

## Suffixes for English Language Learners

Adding suffixes to existing words (the base or root) to form new words is common in academic English. Suffixes are added to the back of the base word in order to create a new word with a different meaning. For example: (*awake*→*awaken*). Suffixes usually change the part of speech of the base word. Suffixes are not words in their own right and cannot stand on their own in sentence: if they are printed on their own they have hyphen before them (-en).

The most common suffixes used in academic English are: *-ise, -en, -ate, -(i)fy*.

### Suffixes used to create verbs:

Suffix	Example
<i>-ise/-ize</i>	compromise, stabilize, characterize, symbolize, visualize
<i>-ate</i>	differentiate, liquidate, pollinate, duplicate, fabricate
<i>-(i)fy</i>	classify, exemplify, simplify, justify
<i>-en</i>	awaken, fasten, shorten, moisten

*adjective + suffix → verb*                      *e.g. short + -en → shorten*

*noun + suffix → verb*                              *e.g. pollen + -ate → pollinate*

### Suffixes used to create nouns:

Suffix	Example
<i>-tion/-sion</i>	alteration, demonstration, expansion, inclusion, admission
<i>-er</i>	advertiser, driver, computer, silencer
<i>-ment</i>	development, punishment, unemployment
<i>-ant/-ent</i>	assistant, consultant, student
<i>-age</i>	breakage, wastage, package
<i>-al</i>	denial, proposal, refusal
<i>-ence/-ance</i>	preference, dependence, interference, attendance, acceptance, endurance
<i>-ery/-ry</i>	bribery, robbery, misery, refinery, bakery, geometry
<i>-ism</i>	Marxism, Maoism, Thatcherism
<i>-ship</i>	friendship, citizenship, leadership
<i>-age</i>	baggage, plumage
<i>-ity</i>	ability, similarity, responsibility, curiosity
<i>-ness</i>	darkness, preparedness, consciousness
<i>-cy</i>	urgency, efficiency, frequency

*verb + suffix → noun*

V                      suffix                      N  
*e.g. demonstrate + -tion → demonstration*

*noun + suffix → noun*

N            suffix            N  
*e.g. citizen + -ship → citizenship*

### **Suffixes used to create adjectives:**

Suffix	Example
<i>-al</i>	central, political, national, optional, professional
<i>-ent</i>	different, dependent, excellent
<i>-ive</i>	attractive, effective, imaginative, repetitive
<i>-ous</i>	continuous, dangerous, famous
<i>-ful</i>	beautiful, peaceful, careful
<i>-less</i>	endless, homeless, careless, thoughtless
<i>-able</i>	drinkable, countable, avoidable

*noun + suffix → adjective*

N            suffix            Adj  
*e.g. peace + -ful → peaceful*

*verb + suffix → adjective*

V            suffix            Adj  
*e.g. attract + -ive → attractive*

### **Prefixes and Suffixes used together:**

Prefix	Root	Suffix	Example
mis-	inform communicate interpret	-tion	misinformation miscommunication misinterpretation
un-	comfort imagine avail	-able	uncomfortable unimaginable unavailable
dis-	appoint able agree	-ment	disappointment disablement disagreement

*Contributed by Kelly Cunningham*