

# 69 Word formation

## 1 Using suffixes to change meaning

| SUFFIX                                     | COMMON USES   | EXAMPLES  |
|--|---|---|
| -er -ee <sup>1</sup> -or<br>-ant -ent -ist | to change a word describing a thing, place or action to a noun describing a person connected with it, or the name of the job <sup>2</sup> | teacher Londoner<br>employer/employee<br>director consultant artist           |
| -ese -ian<br>-an -ish                      | to change the name of a country to the language/the nationality adjective <sup>3</sup>  | Japanese Hungarian Polish   |
| -ian -ician -ist                           | to change the name of a subject to the person studying/connected with it  | historian statistician<br>mathematician economist                             |
| -ism -ist/ite                              | we use -ism to create a noun describing a belief or movement, and -ist to describe a person who follows that movement or belief           | Impressionism/Impressionist<br>communism/communist<br>Thatcherism/Thatcherite |
| -ie -y                                     | to make a familiar or pet version of a name   | doggie mummy Sammy  |

<sup>1</sup> Nouns ending in -er have an active meaning and nouns ending in -ee have a passive meaning, e.g. an *interviewer* asks questions and an *interviewee* answers them; a *trainer* teaches and a *trainee* learns.

<sup>2</sup> Note there are some exceptions, e.g. a *processor* is an electronic component, not a person.

<sup>3</sup> Some nouns that end in (-i)an and -ese can also be used to describe a person:  
*Italian* → *an Italian* *Chinese* → *a Chinese*

## 2 Using suffixes to change word class

| CHANGE                | SUFFIXES                                  | EXAMPLES  |
|-----------------------|---|---|
| adjective → noun      | -ness -ity -ance -ence                    | laziness density endurance difference                                     |
| noun/verb → adjective | -al -ful -less -able<br>-y -ous -ent -ive | central spiteful careless suitable<br>scary continuous persistent elusive |
| noun/adjective → verb | -ise/ize -(e)n -(i)ate -(i)fy             | standardise harmonise heighten<br>differentiate solidify                  |
| verb → noun           | -al -ance -ence<br>-ment -tion -ure       | arrival ignorance dependence<br>argument education closure                |



Pronunciation ► 1.19

## 3 Using prefixes to change meaning

| PREFIX  | MEANING             | EXAMPLES                                  |
|---------|---------------------|---|
| auto-   | self                | autobiography auto-immune autonomous      |
| bi-     | two                 | bilingual bi-annual bisect                |
| co-     | together/joint      | co-signatories co-directors co-owners     |
| ex-     | former/previous     | ex-husband ex-president ex-teacher        |
| inter-  | among/between       | international inter-state intermarriage   |
| in-/im- | into inside         | insert income import                      |
| mega-   | huge/a million      | megastar mega-structure megabytes         |
| mono-   | one only            | monolingual monopoly monophonic           |
| over-   | superior too much   | overlord overdrive overstate              |
| re-     | again               | repay reorganise restate                  |
| semi-   | half                | semi-literate semicircle semi-independent |
| sub-    | below               | substandard sub-zero sub-prime            |
| under-  | inferior too little | underclass underperform undervalue        |

Prefixes with a negative meaning, e.g. *dislike*, *unfair* ► Unit 48.4