

Common Old English/Germanic and French

Word Roots, Prefixes, and Suffixes

Unlike Greek and Latin, Old English (Germanic) words rarely use bound word roots that need another root or suffix to form a word. Instead, whole native English words often combine directly into compounds (for example, house + wife = housewife), and native prefixes and suffixes attach to those whole words. The lists below follow that pattern: prefixes and suffixes first, then a short list of native combining forms that act like roots in compounds.

Old English/Germanic Prefixes

No.	Prefix	Variants	Meaning	Example Word	Short Definition
1	un-		not, opposite of	<i>unhappy</i>	not happy
				<i>undo</i>	to reverse an action
				<i>unfair</i>	not fair
2	over-		too much, above	<i>overeat</i>	to eat too much
				<i>overhead</i>	above one's head
				<i>oversleep</i>	to sleep too long
3	under-		below, too little	<i>underground</i>	below the ground
				<i>undercook</i>	to cook too little
				<i>underpaid</i>	paid too little
4	out-		beyond, exceeding	<i>outrun</i>	to run faster than
				<i>outgrow</i>	to grow too big for
				<i>outdoor</i>	outside a building
5	up-		upward	<i>uphill</i>	up a hill
				<i>upgrade</i>	to raise in quality
				<i>uproot</i>	to pull up by the roots
6	fore-		before	<i>forecast</i>	to tell beforehand
				<i>forehead</i>	the front of the head
				<i>foretell</i>	to tell before it happens
7	mis-		wrong, bad	<i>mistake</i>	a wrong action
				<i>misspell</i>	to spell wrong
				<i>mislead</i>	to lead in a wrong direction
8	with-		against, back	<i>withstand</i>	to hold out against
				<i>withdraw</i>	to pull back
				<i>withhold</i>	to hold back
9	be-		thoroughly, to make	<i>befriend</i>	to make a friend of
				<i>becalm</i>	to make calm
				<i>bewilder</i>	to confuse thoroughly
10	off-		away from	<i>offshore</i>	away from the shore
				<i>offset</i>	to balance out
				<i>offspring</i>	children born from someone

Old English/Germanic Suffixes

No.	Suffix	Variants	Meaning	Example Word	Short Definition
1	-ness		state, quality (noun)	<i>happiness</i>	the state of being happy
				<i>kindness</i>	the quality of being kind
				<i>darkness</i>	the state of being dark
2	-ful		full of (adjective)	<i>hopeful</i>	full of hope
				<i>careful</i>	full of care
				<i>joyful</i>	full of joy

3	-less		without (adjective)	<i>hopeless</i>	without hope
				<i>fearless</i>	without fear
				<i>careless</i>	without care
4	-ly		in the manner of (adverb); like (adjective)	<i>quickly</i>	in a quick manner
				<i>slowly</i>	in a slow manner
				<i>friendly</i>	like a friend
5	-hood		state, period of (noun)	<i>childhood</i>	the state of being a child
				<i>neighborhood</i>	the area around one's neighbors
				<i>falsehood</i>	the state of being false
6	-ship		state, skill, or office (noun)	<i>friendship</i>	the state of being friends
				<i>leadership</i>	the skill of leading
				<i>hardship</i>	a state of difficulty
7	-dom		state, domain (noun)	<i>freedom</i>	the state of being free
				<i>kingdom</i>	the domain of a king
				<i>wisdom</i>	the state of being wise
8	-en		to make/become (verb); made of (adjective)	<i>strengthen</i>	to make strong
				<i>darken</i>	to make dark
				<i>wooden</i>	made of wood
9	-ish		somewhat, like (adjective)	<i>reddish</i>	somewhat red
				<i>childish</i>	like a child
				<i>selfish</i>	too concerned with oneself
10	-some		tending to, full of (adjective)	<i>tiresome</i>	tending to tire
				<i>troublesome</i>	causing trouble
				<i>wholesome</i>	full of health
11	-y		characterized by (adjective)	<i>rainy</i>	full of rain
				<i>sleepy</i>	wanting sleep
				<i>sandy</i>	covered in sand
12	-ward		in the direction of (adverb/adjective)	<i>homeward</i>	toward home
				<i>forward</i>	toward the front
				<i>backward</i>	toward the back
13	-er		one who (noun)	<i>teacher</i>	one who teaches
				<i>farmer</i>	one who farms
				<i>baker</i>	one who bakes

Note: -er and -est also appear as comparative and superlative endings on adjectives (fast, faster, fastest). This is a different job than the "one who" -er above, but it uses the same spelling.

Old English/Germanic Combining Forms ("Roots" in Compounds)

These are whole native English words that lost their independent, everyday use and now mainly appear as the second part of a compound word, the way a Greek or Latin root would.

No.	Combining Form	Variants	Meaning	Example Word	Short Definition
1	-smith		a worker in metal	<i>blacksmith</i>	one who works iron
				<i>goldsmith</i>	one who works gold
				<i>locksmith</i>	one who makes/repairs locks
2	-wright		a maker or builder	<i>shipwright</i>	one who builds ships
				<i>playwright</i>	one who writes plays
				<i>wheelwright</i>	one who makes wheels
3	-monger		a dealer or trader	<i>fishmonger</i>	one who sells fish
				<i>ironmonger</i>	one who sells iron goods
				<i>warmonger</i>	one who promotes war
4	-craft		skill, art	<i>handcraft</i>	skillful work by hand
				<i>witchcraft</i>	the practice of magic
				<i>aircraft</i>	a flying machine
5	-wife		a woman in charge of	<i>housewife</i>	a woman who manages a house
				<i>midwife</i>	a woman who helps at childbirth
				<i>fishwife</i>	a woman who sells fish
6	-land		a place, country	<i>homeland</i>	one's native land
				<i>wonderland</i>	a land of wonder
				<i>woodland</i>	land covered in woods

How Old English/Germanic Suffixes Show Part of Speech

A student who knows the suffix often knows the part of speech before they know the word's exact meaning.

Suffix	Part of Speech It Usually Forms	Example
-ness, -hood, -ship, -dom, -er	Noun	<i>kindness, childhood, friendship, freedom, teacher</i>
-ful, -less, -ish, -some, -y	Adjective	<i>hopeful, fearless, childish, tiresome, rainy</i>
-ly, -ward	Adverb	<i>quickly, homeward</i>
-en	Verb (or adjective)	<i>strengthen (verb), wooden (adjective)</i>

French Prefixes, Suffixes, and Word Parts

Norman French itself grew out of Latin, so many French-origin prefixes and roots in English overlap with the Latin root document (re-, dis-, sur-/super-, trans-, and others). This document covers the prefixes, suffixes, and word parts that came into English distinctly through French.

French Prefixes

No.	Prefix	Variants	Meaning	Example Word	Short Definition
1	en-, em-		to put into, make	<i>enable</i>	to make able
				<i>enrich</i>	to make rich
				<i>embrace</i>	to put one's arms around

Most other French prefixes (sur-, dis-, re-, pre-) came from Latin and are already listed in the Greek and Latin word root bingo document.

French Suffixes

No.	Suffix	Variants	Meaning	Example Word	Short Definition
1	-ette		small, diminutive (noun)	<i>cigarette</i>	a small cigar
				<i>kitchenette</i>	a small kitchen
				<i>cassette</i>	a small case
2	-esque		in the style of (adjective)	<i>picturesque</i>	like a picture
				<i>statuesque</i>	like a statue
				<i>grotesque</i>	in a strange, distorted style
3	-eer		a person who does (noun)	<i>engineer</i>	one who works with engines
				<i>volunteer</i>	one who offers freely
				<i>auctioneer</i>	one who runs auctions
4	-ee		one who receives an action (noun)	<i>employee</i>	one who is employed
				<i>trainee</i>	one being trained
				<i>refugee</i>	one who has fled for safety
5	-age		action, state, or collection of (noun)	<i>marriage</i>	the state of being married
				<i>village</i>	a collection of houses
				<i>baggage</i>	a collection of bags
6	-ance, -ence		state or quality of (noun)	<i>assistance</i>	the act of assisting
				<i>performance</i>	the act of performing
				<i>patience</i>	the quality of being patient
7	-let		small version, diminutive (noun)	<i>booklet</i>	a small book
				<i>bracelet</i>	a small band for the arm
				<i>islet</i>	a small island
8	-ese		relating to a place or style (adjective)	<i>Japanese</i>	relating to Japan
				<i>journalese</i>	the style of journalism
				<i>legalese</i>	the style of legal writing
9	-oon		large or enlarged version (noun)	<i>balloon</i>	a large air-filled ball
				<i>cartoon</i>	originally, a large drawing
				<i>macaroon</i>	a large lump of paste

How French Suffixes Show Part of Speech

Suffix	Part of Speech It Usually Forms	Example
-ette, -eer, -ee, -age, -ance/-ence, -let, -oon	Noun	<i>kitchenette, engineer, employee, marriage, patience, booklet, balloon</i>
-esque, -ese	Adjective	<i>picturesque, Japanese</i>

French does not contribute a distinctly French verb-forming suffix commonly taught at this level; French-origin verbs mostly keep their Latin verb endings.

How Latin Suffixes Show Part of Speech

Includes the six endings from the 40L morphology worksheet, plus other common Latin suffixes that mark part of speech.

Suffix	Part of Speech It Usually Forms	Example
-tion, -sion	Noun	<i>nation, decision, education</i>
-ture	Noun	<i>nature, feature, culture</i>
-ity, -ty	Noun	<i>activity, clarity, honesty</i>
-or	Noun (one who)	<i>actor, inventor, professor</i>
-ent, -ant	Noun (one who) or Adjective	<i>student, resident; important, different</i>
-ive	Adjective	<i>active, creative, defensive</i>
-ial, -al	Adjective	<i>special, artificial; natural, national</i>
-ious, -uous	Adjective	<i>serious, glorious, virtuous</i>
-ous	Adjective	<i>famous, dangerous, nervous</i>
-able, -ible	Adjective	<i>readable, visible, comfortable</i>
-ary, -ory	Adjective or Noun	<i>ordinary, imaginary; dictionary, laboratory</i>
-ate	Verb (mainly)	<i>activate, create, dictate</i>
-fy, -ify	Verb	<i>clarify, simplify, beautify</i>

How Greek Suffixes Show Part of Speech

Greek word-building mainly uses combining forms (see the Greek and Latin Word Root Bingo document) rather than suffixes that mark part of speech. A few Greek-derived suffixes are common and productive enough to be worth teaching, though:

Suffix	Part of Speech It Usually Forms	Example
-ic	Adjective	<i>phonic, poetic, historic</i>
-ism	Noun	<i>heroism, criticism, tourism</i>
-ist	Noun (one who)	<i>artist, scientist, dentist</i>
-ize	Verb	<i>realize, organize, apologize</i>
-oid	Adjective	<i>humanoid, asteroid, spheroid</i>

Old English/Germanic and French Word Ending Exercise

Figure out what part of speech each ending forms. Each group of words below is all the same part of speech (there are no exceptions in a group). Use the charts above for help if you need a hint.

Old English/Germanic Endings

Ending	Example Words (scrambled)	Part of Speech
-ness	<i>happiness, kindness, darkness, sadness, weakness, illness</i>	
-ful	<i>hopeful, careful, joyful, thankful, colorful, painful</i>	
-less	<i>hopeless, fearless, careless, useless, homeless, endless</i>	
-ly	<i>quickly, slowly, softly, quietly, badly, kindly</i>	
-hood/-ship/-dom	<i>childhood, friendship, freedom, kingdom, hardship, wisdom</i>	
-en	<i>strengthen, darken, weaken, soften, harden, sharpen</i>	

French Endings

Ending	Example Words (scrambled)	Part of Speech
-ette	<i>cigarette, kitchenette, cassette, novelette</i>	
-esque	<i>picturesque, statuesque, grotesque, arabesque</i>	
-eer	<i>engineer, volunteer, auctioneer, mountaineer</i>	
-ee	<i>employee, trainee, refugee, nominee</i>	
-age	<i>marriage, village, baggage, package</i>	
-ance/-ence	<i>assistance, performance, patience, difference</i>	

Answers: Old English/Germanic and French Word Ending Exercise

Old English/Germanic Endings

Ending	Example Words	Part of Speech
-ness	<i>happiness, kindness, darkness, sadness, weakness, illness</i>	Noun
-ful	<i>hopeful, careful, joyful, thankful, colorful, painful</i>	Adjective
-less	<i>hopeless, fearless, careless, useless, homeless, endless</i>	Adjective
-ly	<i>quickly, slowly, softly, quietly, badly, kindly</i>	Adverb
-hood/-ship/-dom	<i>childhood, friendship, freedom, kingdom, hardship, wisdom</i>	Noun
-en	<i>strengthen, darken, weaken, soften, harden, sharpen</i>	Verb

French Endings

Ending	Example Words	Part of Speech
-ette	<i>cigarette, kitchenette, cassette, novelette</i>	Noun
-esque	<i>picturesque, statuesque, grotesque, arabesque</i>	Adjective
-eer	<i>engineer, volunteer, auctioneer, mountaineer</i>	Noun
-ee	<i>employee, trainee, refugee, nominee</i>	Noun
-age	<i>marriage, village, baggage, package</i>	Noun
-ance/-ence	<i>assistance, performance, patience, difference</i>	Noun