

Learning together

Reading by Roots and Affixes: Word Families

ACTIVITY #3

SEQUENCE: SPELLING AND SENTENCE STRUCTURE
2ND CYCLE – PRIMARY

By Lise L'Heureux,
Special Education Teacher, Director,
Instructor, Consultant and Coach



Purpose of the activity

The aim of this activity is to suggest a 2nd way of supporting your child's reading development. We've been practising reading by sounds, but now we're going to discover the strategy of using meaningful parts of words to read more efficiently.



Relevance of the activity

Words are made up of meaningful parts called morphemes. These include roots, which carry the main meaning, and affixes, such as prefixes and suffixes, which change or extend that meaning.

For example, run is a root word. Adding -er, -ing, or re- creates related words like runner, running, and rerun.

Recognizing morphemes helps children read longer words more easily, understand their meaning, and see how words are connected within word families.



Supplies



- List of most frequent affixes (see appendix)
- Optional: your child's vocabulary word list or words from a text or a book your child has read

LET'S GO!

What?



Today, we are going to discover how to read words using the *Reading by Roots and Affixes strategy*.

Why?

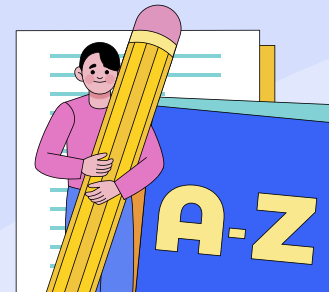


Instead of relying only on letter-sound associations, your child learns to read complex words by recognizing smaller meaningful parts inside them. This makes it easier to break down longer words, understand their meaning, and read them more efficiently. Since roots, prefixes and suffixes are shorter and easier to recognize than whole words, this strategy helps children read unfamiliar words more quickly and accurately.

When?



This strategy is especially useful when words are difficult to read because the usual letter-sound associations do not always apply (e.g., *jumped*). It also helps when words are long and difficult to understand by blending each sound one at a time.



How?



Instead of reading the whole word at once, we are going to look for smaller parts inside the word.

First, we will first look for the **root word**, which is the part that gives the word its main meaning. Then, we will look for the affixes (also called morphemes) which are the parts added before or after the root word to make a new word. This strategy will help you read words that don't follow the letter-sound rules or words that are too long to recognize quickly using the 1st reading strategy of blending letter sounds together.

Now, I will teach you the most common suffixes that make up word families, and then we will read words that are made up of roots and these suffixes: s/es, y/ly, er, ed, ing.

Here is a list of 10 root words and 7 common suffixes.

You can see which suffixes can be added to these 10 words. Note that by learning these 10 root words + the 7 simple suffixes (1 to 3 letters), you can read all 45 words on the list below!

Root	-s	-es	-y	ly	-er	-ing	-ed
top	<i>tops</i>				<i>topper</i>	<i>topping</i>	<i>topped</i>
sad				<i>sadly</i>	<i>sadder</i>		
box		<i>boxes</i>	<i>boxy</i>		<i>boxer</i>	<i>boxing</i>	<i>boxed</i>
blend	<i>blends</i>				<i>blender</i>	<i>blending</i>	<i>blended</i>
cost	<i>costs</i>			<i>costly</i>		<i>costing</i>	
sit	<i>sits</i>				<i>sitter</i>	<i>sitting</i>	
teach		<i>teaches</i>			<i>teacher</i>	<i>teaching</i>	
friend	<i>friends</i>			<i>friendly</i>		<i>friending</i>	<i>friendened</i>
class		<i>classes</i>	<i>classy</i>			<i>classing</i>	<i>classed</i>
link	<i>links</i>				<i>linker</i>	<i>linking</i>	

Here are some examples of questions you could ask your child, using the list.

1. Can you read this complex word by breaking it up into meaningful parts?
2. Can you identify this complex word by identifying the word parts (roots and affixes) inside the word?
3. Here is a list of words that have a root and one (or more) affix (es). Can you identify the root?
4. Can you read this complex word, then 1) identify the root word, and 2) tell me what you think the word means?
5. Identify all the words in your sentence (text) that have multiple morphemes (a root + one or more affixes)?
6. Let's read your book (text) and see if we can find out what the complex words mean by finding their roots and affixes.

Notes

- It is always best to write down these common suffixes and prefixes. We recommend a small notebook!
- The suffix S is added to words to make them plural (cat – catS) or to 3rd person verbs (I run – he runS). Sometimes the S is pronounced [s] (cats, books, cups) and sometimes [z] (lads, dogs, rubs).
- The suffix ES is generally only taught in Grade 2. It is added to words that end with the consonants S, X, Z, CH and SH (buses, boxes, quizzes, witches, brushes), as well as words that end with a Y when they are singular: baby – babies. The ES is generally pronounced [z].
- The suffix ED at the end of verbs does not follow letter-sound rules as it can be pronounced 3 different ways: [d] like *filled*, [id] or [ed] like *visited*, and [t] like *watched*.
- The suffixes Y and LY are pronounced [ee] and [lee] like *lucky* and *lovely*.
- ER is always pronounced [er] like *farmer*, and ING is always pronounced [ing] like *taking*.

Once you've worked the suffixes with your child, you can also add some common prefixes to the list of affixes: re, un, dis, mis, in, im, en, em ...



Don't forget!

When reading with your child, help them look for familiar word parts inside longer words. Noticing roots and affixes in words like *showing*, *puppy*, and *friends* can help them read more easily and better understand the meaning of what they read.



Prefix Root	re-	un-	dis- / mis-	in- / im-	en- / em-
run	rerun				
do	redo	undo			
check	recheck	uncheck			
trust			distrust, mistrust		entrust
place	replace		displace, misplace		emplace

Common affixes

PREFIXES	MEANING	EXAMPLES
de-, dis-	not, opposite of...	delay, distrustful
en-, em-	cause to ...	entrance, embrace
fore-, pre-	before	foresee, prefix
in-, im-, il-, ir-	not, opposite of ...	inadequate, impossible, illegal, irregular
mis-	wrongly	misfire, misrepresent
un-, non-	not	undone, nonstop
sub-, super-	under, above	submarine, subway, supermarket, superhero

Common affixes

SUFFIXES	MEANING	EXAMPLES
-able, -ible	can be	washable, visible
-al, -ial	characteristic of...	global, official
-ed	past tense of verbs	waited, jumped, sailed
-en	made of, to cause	frighten, taken, silken
-er, -est	comparatives	longer, longest
-ful	full of	handful, helpful
-ic	adj.: characteristic of...	basic, historic
-ion, -tion, ation, -ition	noun: act, process, result of	union, action, education, competition
-less	without	penniless, thoughtless
-y, -ly	characteristic of	lucky,
-ment	action, process or result	document, treatment, payment
-ness	state of, condition of...	happiness, sadness
-ous, -eous, -ious	quality of ...	indigenous, outrageous, delicious
-s, -es	plural or 3 rd person singular verbs	friends, boxes, crushes