

# English Word Formation Processes

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# Word-Formation Processes in English (word building)

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IS THE PROCESS OF BUILDING NEW WORDS BY MEANS OF EXISTING ELEMENTS OF LANGUAGE ACCORDING TO CERTAIN PATTERNS AND RULES

# Why Word Formation Processes in an EAP Class

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To empower students linguistically

To provide students the functional skills in linguistic innovation or creativity

To aid in the understanding of words. Their knowledge in the processes can aid in lexical competence

Communicative competence

# Affixation

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Affixation is the process where we take a base form word and we add a prefix, infix or suffix.

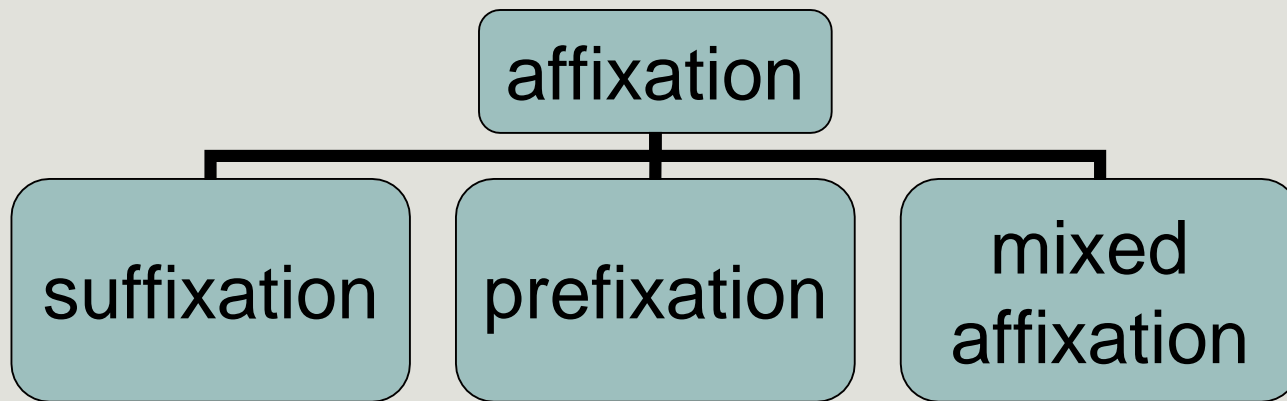
A prefix is an affixation process that includes adding a morpheme at the beginning of the word

A suffix is a segment that we add at the end of the words.

An infix is what goes between the prefix and the root

# Types of Affixation

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# Affixation

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## Suffixation

words are formed with the help of suffixes

changes a part-of-speech meaning  
*(e.g. work – worker)*

transfers a word into a different semantic group  
*(e.g. child – childhood)*

is characteristic of noun and adjective formation

## Prefixation

words are formed with the help of prefixes

does not change a part-of-speech meaning  
*(e.g. usual – unusual)*

about 25 prefixes form one part of speech from another  
*(e.g. head – to behead)*

is characteristic of verb formation

# Mixed Affixation

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formation by both prefixation and suffixation

semantic structure becomes more limited

the more affixes added the less polysemantic the word becomes

*e.g. speak – unspeakable*

*place – irreplaceable*

# Suffixes

These are the responsible for making words change their function.

There are:

- Noun suffixes
- Adjective Suffixes
- Verb Suffixes
- Adverb Suffixes

As a reading, writing or listening recognition strategy, despite of not having the exact meaning of a word, just by looking at the suffix we know the function of the word.



## **Noun-forming suffixes:**

-or: actor, visitor, director

-er/er: speaker, engineer, opener

-ist: scientist, satirist, journalist

-ess: hostess, stewardess, actress

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-ty/ity: cruelty, purity, stupidity

-ure/ture: failure, exposure, mixture

-dom: freedom, kingdom,

-age: passage, marriage, postage

-ance/ence: appearance, preference

-hood: likelihood, brotherhood, neighbourhood

-ing: reading, opening, beginning

-ion/sion/tion/ition/ation: operation, permission, description

-ness: kindness, goodness, willingness

-y/ery: difficulty, enquiry, robbery, slavery

-ship: partnership, membership, kinship

-ment: government, development, movement

-t: complaint, restraint

## Adjective-forming suffixes:

-able/ible: comfortable, fashionable, sensible

-ic/atic: atomic, heroic, systematic

-ful: beautiful, helpful, careful

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-y: bloody, dirty, sunny

-less: useless, homeless, careless

-al/ial/tial: personal, influential, preferential

-ive/ative/itive: active, creative, sensitive

-ant/ent: pleasant, different, excellent

-en: wooden, golden, woollen

-like: childlike, ladylike

-ing: amusing, interesting, charming

-ous: dangerous, famous, mysterious

-ish: bookish, childish, foolish

-ly: friendly, lovely, manly

## **Verb-forming suffixes:**

-ize/ise: civilize, modernize

-ify/fy/efy: simplify, glorify

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-en, deepen, sharpen, lengthen

## **Adverb-forming suffixes:**

-ly: formally, calmly, easily

-ward/wards: homeward, afterwards, backwards

-wise/ways: clockwise, otherwise, sideways

-fold: twofold, threefold

# Infixes

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They are not very common in English.

When they appear is because they are usually in an exclamation word.

Un*fuckin*gbelievable!

Abso*goddam*lutely!



# Coinage

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Coinage is the invention of totally new terms.

## **Sources of coined words:**

1. Trade names of commercial products that become general terms.

e.g. aspirin, kleenex, teflon, xerox.

2. New words based on the name of a person or a place.

e.g. hoover, jeans, sandwich.

# Borrowing (loan words)

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Words are created by borrowing from another language and incorporating into English.

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Sometimes the original meaning is altered, and the pronunciation may change. Since some words were borrowed long ago, it may be hard to recognize that they were ever not part of English.

## Examples

- Tortilla
  - coup de grace
  - kowtow
  - alchemy
  - espresso
- \* nuance
  - \* chaos

# Compounding

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A new word is composed of two free morphemes to create a new meaning. Examples:

- buyout
  - spyware
  - ringtone
  - freefall
  - makeover
  - turnaround
- do-it-yourself  
homeplate  
underestimate  
backpedal  
overstate  
upstage



***2Compounding*** is one of the principal, most productive, and the oldest way of creating words in English

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Nouns – motorway, breakfast, skinhead

Adjectives – snow-white, hard-working

Verbs – daydream, broadcast

Adverbs – downstairs, sometimes, today

Pronouns – somebody, anyone, myself

Prepositions – into, without, within

Conjunctions – whenever, however

# Blending

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A new word is created from blends or parts of morphemes in two other words to form a new single morpheme. Examples:

- Motel (motor-hotel)
- Telecast (television-broadcast)
- Brunch (breakfast-lunch)
- Smog (smoke-fog)
- Modem (Modulator-demodulator)

# Blends

camcorder (camera + recorder) clash (clap + crash) cosmeceutical  
(cosmetic + pharmaceutical) ; docudrama (documentary + drama)  
electrocute (electricity + execute); emoticon (emote + icon)  
faction (fact + fiction); fanzine (fan + magazine)  
flirtationship (flirting + relationship) glimmer (gleam + shimmer)  
Globish (global + English); infotainment (information + entertainment)  
moped (motor + pedal); pornacopia (pornography + cornucopia)  
pulsar (pulse + quasar); sexcapade (sex + escapade) ;  
sexploitation (sex + exploitation)  
sitcom (situation + comedy) slanguage (slang + language)  
smash (smack + mash) sportscast (sports + broadcast)  
stagflation (stagnation + inflation) staycation (stay home + vacation)  
telegenic (television + photogenic)  
textpectation (text message + expectation) workaholic (work + alcoholic)

Clipping (or shortening)  
New<sup>6</sup> words are made by  
shortening the perceived  
ending of another word  
or phrase.

# Types of Shortening

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**final clipping** (apocope) - a word is shortened at the end

e.g. *ed* *editor, ref* *referee*

**initial clipping** (apheresis) – a word is shortened at the beginning

e.g. *phone* ← *telephone,*  
*chute* ← *parachute*

←

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# Types of Shortening

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**medial clipping** (syncope) – some syllables or sounds are omitted from the middle of a word

e.g. *maths*

*mathematics*

*specs*

*spectacles*



*fancy*

*fantasy*



# Types of Shortening

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a word is clipped both at the end and at the beginning

e.g. *flu*

*influenza*

*tec*

*detective*

*fridge*

*refridgerator*



# Acronyms

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The first letter of a group of words is combined into a single word. The resulting word is sometimes capitalized but later made lower case. Examples:

- Radar
- Scuba
- pin (number)
- zip (code)
- POTUS
- AWOL



# Abbreviations

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The first letters of a group of words are combined into a single word whose letter names are pronounced separately. Examples:

◦ **RSVP**

**R&B**

◦ **LOL**

**B&B**

◦ **BFF**

**AKA**

◦ **RIP**

Mixed form of abbreviations and acronyms:

**JPEG**

**ASAP**

# Backformation

This process means a word of one type (usually a noun) is changed to another different type of word (usually a verb)

Example: television -> televise

- priority -> prioritize
- donation -> donate
- enthusiasm -> enthuse
- sermon -> sermonize
- Donation(n) -donate (v)
- Option(n) -Opt (v)
- Babysitter(n) -Babysit (v)

# Conversion

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New words are formed when the grammatical category of a word is changed with no changes to the basic letters of the word.

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Examples:

- butter (N -> V)
- empty (adj -> V, N)
- this movie is a must (V -> N)
- chair (N -> V)
- “friend” on Facebook (N -> V)
- homeschool (N ->V)
- The “can do” spirit (V -> adj.)



# Multiple processes!

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*deli* is **borrowed** from German (*delicatessen*) and then **clipped**

*snowball* is **compounded** from two free morphemes to form a noun, then **converted** into a verb (snowballed, etc.);

*Internet* is a product of **clipping** (international plus network), **blending** (*inter+net*) and **conversion** (*netiquette*)

*cyberbullying* is a **blend** (*cyber + bully*) and a **conversion** (N -> V-> Gerund)

# Reduplication

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NEW WORDS ARE FORMED BY EITHER DOUBLING AN ENTIRE FREE MORPHEME OR PART OF IT.

FAST FAST

*SHARP SHARP*

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See you next class  
read on PARTS OF SPEECH please!!