

Suffixes · Free resource

## Suffix: **-ous**

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

**Origin:** Latin *-osus* via Old French *-ous*, meaning "full of" or "having the quality of"

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### What it means

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**-ous** turns a noun into an adjective meaning "full of" or "having the quality of."

*danger* → **dangerous** (*full of danger*)

*fame* → **famous** (*having fame*)

*courage* → **courageous** (*having courage*)

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## Five spelling cases

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Case 1 — Add directly: *danger* → **dangerous** · *poison* → **poisonous** · *mountain* → **mountainous**

Case 2 — Drop silent *e*: *fame* → **famous** · *nerve* → **nervous** · *adventure* → **adventurous**

Case 3 — Drop *u* from *-our*: *humour* → **humorous** · *glamour* → **glamorous** · *vigour* → **vigorous**

Case 4 — Keep *e* to protect soft *g*: *courage* → **courageous** · *outrage* → **outrageous**

Case 5 — *-ious* form: *ambition* → **ambitious** · *caution* → **cautious** · *suspicion* → **suspicious**

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## Morpheme matrix

|                  | <b>-ous</b> | <b>-ious</b> | <b>(nothing)</b> |
|------------------|-------------|--------------|------------------|
| <b>danger-</b>   | dangerous   | –            | danger           |
| <b>fame-</b>     | famous      | –            | fame             |
| <b>courage-</b>  | courageous  | –            | courage          |
| <b>humour-</b>   | humorous    | –            | humour           |
| <b>ambition-</b> | –           | ambitious    | ambition         |
| <b>caution-</b>  | –           | cautious     | caution          |
| <b>mountain-</b> | mountainous | –            | mountain         |

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

| Base            | -ous word          | Case                              |
|-----------------|--------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <i>danger</i>   | <b>dangerous</b>   | Case 1                            |
| <i>poison</i>   | <b>poisonous</b>   | Case 1                            |
| <i>mountain</i> | <b>mountainous</b> | Case 1                            |
| <i>fame</i>     | <b>famous</b>      | Case 2                            |
| <i>nerve</i>    | <b>nervous</b>     | Case 2                            |
| <i>marvell</i>  | <b>marvellous</b>  | Case 1 (British double <i>l</i> ) |
| <i>humour</i>   | <b>humorous</b>    | Case 3                            |
| <i>glamour</i>  | <b>glamorous</b>   | Case 3                            |
| <i>courage</i>  | <b>courageous</b>  | Case 4                            |
| <i>ambition</i> | <b>ambitious</b>   | Case 5                            |
| <i>caution</i>  | <b>cautious</b>    | Case 5                            |

## Dictation sentences

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The **dangerous** path through the **mountainous** terrain was **famous** for its difficulty.

She was **nervous** but **courageous**, which the crowd found **marvellous**.

His **humorous** response to the **outrageous** claim made everyone laugh.

She was **ambitious** and **cautious** in equal measure — **famous** for both qualities.

The **glamorous** event was **poisonous** with tension beneath the **adventurous** surface.

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*Source: DfE English Appendix 1: Spelling (2013). Etymology: Latin -osus via Old French.*