As with the prefixes, English has relatively few suffixes. Unlike the prefixes, most suffixes do not have meanings that can be stated easily. Most suffixes, in addition to other meaning, also show what word class the word belongs to—if it is a noun, verb, adjectives, or adverb, and within those classes what specific use the word has in its sentence. Thus, when we add the suffix -ent to the verb resurge, we create a new adjective with the special meaning “process” or “condition,” as in the sentence “The central government was fearful of resurgent nationalism among the formerly independent regions.”

Here are the most common suffixes of English grouped together according to their uses:

1. Added to bases, these suffixes form __________.
   - -ion (distortion, repression)
   - -ure (failure, departure)
   - -ence, -ency, -ance, (emergency, divergence)
   - -ment (government, establishment)

2. Added to bases, these suffixes form __________.
   - -(i)ar (circular, popular)
   - -ate¹ (immediate, separate)
   - -ic (lyric, aromatic)
   - -id (rigid, hominid)

¹ This suffix also occurs with verbs; in fact, this use of the suffix -ate developed secondarily out of the verbal use.
-ish  (childish, womanish)

-like  (childlike, deathlike)

-ly  (kindly, neighborly)

-ful  (careful, awful)

-ite  (finite, requisite)

-o(u)s  (virtuous, calamitous)

-some  (troublesome, cumbersome)

-al  (tribal, regional)

3. Added to bases, these suffixes form __________.

-able, -ible  (workable, forcible)

-ent, -ant  (convergent, compliant)

-ile  (servile, tactile)

4. Added to bases, these suffixes form __________.

-ity  (simplicity, acidity)

-ness  (goodness, feebleness)

-er -or  (worker, governor)

-hood  (childhood, manhood)

-(i)an  (Canadian, Fallopian)

-ism  (racism, sexism)
-ist  (typist, ventriloquist)

-ite  (kryptonite, meterorite)

-ship  (fellowship, friendship)

5. Added to bases, these suffixes form __________.

-ate  (originate, assassinate)

-ize  (rationalize, fraternize)

-(i)fy  (modify, solidify)

6. Added to bases, these suffixes form __________.

-ly  (happily, stupidly)

-wise  (crosswise, clockwise)

Putting together complex words:

vit(a) “life”

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{vit} + & \quad \text{-al} & \quad = \quad \text{vital} \\
\text{re}- & + \quad \text{vit} + \quad \text{-al} & + \quad \text{-ize} & \quad = \quad \text{revitalize} \\
\text{re}- & + \quad \text{vit} + \quad \text{-al} & + \quad \text{-iz(e)} & + \quad \text{at(e)} & + \quad \text{-ion} & \quad = \quad \text{revitalization} \\
\text{re}- & + \quad \text{vit} + \quad \text{-al} & + \quad \text{-iz(e)} & + \quad \text{able} & \quad = \quad \text{revitalize} \\
\text{form} & + & \quad \text{-al} & \quad = \quad \text{formal} \\
\text{form} & + & \quad \text{-al} & + \quad \text{-ity} & \quad = \quad \text{formality} \\
\text{form} & + & \quad \text{-al} & + \quad \text{-ize} & \quad = \quad \text{formalize} \\
\text{form} & + & \quad \text{-al} & + \quad \text{-iz(e)} & + \quad \text{-at(e)} & + \quad \text{-ion} & \quad = \quad \text{formalization} \\
\text{form} & + & \quad \text{ul(a)} & \quad = \quad \text{formula} \\
\text{form} & + & \quad \text{ul(a)} & + \quad \text{-ate} & \quad = \quad \text{formulate}
\end{align*}
\]
form + ul(a) + -at(e) + -ion = formulation

Note that the base form also occurs with the prefixes in-, de-, re-, per-, and con-. We could have used other suffixes, including -ant, -ance, and -ive.

Note: The suffix -ly follows -ic in only one word: publicly. In every other case, the suffix -al must come between -ic and -ly: comically, practically, cynically, and so on.

Exercise A: Suffixes

Find at least two more English words using each suffix below:

1. -ion ___________ _________ 11. -ism ___________ _________
2. -ic ___________ _________ 12. -ship ___________ _________
3. -ly ___________ _________ 13. -ous ___________ _________
4. -less ___________ _________ 14. -hood ___________ _________
5. -able ___________ _________ 15. -ment ___________ _________
6. -er ___________ _________ 16. -id ___________ _________
7. -ness ___________ _________ 17. -ate ___________ _________
8. -like ___________ _________ 18. -ent ___________ _________
9. -ize ___________ _________ 19. -ic ___________ _________
10. -al ___________ _________ 20. -ify ___________ _________

Exercise B: Using suffixes

In the sentences below, express the same idea using a different part of speech. Choose appropriate suffixes from the lists given above.

Example: (a) The journey involved peril. (noun)
(b) The journey was perilous. (adjective)
1. The children behaved like *demons*. (noun)
   The behavior of the children was *demon_____*. (adjective)
2. If a man cries, we question whether he is *virile*. (adjective)
   We question the *viril_____* of a man who cries. (noun)
3. He is remembered for the *comedy* he produced. (noun)
   He is remembered as a *comed______*. (agentive noun)
4. He had so much wealth it seemed like a *fable*. (noun)
   He had *fabul_____* wealth. (adjective)
5. We question whether his claims are *valid*. (adjective)
   We question the *valid_____* of his claims. (noun)
6. People still argue about how the universe was *created*. (verb)
   People still argue about how the *creat______* of the universe took place. (noun)
7. To show that he was *displeased*, he refused to talk. (verb)
   To show his *displeas______*, he refused to talk. (noun)
8. We do not associate with them *fraternally*. (adverb based on an adjective)
   We do not *fratern_______* with them. (verb)
9. I do not know how many *calories* this food provides. (noun)
   I do not know the *calor______* content of this food. (adjective)
10. They suspected the dog had *rabies*. (noun)
They suspected the dog was rab______. (adjective)

11. The machine that caused the accident certainly had defects. (noun)

The machine that caused the accident was certainly defect______. (adjective)

12. The national government failed because of people’s loyalty to their tribes. (noun)

The national government failed because of people’s trib_____ loyalties. (adjective)

Exercise C: Combining suffixes

Add all the suffixes at the left to the base provided.

Example: -ate, -ion oper ==> operation

1. -ate, -ion assimil _____________________________
   particip _____________________________
   elucid _____________________________
   circul _____________________________
   perturb _____________________________

2. -ate, -ure temper _____________________________
   liter _____________________________
   curv _____________________________
   caric _____________________________
   lig _____________________________
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<td>3.</td>
<td>-if(y), -ic</td>
<td>terr _____________________________</td>
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<td>scient _____________________________</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>-al, -ly</td>
<td>tribe _____________________________</td>
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<td>mort _____________________________</td>
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<td>frantic _____________________________</td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>-ent, -ial</td>
<td>refer _____________________________</td>
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<td>rever _____________________________</td>
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<td>compon ____________________________</td>
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<td>6.</td>
<td>-ance, -y</td>
<td>compet___________________________</td>
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<td>-ence</td>
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<td>7.</td>
<td>-ate, -ory</td>
<td>compens __________________________</td>
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<td>confis ___________________________</td>
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<td>-ar(y), -ity</td>
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<td>pole _____________________________</td>
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<td>9.</td>
<td>-if(y), -ic</td>
<td>clar ______________________________</td>
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<td>-ate, -ion</td>
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<td>10.</td>
<td>if(y), ic spec</td>
<td>al, ly</td>
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<td>11.</td>
<td>ite, ize paras</td>
<td>ate, ion</td>
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<td>12.</td>
<td>if(y), ic spec</td>
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