

Word Building

In English, words are formed from other words in two ways:

- a) By joining existing words, e.g. class + room = classroom. *Classroom* is a compound word; it is formed by compounding.
- b) By adding syllables to the beginning or end of a word, e.g. in + effect + ive = ineffective. *Ineffective* is formed by derivation. *In-* and *-ive* are affixes. *In-* is called a prefix and *-ive* a suffix. Generally suffixes change the grammatical class of words (effect = n.; effective - adj.) but not the basic meaning. Prefixes, on the other hand, usually change the meaning.

Here are some common prefixes. Dictionaries usually list these and their meanings:

(negation, not, opposite)

non-	nonsense, non-toxic
dis-	displace, displease
mis-	mislead, misprint
im-	improbable, immobile
in-	insoluble, inoperative
il-	illegitimate, illogical
ir-	irreplaceable, irregular
un-	unbroken, unavoidable

Here are some common suffixes, listed according to their grammatical functions:

Adjectives

-able, -ible	controllable, edible
-less	wingless, colourless
-ly, -y	lively, hardy
-ive	destructive, active
-ant, -ent	resistant, permanent
-ing	flying, hardening
-ed	hardened, purified

Verbs

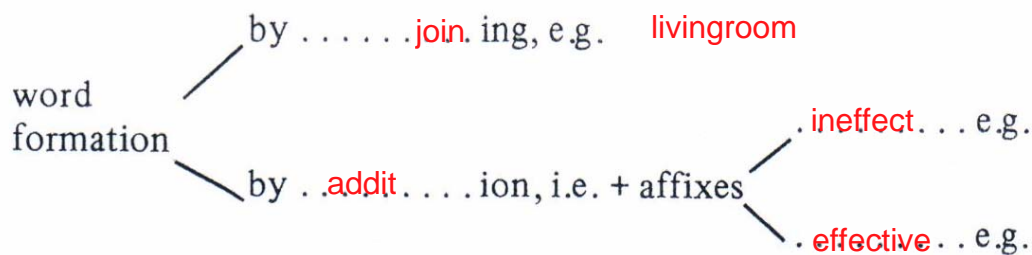
-en	harden, darken
-fy, -ify	liquify, solidify
-ate	amalgamate, compensate
-ise, -ize	sterilise, randomize

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Nouns

-er, -or	researcher, supervisor
-ist	economist, geologist
-ance, -ence	endurance, permanence
-ment	displacement, government
-ness	hardness, brittleness
-ity	rarity, activity
-ion	connection, provision
-ing	building, meeting

From what you have read about word building in this unit, complete the following classification



With the help of your dictionary, write down single words in the blank spaces below. Take care to note any changes in spelling.

- a) To make beautiful. = to . . . beautify
- b) Someone who investigates. = an . . investigator
This person's tasks and activities. = his . investigation
- c) The property of being flexible. = its . flexibility
- d) He likes to destroy things. = He's a . destroying person.
- e) The slow-worm is a kind of lizard without legs. = It is a . legless lizard.
- f) The heat will make the wax soft. = It will . soften it.
- g) As the wax becomes soft, it changes colour. = The . softening wax changes colour.
- h) When it is soft, the wax is brown. = The . softened wax is brown.
- i) The fact that it is soft makes it suitable. = Its . softness makes it suitable.