

Suffixes · Free resource

## Suffix: **-ation**

**Source:** DfE, *English Appendix 1: Spelling* (2013) — Years 3–4 statutory suffix

**Origin:** Latin *-atio / -ationis*, via Old French *-ation*

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### What it means

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**-ation** turns a verb into a noun meaning "the act or process of [verb]-ing" or "the result of [verb]-ing."

*inform (to tell) → **information** (the act of informing; the thing communicated)*

*explore (to investigate) → **exploration** (the act of exploring)*

*imagine (to picture in the mind) → **imagination** (the faculty of imagining)*

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## Where it comes from

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*-ation* came into English from Old French, which took it from Latin *-atio*. It is by far the most common way to form nouns from verbs in academic and formal English. Recognising *-ation* is one of the highest-leverage vocabulary skills for KS2 and beyond.

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## How to add *-ation*

Base ends in a vowel (usually *e*): drop the *e*

*adore* → **adoration** (*e* dropped before *-ation*)

*explore* → **exploration**

*imagine* → **imagination**

Base ends in a consonant: add *-ation* directly

*inform* → **information**

*transform* → **transformation**

## Statutory examples (Appendix 1, Y3/4)

Verb	-ation noun
<i>inform</i>	<b>information</b>
<i>transform</i>	<b>transformation</b>
<i>adore</i>	<b>adoration</b>
<i>explore</i>	<b>exploration</b>
<i>imagine</i>	<b>imagination</b>
<i>observe</i>	<b>observation</b>
<i>educate</i>	<b>education</b>
<i>celebrate</i>	<b>celebration</b>
<i>organise</i>	<b>organisation</b>
<i>invite</i>	<b>invitation</b>
<i>relax</i>	<b>relaxation</b>
<i>examine</i>	<b>examination</b>

## Morpheme matrix

	<b>(nothing)</b>	<b>-ation</b>	<b>-ational</b>	<b>-ationally</b>
<b>inform-</b>	inform	information	informational	informationally
<b>transform-</b>	transform	transformation	transformational	transformationally
<b>educate-</b>	educate	education	educational	educationally
<b>organise-</b>	organise	organisation	organisational	organisationally
<b>explore-</b>	explore	exploration	explorational	—

## The word family explosion

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*-ation* is a gateway to a full word family. From *information* alone:

*inform (verb) → information (noun) → informative (adjective) → informatively (adverb) →  
uninformative (adjective with un-)*

Show children one base word can become dozens of words. This is the power of morphology.

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## Common -ation words across KS2 subjects

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**Science:** investigation, observation, evaporation, condensation, classification, reproduction, circulation

**History:** civilisation, exploration, colonisation, reformation, declaration, occupation, nomination

**Geography:** location, vegetation, population, formation, erosion, migration

**PSHE/English:** communication, imagination, cooperation, celebration, determination, inspiration

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## Classroom activity: the -ation chain

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Give children a verb: *observe*. Build the chain:

*observe* (verb)

*observation* (noun) — what do you observe?

*observational* (adjective) — an observational study

*observer* (person noun) — the one who observes

*observable* (adjective) — able to be observed

The *-ation* suffix is the hinge that makes the whole family visible.

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## Dictation sentences

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The **exploration** of the cave required careful **organisation** and **preparation**.

Her **imagination** created a vivid **transformation** of the ordinary scene before her.

They completed the **examination** of the **information** and shared their **observation**.

The **invitation** to the **celebration** arrived with a detailed **explanation** of the event.

**Education** begins with **observation** and grows through **investigation**.

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*Source: DfE English Appendix 1: Spelling (2013). Etymology: Latin -atio / -ationis, from verbs of the first conjugation (-are).*