

Years 3 & 4 · Free resource

Suffix: **-ation**

Year group: 3/4

Source: DfE, *English Appendix 1: Spelling*, National Curriculum for England (2013) — Years 3–4, Suffixes

Curriculum requirement: Statutory

The rule

The suffix **-ation** is added to verbs to make nouns. It means "the act or process of" doing something.

inform (verb) → **information** (noun)

adore (verb) → **adoration** (noun)

sense (verb) → **sensation** (noun)

When the verb ends in a silent e: drop the *e* before adding *-ation*.

adore → *ador* + *-ation* = **adoration**

sense → *sens* + *-ation* = **sensation**

When the verb ends in a consonant: add *-ation* directly.

inform + *-ation* = **information**

transform + *-ation* = **transformation**

Why this is one of the most powerful suffixes in English

-ation (and its close relatives *-tion*, *-sion*, *-ssion*) comes from Latin and is extraordinarily common in academic and subject-specific vocabulary. A child who recognises *-ation* can read and spell a large proportion of the complex nouns they will encounter in history, science, geography, and PSHE from Year 3 onwards.

Etymology note: The suffix entered English via French from Latin *-atio / -ationis*. Many *-ation* words came into English after the Norman Conquest (1066) when French-influenced vocabulary expanded dramatically in formal registers. This is why *-ation* words tend to feel "formal" or "academic" — they were originally the vocabulary of administration, law, and religion.

Examples

Verb → noun with -ation (no spelling change to base):

Verb	Noun
inform	information
transform	transformation
confirm	confirmation
form	formation
perform	performance (<i>note: -ance here, not -ation</i>)
consider	consideration
admire	admiration (<i>drop the e</i>)

From the Y3/4 statutory word list:

imagine → **imagination** (imagine + -ation, drop the *e*)

observe → **observation** (*non-statutory but useful*)

educate → **education** (*drop the e*)

Common -ation words children encounter in KS2 subjects:

information (computing, English)

investigation (science)

transformation (maths, art)

communication (PSHE)

civilisation (history)

organisation (all subjects)

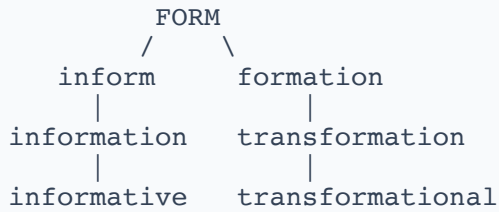
Common mistakes and why they happen

Wrong	Right	Why
<i>informaion</i>	information	The <i>t</i> belongs to the suffix: <i>inform</i> + <i>-ation</i>
<i>adoration</i> → <i>adoreration</i>	adoration	Drop the <i>e</i> from <i>adore</i> before adding <i>-ation</i>
<i>sensitiveation</i>	<i>(not a word)</i>	<i>sensitive</i> takes <i>-ity</i> not <i>-ation</i> ; learn which suffix fits which base
<i>confirmashun</i>	confirmation	The <i>-ation</i> ending is always spelled <i>-ation</i> regardless of how it sounds

Pronunciation note: The *-ation* ending is pronounced /eɪʃən/ (as in "ay-shun"). Children sometimes spell it *-ashun* or *-ation* confusedly. The spelling is always *-ation* — pronunciation does not change the spelling.

Morpheme family web

Show children how one base word generates multiple forms:



For the classroom: Write *FORM* on the board. Ask children to build as many words as they can using *form* as the base, adding prefixes and suffixes. How many can the class find in 2 minutes?

form, reform, inform, transform, conform, uniform, format, formation, information, transformation, reformation, confirmation, deformation, formal, informal, formally...

Word sort activity

Sort these words: which base verb does each *-ation* noun come from?

Words: information · admiration · organisation · examination · exploration · celebration · imagination · invitation · relaxation · transformation

Base verb	-ation noun
inform	information
admire	
organise	
examine	
explore	
celebrate	
imagine	
invite	
relax	
transform	

Extension: For each verb, can you use the *-ation* noun in a sentence?

Dictation sentences (teacher-ready)

Read aloud. Children write. Mark together.

The **information** on the display board helped everyone understand the task.

She looked at the picture with **admiration** because the colours were so vivid.

The science lesson required careful **observation** of the plants each day.

With great **imagination**, he built an entire world from a pile of bricks.

The **transformation** of the caterpillar into a butterfly took two weeks.

Classroom questions

What verb is hiding inside the word *information*?

If *-ation* turns verbs into nouns, what does *exploration* mean? What is the base verb?

Why do we drop the *e* from *adore* before adding *-ation*? (Link to Y2 drop-the-e rule)

Can you think of a science word that ends in *-ation*? What does the base verb mean?

Links to other rules

Y3/4 rule 03 — Suffixes *-tion*, *-sion*, *-ssion*, *-cian*: all related endings; *-ation* is the most common form

Y2 drop-the-e rule — why *adore* becomes *adoration* not *adoreation*

Source: DfE English Appendix 1: Spelling (2013). All statutory word examples verified against the published statutory word lists for Years 3–4.