

## Building up Words and Breaking them down

Look at these words:

comfort    comforts    comforted    comforting  
discomfort  
comfortable                    uncomfortable  
comfortably            uncomfortably  
comforter

What they all have in common is the stem or root word “comfort”. To it have been added **prefixes** (pieces placed in the front), and **suffixes** (pieces placed at the back). The prefixes used in this example are **dis-** and

**-un**. The suffixes are **-s**, **-ed**, **-ing**, **-able**, and **-ly** (**-ably** in this case, made up of **-able** and **ly** - you have to drop the **-le** and add **-ly**).

Most prefixes are added without making any changes but suffixes do sometimes cause changes, for example in words ending with e or y.

The technical terms are:

**stem** or root words (I will use stem words from this on)

**prefixes** - small part of a word added before the stem word  
(remember pre-war = before the war, pre-natal = before birth.)

**suffixes** - small part of a word added after the stem

## Exercise 1: Word Building on “friend”

friend	friendly	friendliness	
unfriendly	friendship	befriend	friendless

Pick the correct word to fill the gap in these sentences and write them out again:

1. She was the first \_\_\_\_\_ that I made at school.
2. Our \_\_\_\_\_ has lasted twenty years.
3. He felt lonely and \_\_\_\_\_ in the big city.
4. Ireland used to be famous for the \_\_\_\_\_ of its people.
5. She looked so lost and shy that he decided to \_\_\_\_\_ her.
6. I was relieved to see a \_\_\_\_\_ face coming towards me.
7. I didn't wish to be \_\_\_\_\_ but I was in a terrible hurry.

The prefixes are:

be-

un-

The suffixes are:

-ship,

-ly,

-less,

-liness (made up of -ly and -ness: drop the y and use I)

**Answers on page 5**

## Exercise 2: Word building on “point”

point	pointed	pointing	pointless
pointlessness	appointment	appointing	disappointed

Rewrite the sentences, filling the gaps with the appropriate word, which contains “point”:

1. I wish you would stick to the - - - - - .
2. It is quite - - - - - trying to argue with her.
3. He made an - - - - - to meet them at four o’clock.
4. They were very - - - - - when they couldn’t get tickets for the match.
5. It was one of those modern plays about the total - - - - - of human existence.
6. They were accused of - - - - - all their own supporters to posts that came up.
7. All the evidence - - - - - to it being an inside job.
8. He takes great pleasure in - - - - - out all my mistakes.

You can make many more words by adding prefixes and suffixes to ‘point

For another exercise try building up new words with:

-s, -ed, -ing, -er, -less, -ly, -ness, -ment

dis-, a- (you often have to double the first letter when adding a).

**Answers on last page**

### Exercise 3: Word Building on “separate”

separate\*   separated   separating   separately  
separation   inseparable

\* separate can be pronounced in two different ways, with the stress on different parts of the word - they plan to separate, separate parts. Both words are spelled the same. (A sentence has been given for each)

Pick the correct word to fill the gap in these sentences and write them out again: (Notice that you have to drop the final -e to add -ed, -ing, -tion (you don't double the t), and -able. -ly does not change the root)

1. The first thing you have to do is to \_\_\_\_\_ the whites and yolks of the eggs.
2. They were great friends and had been \_\_\_\_\_ since childhood.
3. Twins who have been \_\_\_\_\_ at birth still show a great resemblance to each other in their manner and tastes.
4. The marriage was clearly not working out and a \_\_\_\_\_ seemed inevitable.
5. They were sitting at \_\_\_\_\_ tables in the hotel diningroom.
6. The crowd was \_\_\_\_\_ into two groups and the atmosphere was tense.
7. They left \_\_\_\_\_ to avoid being noticed

Prefix: in-   Suffixes: -ed, -ing, -ly, -tion, -able. Notice the changes!

Watch that a i in separate. Some people use the phrase “See a rat in separate” to help them remember. The name for a phrase which help you to remember things is a mnemonic (pronounced neh-mon-ic). Fortunately you don't have to remember that to make use of memory aids!

# Answers:

## Exercise 1:

1. friend
2. friendship
3. friendless
4. friendliness
5. befriend
6. friendly
7. unfriendly

## Exercise 2:

1. point
2. pointless
3. appointment
4. disappointed
5. pointlessness
6. appointing
7. pointed
8. pointing

## Word building on “point”;

point points pointed pointing  
pointer pointless pointlessly pointlessness  
appoint appoints appointed appointing  
appointment  
disappoint disappoints disappointed  
disappointing disappointingly disappointment

## Exercise 3:

1. separate
2. inseparable
3. separated
4. separation
5. separate
6. separating
7. separately