



**Cambridge Assessment  
English**

Authorised Platinum Exam Centre

# **Working with word formation processes**

**Levels B1 to C2**

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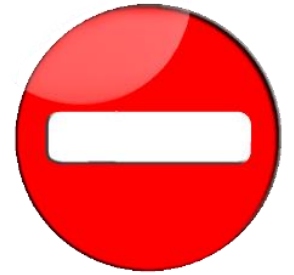
# WORD FORMATION



## Why should we work with it?

1. Knowledge about the composition of words will help learners decipher new words.
2. It enhances students' lexical repertoire.
3. It is tested.

# LEARNER PROBLEMS AND TEACHING ISSUES

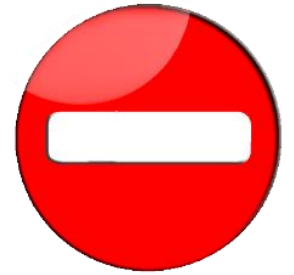


## 1. Failing to use context to work with word formation exercises

Context does not only determine the kind of word that is required but also its meaning; for example, the use of a positive or negative adjective.

***“Candidates may be required to demonstrate understanding of the text beyond sentence level.”*** (Cambridge English First Handbook for Teachers about Part 3 of the Reading and Use of English Paper)

# LEARNER PROBLEMS AND TEACHING ISSUES



## 2. The teaching of affixation

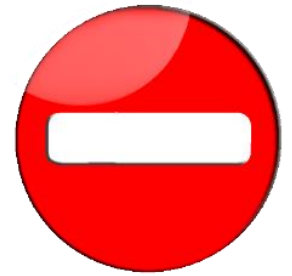
No focus on the process of affixation until Intermediate or Advanced courses.

### Why?

- Word formation exercises do not feature in tests until those levels.

### Consequences

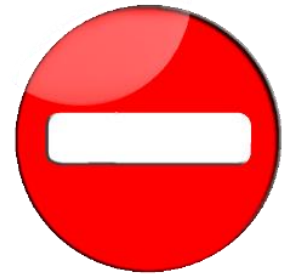
- Little attention is paid to word building in the earliest stages of the learning process. Example: “tidy” - “untidy” (opposites – no awareness raising to prefix “un”)
- Reduced lexical generative capacity.



## 3. Lack of knowledge of affixes and their meanings because of L1 interference

- Prefixes which are the **same** or **similar** to their Spanish version cause little or no difficulty for students (-pre).
- Affixes which are **unfamiliar** for students because they bear no resemblance to their mother tongue (-ship and -ness).

The fact that some affixes are similar to the students' L1 does not mean they should not be discussed because it is fundamental for the students to know where similarities exist. Suffixes which do not have a direct equivalent in Latin-based languages clearly deserve attention.



## 4. The teaching of suffixes that change word category

A suffix is a letter or group of letters added at the end of a word which makes a new word. The new word is most often a different word class from the original word... If you see a word ending in -ment, for example, it is likely to be a noun (e.g. commitment).

It is common to see that our students' oral and / or written production at different levels lacks lexical accuracy.

“I walk slow” - “I walk slowly”.

Focusing on suffixes will lead to students resorting to more precise and appropriate lexis.

# SUGGESTIONS FOR TEACHING

## ACTIVITIES



# SUGGESTIONS FOR TEACHING



## 1. Hidden word

**Aim:** To help students use context in word formation exercises and to expand their vocabulary.

**Procedure:** Students work in pairs to try to find out which word is needed in the sentence using context and trying to come up with as many possibilities (expanding their vocabulary). The activity is checked, students are given the words which were hidden in the sentence but in the incorrect form. Students are asked to work individually to put the words in the right sentence and to transform them to fit in the sentence. The activity is checked with students specifying why the word given is inappropriate.



**1. Work out from the context what kind of word (noun, adjective, etc) is hidden. Then try to come up with as many words as possible that might fill the gap.**

- a. More and more young people are surfing the net for ... in their spare time.
- b. The... started the blog as nothing more than a leisure activity.
- c. The majority of ... find online gaming a very enjoyable pastime.
- d. Karl taught ... to play chess by playing with other novices online.
- e. It seems almost ... that some people spend more than 12 hours a day online.
- f. There have been a number of ... in video game graphics in recent years.
- g. This game is ... for young children.
- h. It's your .... To make sure that everyone behaves on the forum.

**2. Put a word from the box into the correct form to complete each sentence in exercise**

AMUSE BELIEVE IMPROVE ORIGIN PLAY RESPONSIBLE SELF SUITABLE

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.

# SUGGESTIONS FOR TEACHING



## 2. Identifying the affixes

**Aim:** To help students recognise affixes and create patterns.

**Procedure:** Students are given a list of words and are asked to underline the prefixes and suffixes in each word (to help them become aware of a variety of affixes). Students work in pairs comparing their answers and the activity is checked. In the next stage, students continue working together answering some questions which will allow them to create patterns. After students have finished they change pairs and share their findings. Finally, the activity is checked and answers are discussed adding further examples to enhance its result.

**Follow up:** Students are asked to use some of the words in sentences or short texts.

**1** Underline the prefixes and suffixes in these words.

**1** active

**2** dissatisfaction

**3** enable

**4** friendship

**5** happiness

**6** illiterate

**7** importance

**8** infrequent

**9** loudly

**10** medical

**11** nervous

**12** peaceful

**13** possibility

**14** preventable

**15** replacement

**16** suggestion

**17** tendency

**18** unhealthy

**2** Look at the words in exercise 1 again and answer the questions.

**1 a** Which verb has a prefix that means put into or cause a particular state?

**b** Write another verb that begins with this prefix.

**2 a** Which prefixes are added to give words a negative or opposite meaning?

**b** Write any other prefixes you know which form negatives or opposites.

**3 a** Which suffixes have been added to form nouns? \_\_\_\_\_

**b** Write any other suffixes you know which form nouns. \_\_\_\_\_

**4 a** Which suffixes have been added to form adjectives? \_\_\_\_\_

**b** Write any other suffixes you know which form adjectives. \_\_\_\_\_

**5** Which suffix is used to form a regular adverb?



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## SUGGESTIONS FOR TEACHING



### 3. Focus on affixes

**Aim:** To help students understand the meaning of affixes.

**Procedure:** Students are given two photocopies. One has a box which contains four affixes and the other a box which contains a variety of words. Students are asked which of the affixes in the first box they could use with the words in the second box and the meaning that can be assigned to each of the affixes consulting different dictionaries (paperback or online) to check their guesses. After the activity is checked, a discussion takes place in which examples of other words are added.

**Follow up:** Students are asked to write sentences or short texts using the words formed in the exercise.

Which of the following prefixes would you be able to use with the words on the right? What meaning can you assign to each of the prefixes?

<b>pre+</b>	<b>sub+</b>
<b>ultra+</b>	<b>ex+</b>

war	conservative
modern	human
revolutionary	

## SUGGESTIONS FOR TEACHING



### 4. Forming words by using different suffixes

**Aim:** To help students recognise how suffixes change word categories.

**Procedure:** The teacher gives the students a kind of construction kit which consists of words and different suffixes. Students working in groups have to try to make as many words as possible by adding different suffixes in 5 minutes. Students are then asked to choose six of the words they have formed so they can write a sentence for each. The sentence should use a word in the incorrect form. The groups exchange their sentences and the students check them. The team that checks the six sentences correctly the more quickly wins the game.

dis	<b>excite</b>	ful	ment
un	<b>appoint</b>	less	ness
im	<b>honest</b>	able	
in	<b>patient</b>	ly	
	<b>success</b>	y	
	<b>direct</b>	ship	
	<b>kind</b>		
	<b>profit</b>		
	<b>help</b>		
	<b>friend</b>		
	<b>luck</b>		
	<b>like</b>		

# Remember!

If we work with word building in the classroom, we will help our students not only improve their performance in word formation exercises but also expand their lexical knowledge, improve their accuracy and enhance their general understanding of the language.





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YOU



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CELEBRATING

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YEARS

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