

# 115 Suffixes

Suffixes are small groups of letters which can be added to the end of many words to give them different meanings.

See also:

Types of verbs 49

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## 115.1 SUFFIXES

Suffixes attach to the end of a word to change its meaning. Suffixes usually give the same change in meaning to each word they attach to.

**-able** = possible to be

It's useful to set yourself **achievable** targets at work.



**-ful** = full of

The principal was so pleased that the play was **successful**.



**-ist** = someone who

My friend Jamie is the best **artist** I know.



**-less** = without

I don't like the food in the cafeteria. It is **tasteless**.



## FURTHER EXAMPLES

Hugo is very funny and kind. He's a really **likeable** guy.



I can paint the house in a day. It's definitely **doable**.



Sarah is a **violinist**. She plays in her local orchestra.



Now that I've passed my exams, I am **hopeful** for the future.



What a boring lecture. Being there was **pointless**.



I am a **perfectionist**. My work takes me a long time.



## 115.2 USING SUFFIXES

Some words can take more than one kind of suffix to give different meanings.

The best jokes are in good **taste**.



That joke was hilarious. It was very **tasteful**.



That joke was offensive. It was very **tasteless**.



## 115.3 COMMON SUFFIXES

SUFFIX	MEANING	SAMPLE SENTENCE
-able, -ible	able to be	It is perfectly <b>acceptable</b> to submit your essays online.
-al, -ial	having characteristics of	The verdict was based entirely on <b>circumstantial</b> evidence.
-ance, -ence	state of	Male lions fight each other to assert their <b>dominance</b> .
-ate	become	You need to <b>activate</b> your credit card before you can use it.
-dom	place or state of being	Older children can be given a greater amount of <b>freedom</b> .
-en	become	They are planning to <b>widen</b> the roads to reduce congestion.
-er, -or	person who performs an action	Shakespeare is probably the most famous English <b>writer</b> .
-ful	full of	The computer is one of the most <b>useful</b> inventions ever.
-ic, -tic, -ical	having characteristics of	Running is a great form of <b>physical</b> exercise.
-ism	an action, state, or system	<b>Surrealism</b> was a major art movement of the 20th century.
-ist, -ian	someone who plays or does	A <b>pianist</b> is somebody who can play the piano.
-ity, -ty	quality of	<b>Equality</b> is the belief that everybody should be equal.
-ize	make	I'm trying to <b>maximize</b> our profits by selling more stock.
-less	without	The possibilities of technology are <b>limitless</b> .
-ment	condition of, act of	Buying property can be a very good <b>investment</b> .
-ness	state of	Lots of people today are interested in health and <b>fitness</b> .
-ous	having qualities of	The inland taipan is the most <b>venomous</b> snake in the world.
-sion, -tion	state of being or act of	All essays should end with a good <b>conclusion</b> .
-y	characterized by	The weather's terrible today. It's very <b>cloudy</b> outside.

## 115.4 SUFFIXES CHANGING WORD CLASS

Certain suffixes are only used for specific types of words. The suffix of a word can sometimes show what part of speech the word is.

### ADJECTIVES



#### -able, -ible

comfortable  
manageable  
sensible

#### -al, -ial

accidental  
controversial  
seasonal

#### -en

golden  
wooden  
woolen

#### -ful

powerful  
useful  
wonderful

#### -ic, -tic, -ical

historic  
poetic  
radical

#### -less

harmless  
powerless  
tasteless

#### -ous

continuous  
famous  
outrageous

#### -y

cloudy  
funny  
stormy

### NOUNS



#### -acy

conspiracy  
diplomacy  
literacy

#### -al

accusal  
betrayal  
denial

#### -ance, -ence

competence  
defiance  
dominance

#### -ant, -ent

accountant  
defendant  
student

#### -ism

capitalism  
modernism  
realism

#### -ist

optimist  
pessimist  
pianist

#### -ity, -ty

equality  
royalty  
society

#### -ment

employment  
entertainment  
government

## VERBS



**-ate**

activate  
debate  
inflate

**-en**

brighten  
sweeten  
widen

**-ify**

classify  
mystify  
simplify

**-ize**

energize  
immunize  
minimize

**-dom**

freedom  
kingdom  
wisdom

**-er, -or**

generator  
singer  
writer

**-ness**

happiness  
sadness  
sickness

**-sion, -tion**

appreciation  
collision  
infection

## 115.5 SUFFIX SPELLING RULES

If the suffix starts with a vowel, and the root ends with a stressed final syllable ending consonant-vowel-consonant, the last letter of the root is doubled before adding the suffix.

occur

↓  
occurrence

If the suffix starts with a vowel and the root ends with an “-e,” the final “-e” is dropped from the root before adding the suffix. Roots ending “-ge” or “-ce” are an exception.

Root ends with “-ge.”

debate → debatable

manage → manageable

The “e” stays in the word.

If the root ends consonant plus “-y,” the “y” changes to an “i” before any suffix is added. The exception is “-ing.”

plenty → plentiful

apply → applying

“-y” doesn’t change before “-ing.”

If the root ends vowel plus “-y,” the final “-y” does not change.

Root ends vowel plus “-y.”

employ → employable

The “-y” does not change to an “i.”