

Suffixes · Free resource

## Suffixes: **-ment, -ness, -ful, -less**

**Source:** DfE, *English Appendix 1: Spelling* (2013) — Year 2 statutory suffixes

**Origins:** Old English (*-ness, -ful, -less*) and Old French from Latin (*-ment*)

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### ***-ment* – the result or act of**

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**Origin:** Old French *-ment*, from Latin *-mentum*

Turns a verb into a noun: the **result** or **act** of doing something.

<b>Base</b>	<b>-ment word</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
<i>enjoy</i>	<b>enjoyment</b>	<b>the result of enjoying</b>
<i>move</i>	<b>movement</b>	<b>the act of moving</b>
<i>excite</i>	<b>excitement</b>	<b>the state of being excited</b>
<i>treat</i>	<b>treatment</b>	<b>the way of treating</b>
<i>agree</i>	<b>agreement</b>	<b>a state of agreeing</b>
<i>amuse</i>	<b>amusement</b>	<b>entertainment</b>
<i>disappoint</i>	<b>disappointment</b>	<b>the state of being disappointed</b>
<i>achieve</i>	<b>achievement</b>	<b>something achieved</b>
<i>invest</i>	<b>investment</b>	<b>money put to work</b>
<i>improve</i>	<b>improvement</b>	<b>the act of improving</b>

Morpheme family from *move*: move → movement → moveable → removal → immovable

## **-ness – the state of being**

**Origin:** Old English *-nes / -ness*

Turns an adjective into a noun: the **state** or **quality** of being that adjective.

<b>Base</b>	<b>-ness word</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
<i>sad</i>	<b>sadness</b>	<b>the state of being sad</b>
<i>kind</i>	<b>kindness</b>	<b>the quality of being kind</b>
<i>dark</i>	<b>darkness</b>	<b>the state of being dark</b>
<i>happy</i>	<b>happiness</b>	<b>the state of being happy (y → i)</b>
<i>busy</i>	<b>business</b>	<b>(note: unusual pronunciation /'biznis/)</b>
<i>aware</i>	<b>awareness</b>	<b>the state of being aware</b>
<i>polite</i>	<b>politeness</b>	<b>the quality of being polite</b>
<i>good</i>	<b>goodness</b>	<b>the quality of goodness</b>
<i>weak</i>	<b>weakness</b>	<b>the state of being weak</b>
<i>great</i>	<b>greatness</b>	<b>the quality of greatness</b>

## **-ful – full of; having**

**Origin:** Old English *-full*; note: always ONE *l* as a suffix (the *-l* from *full* is reduced to *-l*)

Turns a noun into an adjective: having a lot of something.

<b>Base</b>	<b>-ful word</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
<i>care</i>	<b>careful</b>	<b>full of care</b>
<i>help</i>	<b>helpful</b>	<b>full of help</b>
<i>hope</i>	<b>hopeful</b>	<b>having hope</b>
<i>play</i>	<b>playful</b>	<b>full of play</b>
<i>use</i>	<b>useful</b>	<b>full of use</b>
<i>wonder</i>	<b>wonderful</b>	<b>full of wonder</b>
<i>thank</i>	<b>thankful</b>	<b>full of thanks</b>
<i>colour</i>	<b>colourful</b>	<b>full of colour</b>
<i>beauty</i>	<b>beautiful</b>	<b>full of beauty (<i>y</i> → <i>i</i>)</b>
<i>success</i>	<b>successful</b>	<b>having success (<i>ss</i> + <i>ful</i>)</b>
<i>power</i>	<b>powerful</b>	<b>full of power</b>
<i>peace</i>	<b>peaceful</b>	<b>full of peace</b>

**Common mistake:** writing *carefull*, *helpfull*\* with two *ls*. The suffix has only one *l* — the full word *full* is reduced to *-ful* as a suffix.

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## ***-less* – without**

**Origin:** Old English *-leas* (free from, without)

Turns a noun or adjective into an adjective: **without** something.

<b>Base</b>	<b><i>-less</i> word</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
<i>care</i>	<b>careless</b>	<b>without care</b>
<i>help</i>	<b>helpless</b>	<b>without help</b>
<i>hope</i>	<b>hopeless</b>	<b>without hope</b>
<i>use</i>	<b>useless</b>	<b>without use</b>
<i>harm</i>	<b>harmless</b>	<b>without harm</b>
<i>end</i>	<b>endless</b>	<b>without end</b>
<i>worth</i>	<b>worthless</b>	<b>without worth</b>
<i>sleep</i>	<b>sleepless</b>	<b>without sleep</b>
<i>thought</i>	<b>thoughtless</b>	<b>without thought</b>
<i>count</i>	<b>countless</b>	<b>too many to count</b>
<i>power</i>	<b>powerless</b>	<b>without power</b>
<i>fear</i>	<b>fearless</b>	<b>without fear</b>

## The *care* word family – teaching the four suffixes together

*care* is the ideal teaching word for all four suffixes:

Suffix	Word	Class	Meaning
<i>(none)</i>	<b>care</b>	noun/verb	<b>attention; to feel concern</b>
<i>-ful</i>	<b>careful</b>	adjective	<b>having care</b>
<i>-less</i>	<b>careless</b>	adjective	<b>without care</b>
<i>-fully</i>	<b>carefully</b>	adverb	<b>in a careful way</b>
<i>-lessly</i>	<b>carelessly</b>	adverb	<b>in a careless way</b>
<i>-fulness</i>	<b>carefulness</b>	noun	<b>the quality of being careful</b>
<i>-lessness</i>	<b>carelessness</b>	noun	<b>the quality of being careless</b>

Seven words from one base. Show children this chain on the board — it demonstrates the productive power of morphology more clearly than any definition.

## Morpheme matrix

	<b>-ment</b>	<b>-ness</b>	<b>-ful</b>	<b>-less</b>
<b>care-</b>	–	–	<b>careful</b>	<b>careless</b>
<b>hope-</b>	–	–	<b>hopeful</b>	<b>hopeless</b>
<b>help-</b>	–	–	<b>helpful</b>	<b>helpless</b>
<b>use-</b>	–	–	<b>useful</b>	<b>useless</b>
<b>power-</b>	–	–	<b>powerful</b>	<b>powerless</b>
<b>enjoy-</b>	<b>enjoyment</b>	–	–	–
<b>excite-</b>	<b>excitement</b>	–	–	–
<b>sad-</b>	–	<b>sadness</b>	–	–
<b>kind-</b>	–	<b>kindness</b>	–	–

## Word sort

Add the correct suffix to make a new word.

<b>Base</b>	<b>+ -ment</b>	<b>+ -ness</b>	<b>+ -ful</b>	<b>+ -less</b>
<i>enjoy</i>				
<i>kind</i>				
<i>care</i>				
<i>hope</i>				
<i>excite</i>				
<i>dark</i>				

## Dictation sentences

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With **careful movement** and **endless kindness**, she helped the **helpless** bird.

The **excitement** and **goodness** of the day made the earlier **sadness** seem **worthless**.

**Hopeful** and **fearless**, she walked into the **darkness** with **wonderful calmness**.

His **carelessness** caused **disappointment** — a **thoughtless** act with **countless** consequences.

The **achievement** brought great **happiness** and a feeling of **usefulness** to the whole team.

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*Source: DfE English Appendix 1: Spelling (2013). Etymology verified against Oxford English Dictionary.*