**Vocabulary building**

**Affixes and roots**

Adding affixes to existing words (the base or root) to form new words is common in academic English. Prefixes are added to the front of the base (*like* right arrow *dislike*), whereas suffixes are added to the end of the base (*active* right arrow *activate*). Prefixes usually do not change the class of the base word, but suffixes usually do change the class of the word.

The most common prefixes used to form new verbs in academic English are: *re-, dis-, over-, un-, mis-, out-*. The most common suffixes are: *-ise, -en, -ate, -(i)fy*. By far the most common affix in academic English is *-ise*.

**Verbs**

e.g. prefix + verb right arrow verb

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| **Prefix** | **Meaning** | **Examples** |
| *re-* | again or back | restructure, revisit, reappear, rebuild, refinance |
| *dis-* | reverses the meaning of the verb | disappear, disallow, disarm, disconnect, discontinue |
| *over-* | too much | overbook, oversleep, overwork |
| *un-* | reverses the meaning of the verb | unbend, uncouple, unfasten |
| *mis-* | badly or wrongly | mislead, misinform, misidentify |
| *out-* | more or better than others | outperform, outbid |
| *be-* | make or cause | befriend, belittle |
| *co-* | together | co-exist, co-operate, co-own |
| *de-* | do the opposite of | devalue, deselect |
| *fore-* | earlier, before | foreclose, foresee |
| *inter-* | between | interact, intermix, interface |
| *pre-* | before | pre-expose, prejudge, pretest |
| *sub-* | under/below | subcontract, subdivide |
| *trans-* | across, over | transform, transcribe, transplant |
| *under-* | not enough | underfund, undersell, undervalue, underdevelop |

e.g. Suffix used to form verbs with the meaning "cause to be".

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| **Suffix** | **Example** |
| *-ise* | stabilise, characterise, symbolise, visualise, specialise |
| *-ate* | differentiate, liquidate, pollinate, duplicate, fabricate |
| *-fy* | classify, exemplify, simplify, justify |
| *-en* | awaken, fasten, shorten, moisten |

**Nouns**

The most common prefixes used to form new nouns in academic English are: *co-* and *sub-*. The most common suffixes are: *-tion, -ity*, *-er, -ness, -ism, -ment, -ant, -ship, -age, -ery*. By far the most common noun affix in academic English is *-tion.*

e.g. prefix + noun right arrow noun

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| **Prefix** | **Meaning** | **Examples** |
| *anti-* | against | anticlimax, antidote, antithesis |
| *auto-* | self | autobiography, automobile |
| *bi-* | two | bilingualism, biculturalism, bi-metalism |
| *co-* | joint | co-founder, co-owner, co-descendant |
| *counter-* | against | counter-argument, counter-example, counter-proposal |
| *dis-* | the converse of | discomfort, dislike |
| *ex-* | former | ex-chairman, ex-hunter |
| *hyper-* | extreme | hyperinflation, hypersurface |
| *in-* | the converse of | inattention, incoherence, incompatibility |
| *in-* | inside | inpatient, |
| *inter-* | between | interaction, inter-change, interference |
| *kilo-* | thousand | kilobyte |
| *mal-* | bad | malfunction, maltreatment, malnutrition |
| *mega-* | million | megabyte |
| *mis-* | wrong | misconduct, misdeed, mismanagement |
| *mini-* | small | mini-publication, mini-theory |
| *mono-* | one | monosyllable, monograph, monogamy |
| *neo-* | new | neo-colonialism, neo-impressionism |
| *out-* | separate | outbuilding, |
| *poly-* | many | polysyllable |
| *pseudo-* | false | pseudo-expert |
| *re-* | again | re-organisation, re-assessment, re-examination |
| *semi-* | half | semicircle, semi-darkness |
| *sub-* | below | subset, subdivision |
| *super-* | more than, above | superset, superimposition, superpowers |
| *sur-* | over and above | surtax |
| *tele-* | distant | telecommunications, |
| *tri-* | three | tripartism |
| *ultra-* | beyond | ultrasound |
| *under-* | below, too little | underpayment, under-development, undergraduate |
| *vice-* | deputy | vice-president |

e.g. Suffix added to a verb (V), noun (N) or adjective (A) right arrow noun

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| **Suffix** | **Meaning** | **Examples** |
| *-tion -sion* | action/instance of V-ing | alteration, demonstration expansion, inclusion, admission |
| *-er* | person who V-s something used for V-ing | advertiser, driver computer, silencer |
| *-ment* | action/instance of V-ing | development, punishment, unemployment |
| *-ant -ent* | person who V-s | assistant, consultant student |
| *-age* | action/result of V | breakage, wastage, package |
| *-al* | action/result of V | denial, proposal, refusal, dismissal |
| *-ence -ance* | action/result of V | preference, dependence, interference attendance, acceptance, endurance |
| *-ery/-ry* | action/instance of V-ing place of V-ing | bribery, robbery, misery refinery, bakery |

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| **Suffix** | **Meaning** | **Examples** |
| *-er* | person concerned with N | astronomer, geographer |
| *-ism* | doctrine of N | Marxism, Maoism, Thatcherism |
| *-ship* | state of being N | friendship, citizenship, leadership |
| *-age* | collection of N | baggage, plumage |

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| **Suffix** | **Meaning** | **Examples** |
| *-ity* | state or quality of being A | ability, similarity, responsibility, curiosity |
| *-ness* | state or quality of being A | darkness, preparedness, consciousness |
| *-cy* | state or quality of being A | urgency, efficiency, frequency |

**Adjectives**

Many adjectives are formed from a base of a different class with a suffix (e.g. *-less, -ous*). Adjectives can also be formed from other adjectives, especially by the negative prefixes (*un-, in- and non-*).

The most common suffixes are *-al, -ent, -ive, -ous, -ful, -less.*

e.g. Suffix added to verbs or nouns right arrow adjective

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

e.g. negative + adjective right arrow adjective

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| **Prefix** | **Examples** |
| *un-* | unfortunate, uncomfortable, unjust |
| *im-/in-/ir-/il-* | immature, impatient, improbable, inconvenient, irreplaceable, illegal |
| *non-* | non-fiction, non-political, non-neutral |
| *dis-* | disloyal, dissimilar, dishonest |

[Exercise](http://www.uefap.com/vocab/exercise/build/form_a2.htm)

**Mixed**

e.g. base with both prefix and suffix

Adjectives: uncomfortable, unavoidable, unimaginative, inactive, semi-circular

Nouns: disappointment, misinformation, reformulation

**Word formation**

Formal written English uses nouns more than verbs. For example, judgement rather than judge, development rather than develop, admiration rather than admire.

There appeared to be evidence of differential *treatment* of children.

This is reflected in our *admiration* for people who have made something of their lives, sometimes against great odds, and in our somewhat disappointed *judgment*of those who merely drift through life.

All airfields in the country would be nationalised, and the government would continue with the *development* of new aircraft as recommended by the Brabazon Committee.

Associated with nominalisation is the occurrence of prepositional phrases, introduced by *of*:

judgment *of* those

treatment *of* children

development *of* new aircraft

*-tion* is the most common suffix used in this way. For example:*alteration, resignation.*

However others are: *-ity* ability, similarity, complexity; *-ness* blindness, darkness, preparedness; *-ment* development, encouragement; *-ship* friendship; *-age* mileage; *-ery* robbery, bribery; *-al* arrival; *-ance* assistance, resemblance.