

How to use suffixes



A suffix is a group of letters added to the end of a word. Suffixes modify the meaning of a word. They are useful in many ways, for example transforming verbs into nouns, making adjectives comparatives, change of tense, suggesting professions, etc.

The word "**believable**" consists of the root word "believe" combined with the suffix "**able**" (which means "**able to**"); the word "**believable**" means "**able to believe**". Suffixes are often used to show the part of speech of a word. Think of adding "**ion**" to a verb as "**tense**" which then makes it "**tension**," the noun form of the word.

Suffixes also show us the verb tense of words or whether the words are plural or singular. Some suffixes have more than one meaning. "**er**" may suggest a person who performs an action, like a **teacher**. But "**er**" is also used to make adjectives and adverbs, they then become comparatives - for example "**faster**" and "**stronger**."

Some examples:

"**ed**" – past tense | *show + ed = showed (used for verbs) | talked, managed, used*

"**ing**" – continuous forms or gerung | *show + ing = **showing** (verbs, nouns) | talking, managing, using*

"**y**" – full of | *mess + y = messy (to make adverbs and adjectives) | funny, fully, glory*

An overview of the most common suffixes

Suffix	Meaning	Examples
-able	able to, having the quality of	comfortable, portable (often adjectives and adverbs)
-al	relating to	annual, comical (often adjectives and adverbs)
-er	comperative and nouns	bigger, stronger (adjectives and adverbs) teacher, manager (nouns)
-est	superlative	strongest, tiniest (often adjectives and adverbs)
-ful	full of	beautiful, grateful (often adjectives)
-ible	forming an adjective	reversible, terrible (adjectives)
-ily	forming an adverb	happily, lazily (adverbs)
-ing	denoting an action, a material, gerund	acting, showing (verbs and gerunds)
-less	without, not affected by	friendless, tireless (often adjectives)
-ly	forming an adjective	clearly, hourly (adjectives)
-ness	denoting a state or condition	kindness, wilderness (often nouns)
-y	full of, denoting a condition, diminutive	glory, messy, victory (often adjectives and nouns)



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Spelling changes

When you add a suffix to a word, often the spelling of the original word stays the same, but sometimes they do change. For example: if the original word is one syllable and ends with a single consonant, we double the last letter. For example: **run = running, tip = tipped**. If the word ends in more than one consonant, for example *talk = talked*, the last letter doesn't get doubled.

The spelling of a base word can change when you add a suffix. Think of words ending in the letter "y" when we want to add the suffix -ness: "**crazy**" - "**craziness**," we replace the "y" with an "i".

Or words ending in a silent "e" when the suffix begins with a vowel. For example, "**date**," "**fade**" and "**imagine**," we drop the "e" in the words when we add -ing to make: "**dating**," "**fading**" and "**imagining**."

We also often, but certainly not always drop the silent "e" before the suffix -able such as in "**advisable**" or "**inflatable**", but not in "**changeable**" and "**loveable**." We sometimes double the consonant when the ending is added for example in "**forgettable**" or "**regrettable**".

Note: sometimes problems occur from a mix up between English and other languages. Spanish has a lot of verbs which end in AR
- confisCAR (Spanish) = confiscATE (English). This can result in the assumption that all Spanish verbs that end in AR end in ATE in English.
- cocinAR (Spanish) = cook (English) is sometimes heard as cocinATE. (incorrect)

1. Practise - choose the right suffix (look in the list above if unsure)

-able -al -er -est -ful -ible
-ily -ing -less -ly -ness -y

1. depend ____
2. nice ____
3. hydrate ____
4. play ____
5. behave ____
6. thought ____
7. do ____
8. commic ____
9. sport ____
10. big ____
11. reverse ____
12. like ____
13. kind ____
14. fun ____
15. hour ____
16. historc ____
17. friend ____
18. great ____
19. mess ____
20. active ____
21. direct ____
22. understand ____
23. active ____
24. comfort ____
25. crazy ____

2. Practise - fill in the gaps by choosin the correct suffix. (look in the list above if unsure)

Example: ____ . The situation can only change depending on your actions.

1. Many of us think that W. Churchill was the greatest (politics) ____ of the 20th century.
2. If you need a certain book, the (manage) ____ will help you look for it.
3. He's always been (thought) ____ so we weren't surprised when he came to surprise her.
4. What you did was terrible, but your mistake is (reverse) ____.
5. The (hour) ____ wage of this country is (incredible) ____ low.
6. Her housemate is very (mess) ____, I don't understand how they live together.
7. After doing sports, you should drink enough water to stay (hydrate) ____.
8. There is security at many public paces in order to prevent a (terror) ____ attack.
9. ZARA just launched their new (collect) ____, do you want to have a look?
10. Shooting would start again at 9 the following morning.
11. As soon as they said goodbye, she became (emotion) ____.
12. My grandmother is getting old these days, she's verb (forget) ____.

3. Practise - think of your own examples

- | -able | -al | -er | -est | -ful | -ible |
|-----------------------|------------------|----------------|----------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| 1. <u>forgettable</u> | <u>emotional</u> | <u>manager</u> | <u>largest</u> | <u>thoughtful</u> | <u>reversible</u> |
| 2. _____ | | | | | |
| 3. _____ | | | | | |
| 4. _____ | | | | | |

- | -ily | -ing | -less | -ly | -ness | -y |
|-------------------|-------------------|-----------------|---------------|-----------------|--------------|
| 1. <u>happily</u> | <u>practising</u> | <u>tireless</u> | <u>hourly</u> | <u>kindness</u> | <u>crazy</u> |
| 2. _____ | | | | | |
| 3. _____ | | | | | |
| 4. _____ | | | | | |