

Morphology in 15 minutes



...or why you should
learn your roots!

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MORPH OLOGY

To Shape

To Study

Morphology is literally to "study" the "shape" of a word.

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Morphology explains how
words are formed.

And how you can make meaning
from word parts.

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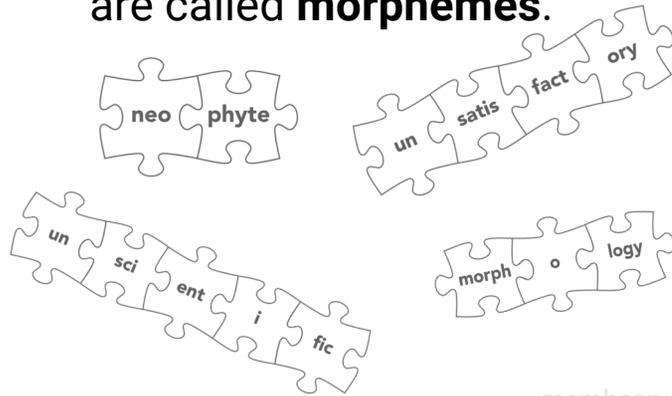
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English words can be
broken down into
pieces.

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These broken-down pieces are called **morphemes**.



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Consider these words:

CONFLUENCE
AFFLUENT
SUPERFLUOUS

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This is the **root** FLU

CON**FLU**ENCE
AFF**FLU**ENT
SUPER**FLU**OUS

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Notice the pieces in front of **FLU**.

CONFLUENCE
AFFLUENT
SUPERFLUOUS

They are called **prefixes**.

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Finally, we have these pieces
at the back of **FLU**.

CONFLU**ENCE**
AFFLU**ENT**
SUPERFLU**OUS**

They are called **suffixes**.

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Prefixes are always at the head of a word
and suffixes are at the tail.

CONFLU**ENCE**
AFFLU**ENT**
SUPERFLU**OUS**



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Most of the meaning of a word
comes from its root.

CONFLU**ENCE**
AFFLU**ENT**
SUPERFLU**OUS**

Flu means **"flow"**

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Suffixes, on the other hand,
contribute relatively little to
word meaning.

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So we won't be learning suffixes.

CONFLUENCE
AFFLUENT
SUPERFLUOUS

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To illustrate:
Let's add a suffix to the root **SCI**
which means "know."

know state or condition
SCIENCE
root suffix

So "science" means the "state or condition" of
"knowing" something.

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Let's add a few more suffixes to the root
SCI and make more words:

SCI { ENCE science
 ENTIST scientist
 ENCY sciency
 ENTIFIC scientific
 suffix

From the **root SCI alone**, we know that each of
these words has something to do with "knowing."

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So the suffix isn't as
important for word
meaning.

Suffixes don't change meaning, so we won't
learn them.

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Prefixes, on the other hand, attach to the front of words and **can change meaning**.

not know
UN SCIENTIFIC
prefix

An unscientific person is “not” in a state of “knowing”; they don’t know much.

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Here is another example:

thoroughly know
CONSCIENCE
prefix

So this word means the “thorough knowing” of right and wrong inside your mind.

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Prefixes can build on each other.

CONSCIENCE
UNSCIENTIFIC

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not thoroughly known
UNCONSCIONABLE
prefix prefix root

“Not” what is “thoroughly known” to be the right thing to do; hence, something that’s really wrong to do.

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un con sci ion able

You've seen how this large juicy word is built from its parts.

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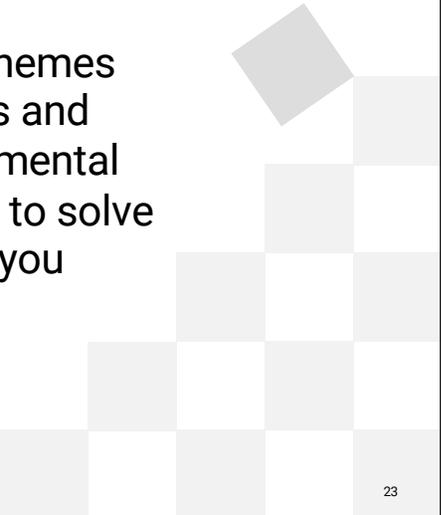
It's important to remember that roots will NOT always directly give you the meaning of a word.

But they will serve as effective memory triggers!

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Think of morphemes (prefixes, roots and suffixes) as a mental puzzle you get to solve for each word you encounter.



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Puzzle #1

Can you figure out the meaning?

honey flow

MELLIFLUOUS

Ans: A mellifluous voice "flows" sweetly like "honey" – it's nice to listen to.

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Puzzle #2
Can you figure out the meaning?

new plant
NEOPHYTE

Ans: A neophyte is a person who is like a "new plant." They are new at something and are just beginning to learn (like a beginner in chess).

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Puzzle #3
Can you figure out the meaning?

say act of doing place for
DICTIONARY

Ans: A dictionary is a place for saying words. "Dictionaries" were originally made to tell people how to pronounce a word.

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Puzzle #4
Can you figure out the meaning?

hand make act
MANUFACTURE

Ans: The "act" of "making" by "hand." Originally all manufacturing was done by hand instead of by machines.

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Fill out your worksheets regularly. A small time investment in learning roots will give you a better grasp on English words and their meanings!

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1 Why is learning roots important?

- Roots can help you remember definitions of words.
- Roots can help you make an informed guess as to what a word means.
- Roots can help you group similar words together, allowing you to make interesting connections.
- All of the above.

2 What are broken-down pieces of words called?

- morphemes
- syllables
- consonants
- definitions

3 Which is not a morpheme?

- root
- prefix
- verb
- suffix

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4 In the word "superfluous," what is the root?

- super
- flu
- ous
- superflu

5 In the word "confluent," what is the prefix?

- con
- ent
- flu
- conflu

6 In the word "affluence," what is the suffix?

- flu
- af
- ence
- afflu

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7 Where is the prefix of a word found?

- at the beginning
- at the end
- in the middle
- sometimes at the end or at the beginning

8 What does the root "sci" mean in "science?"

- smart
- investigator
- class
- know

9 Can there be a string of prefixes in a word?

- No
- Are you kidding?
- Yes
- If there are two ways to spell a word

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10 Is it probable that there is more than one prefix in the word "pneumonoultramicroscopicsilicovolcanoconiosis?"

- Yes
- Probably not
- No
- It depends

11 If the prefix "pre-" means "before" and the root "fract" means "broken," what is a probable meaning of "prefracted?"

- Something that used to be broken.
- Something that cannot be broken.
- Something that's already broken.
- Something that's made beforehand.

12 If the prefix "in-" means "not," the prefix "circum-" means "around," and the root "saltat" means "dance," would your math teacher want you "incircumsaltating" in class?

- No—at all times during class
- No—but only while taking a test
- Yes—at all times during class
- None of the above.

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