96 Forming adjectives

> The government has set up these courses to solve the growing problem of **il**literate adults. The courses are **in**expensive and suit**able** for all adults who struggled with reading and writing at school.

1 Adjectives from nouns and verbs

We can add suffixes to some nouns and verbs to make adjectives:

NOUN OR VERB	+ SUFFIX	= ADJECTIVE
centre music nation	-al	central musical national
beauty care help pain use	-ful	beautiful careful helpful painful useful
care help pain use	-less	careless helpless painless useless
comfort drink fashion suit	-able	comfortable drinkable fashionable suitable
dirt health rain sun thirst wind	-y	dirty healthy rainy sunny thirsty windy
continue danger fame	-ous	continuous dangerous famous
depend differ excel insist	-ent	dependent different excellent insistent
act attract expense relate	-ive	active attractive expensive relative

Note the suffix *-less* means 'without/not', *-ful* can mean 'displaying/containing' and *-able* after a verb often has the meaning of 'it is possible to'.

NATURAL ENGLISH In informal spoken English we can add the suffix *-ish* to some short adjectives to make the meaning weaker or less exact:
*He's got **darkish** hair.* (dark but not very dark)
*I'm not sure how old she is – she's **youngish**.* (fairly young but not very young)

Adjectives, e.g. *interesting/interested* ➤ Unit 19.3

2 Changing the meaning of adjectives

We can use prefixes (short additions to the beginning of words) to change the meaning of some adjectives. These prefixes usually mean 'not', e.g. *displeased* = not pleased.

PREFIX	+ ADJECTIVE	= ADJECTIVE WITH NEGATIVE MEANING
dis-	honest loyal pleased	dishonest disloyal displeased
un-	happy tidy usual	unhappy untidy unusual
in-	complete correct formal	incomplete incorrect informal
im-	patient polite possible	impatient impolite impossible
ir-	replaceable responsible	irreplaceable irresponsible
il-	legal literate logical	illegal illiterate illogical

- We can add a prefix to an adjective that already contains a suffix:
  ***un**mistakeable, **un**helpful, **ir**replaceable, **in**expensive, **in**dependent*
- If the adjective begins with the sound /p/ we often use *im-*, not *in-*, to make the negative form:
  polite → ✓ impolite ✗ inpolite   perfect → ✓ imperfect ✗ inperfect
- We use *ir-* before the sound /r/ and *il-* before the sound /l/:
  responsible → ✓ irresponsible ✗ inresponsible   logical → ✓ illogical ✗ inlogical

⚠ With nouns and verbs, the prefixes *in-/im-* do not always mean *not*, they can mean 'into' or 'inside':
to import (= bring things into a country) *income* (= money you receive)
to input (= put information into a computer)