

Lesson Plan: Word formation: prefixes, suffixes, and roots

Level	Advanced (C1–C2)
Time	60–90 minutes
Skills	Vocabulary, writing
Focus	Productive affixes; word families; inferring meaning; C1/C2 exam Use of English

OBJECTIVES

By the end of the lesson, students will be able to:

- Apply the most productive prefixes and suffixes in English correctly
- Infer the meaning of unfamiliar words from their components
- Build complete word families and avoid common formation errors
- Use word formation as a productive strategy for vocabulary expansion

TARGET LANGUAGE & EXAMPLES

Key prefixes — meaning and examples

- un- (not): unhappy, unclear, unlikely, unprecedented
- re- (again): rebuild, reconsider, renegotiate, redefine
- over- (too much): overestimate, overreact, overturn, overcome
- under- (too little): underestimate, underfund, underperform
- mis- (wrongly): misunderstand, mislead, misinterpret, misjudge
- dis- (opposite/reversal): disagree, disrupt, dismantle, discredit

Key suffixes — noun formation

- -tion/-sion: create → creation, expand → expansion
- -ment: develop → development, achieve → achievement
- -ity: complex → complexity, available → availability
- -ness: aware → awareness, effective → effectiveness

Key suffixes — adjective and adverb

- -ous/-ious: danger → dangerous, ambition → ambitious
- -al: function → functional, origin → original
- -ive: effect → effective, create → creative
- -ly (adverb): significant → significantly, gradual → gradually

Meaning & Nuance

Root	Verb	Noun	Adjective	Adverb
create	create	creation	creative	creatively
analyse	analyse	analysis	analytical	analytically
signify	signify	significance	significant	significantly

develop	develop	development	developmental	—
innovate	innovate	innovation	innovative	innovatively
establish	establish	establishment	established	—

LESSON PROCEDURE

1. Warm-up: Construct the word (10 min)

Task: Teacher gives prefix + root. Students construct and define the word.

- 'over + estimate' → overestimate = to think something is larger/greater than it actually is
- 'mis + interpret' → misinterpret = to understand something incorrectly

2. Presentation (15 min)

Task: Prefixes in categories: negative, reversal, degree. Suffixes: noun, adjective, adverb.

- Word family trees: show how one root generates 4–6 related words.
- Exceptions: analysis (not analysation), strong → strength — irregular formations.

3. Word building challenge (15 min)

Task: Students build word families from 8 given roots, adding as many affixes as possible.

- 'effect' → effective, ineffective, effectively, ineffectively, effectiveness, effect (v)
- Time limit creates energy and productive engagement.

4. C1 Use of English task (25 min)

Task: 10 sentences with blanks. Students use word formation to complete them.

- 'The project suffered from _____. (under + fund)' → underfunding
- 'Her ____ of the data led to the wrong conclusion. (mis + interpret)' → misinterpretation

TEACHER NOTES

- Word formation is explicitly tested in Cambridge C1/C2 Use of English Part 3.
- Word families should always be taught alongside single words: analyse, analysis, analytical, analytically.
- The exceptions (strong → strength, broad → breadth) reward explicit attention.

EXTENSION / HOMEWORK

Choose one or more:

1. Build complete word families for 10 common roots using a dictionary if needed.
2. Find 5 words with prefixes and 5 with suffixes in an academic article and analyse their components.
3. Write a paragraph using at least 8 different word formation patterns.