility
13. The service will be sold in a package from the company's other products.
- a) separate
 - b) separated
 - c) separation
 - d) separately

14. The system is easily adapted, as it is modular and
- a) expand
 - b) expansion
 - c) expanse
 - d) expandable
15. There are still many travelers on transatlantic ship crossings.
- a) regular
 - b) regulatory
 - c) regularity
 - d) regularly
16. Our of the meal was spoiled by the couple beside us who talked loudly throughout.
- a) enjoyable
 - b) enjoyed
 - c) enjoying
 - d) enjoyment
17. We are going to conduct a investigation into the reason why the tests failed.
- a) comprehension
 - b) comprehensible
 - c) comprehensive
 - d) comprehensively
18. It's a new technology, so the device remains quite for the moment.
- a) priced
 - b) pricing
 - c) pricey
 - d) priceless
19. The film was so controversial that most of the audience walked out during the first
- a) screen
 - b) screener
 - c) screening
 - d) screened
20. Upon the Earth's atmosphere, the rocket's first stage is slowed down.
- a) re-enter
 - b) re-entry
 - c) re-entering
 - d) re-entered

requirements – things needed, asked for or demanded
to hold something up – to cause a delay
critics – people who review books, plays, and movies
to clear out – to empty by removing papers, files etc.
to fund – to give financial support or backing
upset – unhappy, displeased
diverted – sent on a different route
parking fee – money paid to park a car in certain places