



WORD FORMATION

Many words in English are formed from the same root or base of a word. Using the word **joy** as a base for example, there is a range of words that can be formed. Adding **en-** to **joy** forms **enjoy** and such words as **enjoyable, enjoyably, enjoyment,** and there is also **joyful, joyless** and **joyous**. There is even a relatively new word **joystick** which is a device used to control an airplane or computer game. These words were formed in four different ways, including:

- prefixes
- suffixes
- converting
- compounding

IELTS Tip

When you come across an unfamiliar word in your reading, try to work out the meaning from the parts of the word you may know.

For example, check whether you recognise the prefix, suffix or any other part. Through association take a guess what the word might mean.

Learning the meanings of prefixes and suffixes and knowing how to convert and make compound words can help you to extend your vocabulary and work out the meaning of unfamiliar vocabulary. It also helps to remember the meaning of words more easily.

Prefixes

Here is a list of some of the more common prefixes and words commonly used with them.

Prefix	Meaning	Examples
a-	in a particular state, in the process of	asleep, awake, aside, aback, anew
anti-, ant-	against, opposing	antisocial, antioxidant, antidote, anti-aircraft, antipasto, antiperspirant, antiseptic, anti-pollution, anti-virus
auto-	self	autobiography, autograph, autoimmune, automobile, autocue, autonomy, autopilot
bi-	two, twice	biannual, bicycle, bicentenary, bilingual
co-	with	coexist, cohabit, coeducational, co-author, cooperate, co-pilot, co-worker
de-	to reverse, to remove, opposite action	deforestation, dehydration, decaffeinated, defrost, devaluation, detoxification (detox)
dis-	to remove, to reverse, opposite action, negation	disinfect, disadvantage, disagree, disapprove, disconnect, disqualify
eco-	relating to the environment	eco-friendly, ecosystem, eco-tourism, eco-tourist, ecology
ex-	former, previous	ex-president, ex-smoker
hyper-	more than usual	hyperactive, hypertension, hypertext, hypermarket, hyperventilate
hypo-	less than usual	hypochondria, hypothermia
il-, im-, in-, ir-	not, without	illegal, inappropriate, impossible, impolite, irrational, irresponsible
in-, im-	in, toward, inside	input, intake, import



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inter-	between, connected, among	interaction, interchange, international, intergenerational, intercontinental, interdepartmental, interdisciplinary
mis-	incorrectly, wrong	misunderstand, misspell, mistranslate, misinterpret, mistrial, misuse, mistreat, misfortune, mishandle, misplace
non-	not, opposite of	non-smoker, non-alcoholic, non-dairy, non-stick, non-standard, non-specific, non-profit, non-prescription, non-negotiable, non-scientific, non-violent
over-	too much	overpopulation, overeat, overload, overwork, overcharge, overdose, overdue, overfishing, overheat, overindulge, overpay, oversleep, overtime, overweight
post-	after	postgraduate, post-secondary, post-industrial, post-examination, postscript (PS)
pre-	before	prefix, prepay, pre-2010, premature, pre-cooked, prehistoric, preview
re-	again, back	replay, resend, rewrite, rename, replace, recycle, redial, recover, rebuild, recall, re-format, refuel, removable, renew, reorder, repay, reschedule
sub-	below, under, secondary	subsection, subway, substandard, submarine, substation, subtitle, sub-zero, subtotal
un-	not, to remove, to reverse	unhappy, unkind, uncertain, unusual, unable, unaware, unbalanced, unbelievable, unbiased, uncomfortable, uncooked, undecided, unemployed, unemployment, unequal, unpaid, unreliable
well-	successful, useful	well-balanced, well-dressed, well-educated, well-being, well-run, well-written, well-built

Suffixes

Here is a list of some of the more common suffixes which form adjectives, nouns and verbs, and words commonly used with them.

Suffixes forming adjectives		
Suffix	Meaning	Examples
-able, -ible	able to be done, capable of being	readable, drinkable, useable, washable, responsible, visible, suitable, knowledgeable
-al	relating to	national, informal, political, seasonal, criminal
-ful	having the characteristic of	joyful, helpful, forgetful, powerful, grateful, successful, wonderful, cheerful, beautiful, peaceful
-ian	relating to, nationalities	Australian, Canadian, Austrian, Cambodian, Egyptian, Iranian, Indian, Jordanian, Slovakian, Russian, Ukrainian
-ive	something that is	attractive, effective, imaginative, productive, persuasive, repetitive
-less	without	homeless, worthless, hopeless, nameless, effortless, meaningless, useless
-like	resembling	child-like, business-like, mouse-like
-ous	having the characteristic of	delicious, famous, dangerous, enormous, generous



Suffixes forming nouns		
Suffixes	Meaning	Examples
-ant/-ent	someone who does something or something that has a particular function	student, president, resident, assistant, defendant, accountant, deodorant
-ee	someone who does something	addressee, interviewee, referee, trainee, employee, refugee, trustee, lessee, retiree
-ar, -er, -or	someone who does something, something that does a particular job	writer, teacher, worker, dancer, buyer, actor, supervisor, hammer
-ism	belief, behaviour, theory or act of	Buddhism, humanism, journalism, feminism, criticism, alcoholism, vegetarianism,
-ist	person connected with, belief in	Buddhist, humanist, journalist, feminist, pianist, violinist, cellist
-ment	forming abstract nouns	government, enjoyment, management, development, employment, investment, achievement
-ness	quality or state	happiness, kindness, forgiveness, goodness, sadness, weakness, thickness, thinness, darkness
-sion, -tion	quality or state	population, computerisation, discussion, excursion, complication, formation, confusion

Suffixes forming verbs		
Suffix	Meaning	Examples
-ate	to bring about a state	demonstrate, generate, communicate, suffocate, illustrate, separate, segregate, legislate, validate, immigrate, motivate
-en	to become	widen, thicken, ripen, lengthen, strengthen, lighten, shorten, darken
-ify	to make something, to become	identify, clarify, simplify, glorify, modify, purify, solidify
-ise (-ize*) *North American English	to do something, to become	criticise, computerise, realise, rationalise, standardise, modernise, nationalise, homogenise, idealise, optimise, popularise, sanitise

Converting

A word can change from one part of speech to another without adding a prefix or suffix. This is called conversion or converting.

Here are some of the more common type of conversions and examples.

Converting		
verbs → nouns	to drink – a drink; to speed – speed; to work – work; to laugh – a laugh	
nouns → verbs	head – to head (a committee); e-mail – to e-mail; humour – to humour (someone)	
adjectives → verbs	calm – to calm; smooth – to smooth (something over/down/into)	
nouns → verbs by stress	nouns	verbs
	abstract accent address ally combat	abstr <u>a</u> ct acc <u>e</u> nt add <u>r</u> ess all <u>y</u> comb <u>a</u> t



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	<p>compound conduct conflict console contest contrast converse convert decrease desert (cf dessert) discount export finance increase insult object present produce progress project protest record recount refuse research subject suspect transfer transport upset</p>	<p>compound conduct conflict console contest contrast converse convert decrease desert discount/discount (North America) export finance increase insult object present produce progress project protest record recount refuse research subject suspect transfer transport upset</p>
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Compounding

Compound words are found in all parts of speech, but the most common are those formed with adjectives, nouns and verbs.

Compound adjectives	
function: object + -ed/-ing	dark-haired, English-speaking, brown-eyed, right-handed, long-sighted, easy-going, broad-shouldered, air-conditioned
others	fat-free, duty-free, interest-free, hand-made, first-class, part-time, dry-roasted, light-blue

Compound nouns	
subject + verb	bus stop, car park, heart attack, headache, car alarm
verb + subject	answering machine, chewing gum, steering wheel, alarm clock, driving school
object + verb	global warming, food poisoning, blood donor, data processing
noun + noun	greenhouse effect, bank account, junk food, mother-tongue, death penalty, human rights
from phrasal verbs	check-out, crack-down, break-up, turnover, print run

Compound verbs	
derived from another part of speech	to babysit, to daydream, to dry-clean, to sightsee