



## Suffixes

### Guidelines:

- **A suffix is a letter, or group of letters, that is added to the end of a root (base) word. Common suffixes include *s*, *ed*, *ing*, *ly*, and *tion*.**  
A suffix changes the meaning of the root or base word. Therefore, children, need to understand the meanings of suffixes and how they affect the words they're attached to. By helping children quickly identify a suffix and visually remove it to identify the base word, you'll help them figure out the meaning of the whole word.
- **Adding a suffix sometimes changes the spelling of a base word, and children need to be directly taught the suffixes that cause changes. The three most common spelling changes resulting from the addition of suffixes are:**
  - 1. Consonant doubling (*runner, running*):** The consonant is doubled so that the first syllable will form a CVC pattern. Most CVC words contain a short vowel sound. Therefore, the second consonant acts as a diacritical mark, ensuring that the short vowel sound of the root word is maintained.
  - 2. Changing *y* to *i* (*flies, happiest, loneliness*):** Words that end in *y* change the *y* to *i* before adding a suffix. The letter *y* at the beginning of a word or syllable acts as a consonant and stands for the /y/ sound. However, the letter *y* at the end of a word either stands for a vowel sound (*fly*) or is part of a vowel digraph (*play*). The change from *y* to *i* ensures that the vowel sound the *y* stands for in the word is maintained.
  - 3. Deleting the silent *e* (*making*):** When a word ends in silent *e*, the letter is removed before adding the suffix (except *s*). Most of the common suffixes begin with vowels and vowel doubling in this case would cause confusion; it would create a vowel digraph.
- **Teach only the most commonly used suffixes.** The chart on page 215 shows the 20 most frequent suffixes appearing in words in the *Word Frequency Book* (Carroll, Davies, and Richman, 1971). The suffixes *s*, *es*, *ed*, and *ing* account for almost two-thirds of the words. The suffixes *s* and *es* are used to form the plurals of most nouns. The suffixes *ed* and *ing* are inflectional endings added to verbs to change their tense. These suffixes are generally introduced to children in grade one. The word lists included here are for those suffixes that need to be formally taught in the primary grades.



Rank	Suffix	%
1.	s, es (plurals)	31
2.	ed (past-tense verbs)	20
3.	ing (verb form/present participle)	14
4.	ly (characteristic of)	7
5.	er, or (person connected with)	4
6.	ion, tion, ation, ition (act, process)	4
7.	ible, able (can be done)	2
8.	al, ial (having characteristics of)	1
9.	y (characterized by)	1
10.	ness (state of, condition of)	1

Rank	Suffix	%
11.	ity, ty (state of)	1
12.	ment (action or process)	1
13.	ic (having characteristics of)	1
14.	ous, eous, ious (possessing the qualities of)	1
15.	en (made of)	1
16.	er (comparative)	1
17.	ive, ative, itive (adjective form of a noun)	1
18.	ful (full of)	1
19.	less (without)	1
20.	est (comparative)	1

All other suffixes (about 160) accounted for only 7% of the words.

Noun suffixes: *age, al, ance, ant, ate, ee, ence, ent, er, or, ar, ese, ess, hood, ice, ism, ist, ment, ness, sion, tain, tion, ure*

Suffixes that form adjectives: *able, al, er, est, ette, let, ful, fully, ible, ic, ical, ish, ive, less, ous, some, worthy*

Suffixes that form adverbs: *ly, wards, ways, wide, wise*

Suffixes that create a verb form: *ate, ed, en, ing, ise, ize, yze*