



# English Language Support

## Word Formation

### What are Word Formations?

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, followed by examples on how they are used in the process of word formation. More can be found in the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*.

<b>Verb Formation:</b> The endings <b>-ize</b> and <b>-ify</b> can be added to nouns and adjectives to form verbs			
American	+ <b>ize</b> = Americanize	Beauty	+ <b>ify</b> = beautify
Legal	+ <b>ize</b> = legalize	Liquid	+ <b>ify</b> = liquidify
Modern	+ <b>ize</b> = modernize	Pure	+ <b>ify</b> = purify
<i>They want to make the factory more <b>modern</b>. They want to <b>modernize</b> the factory.</i>		<i>These tablets make the water <b>pure</b>. They <b>purify</b> the water.</i>	

<b>Adverb Formation:</b> The ending <b>-ly</b> can be added to most adjectives to form adverbs			
Easy	+ <b>ly</b> = easily	<i>The English test was <b>easy</b>. He <b>easily</b> finished the test.</i>	
Stupid	+ <b>ly</b> = stupidly	<i>His behaviour was <b>stupid</b>. He behaved <b>stupidly</b>.</i>	

<b>Noun Formation:</b> The endings <b>-er</b> , <b>-ment</b> , and <b>-ation</b> can be added to many verbs to form nouns					
Drive	+ <b>er</b> = driver	Amaze	+ <b>ment</b> = amazement	Admire	+ <b>ation</b> = admiration
Fasten	+ <b>er</b> = faster	Develop	+ <b>ment</b> = development	Organize	+ <b>ation</b> = organization
Open	+ <b>er</b> = opener	Retire	+ <b>ment</b> = retirement	Examine	+ <b>ation</b> = examination
<i>John <b>drives</b> a bus. He is a bus <b>driver</b>.</i>		<i>Children <b>develop</b> very quickly. Their <b>development</b> is very quick.</i>		<i>The doctor <b>examined</b> me. The doctor gave me an <b>examination</b>.</i>	

The endings <b>-ity/ty</b> and <b>-ness</b> can be added to many adjectives to form nouns			
Cruel	+ <b>ty</b> = cruelty	Dark	+ <b>ness</b> = darkness
Stupid	+ <b>ity</b> = stupidity	Happy	+ <b>ness</b> = happiness
<i>Don't be so <b>cruel</b>. I hate <b>cruelty</b>.</i>		<i>It was very <b>dark</b>. The <b>darkness</b> made it hard to see.</i>	

<b>Adjective Formation:</b> The endings <b>-y</b> , <b>-ic</b> , <b>-ical</b> , <b>-ful</b> , and <b>-less</b> can be added to many nouns to form adjectives					
The ending <b>-able</b> can be added to many verbs to form adjectives					
Dirt	+ <b>y</b> = dirty	Atom	+ <b>ic</b> = atomic	Pain	+ <b>ful</b> = painful
Smell	+ <b>y</b> = smelly	Poetry	+ <b>ic</b> = poetic	Hope	+ <b>ful</b> = hopeful
<i>That was an awful <b>smell</b>. It was very <b>smelly</b>.</i>		<i>That was a book of <b>poetry</b>. It was a <b>poetic</b> book.</i>		<i>His broken leg caused <b>pain</b>. It was very <b>painful</b>.</i>	
Wash	+ <b>able</b> = washable	Pain	+ <b>less</b> = painless		
Love	+ <b>able</b> = lovable	Care	+ <b>less</b> = careless		
<i>You can <b>wash</b> this coat. It's <b>washable</b>.</i>		<i>The operation didn't cause <b>pain</b>. It was <b>painless</b>.</i>			

<b>Opposites:</b> <b>Prefixes</b> can be added to the front of many words to produce an opposite meaning			
NOTE: Some words produced do not have exact opposite words, but have similar meanings.			
<b>un-</b> + happy = unhappy	<b>in-</b> + efficient = inefficient	<b>de-</b> + centralize = decentralize	
<b>un-</b> + fortunate = unfortunate	<b>im-</b> + possible = impossible	<b>de-</b> + ascend = descend	
<b>un-</b> + lock = unlock	<b>il-</b> + literate = illiterate	<b>de-</b> + inflate = deflate	
<i>I'm not very <b>happy</b>. In fact I'm very <b>unhappy</b>.</i>	<i>It's just <b>not possible</b> to do that, it's <b>impossible</b>.</i>	<i>Instead of <b>inflating</b> the tire, he <b>deflated</b> it.</i>	
<b>dis-</b> + agree = disagree	<b>non-</b> + sense = nonsense		
<b>dis-</b> + approve = disapprove	<b>non-</b> + payment = non-payment		
<b>dis-</b> + honest = dishonest	<b>non-</b> + resident = non-resident		
<i>I don't <b>agree</b> with everything you said. I <b>disagree</b> with the last part.</i>	<i>The things you say are not making any <b>sense</b>. What you are saying is <b>nonsense</b>.</i>		

This handout was compiled by Vincent Chung, ELS student staff (April 2009)

Source: Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (2003.). Longman Pearson Education