

# Suffix

## Definition of Suffix

In semantics, a suffix is a letter or a group of the letters that is attached at the end of a root or a base word to change its meaning or tense. It serves to create new words out of the old words.

Most common suffixes include -able, -al, -ed, -er, -en, -est, -ful, -ing, -tion, -ity, -less, -ly, -ment, -ous, -ness, -ious, -es, and -s. For instance, in the [sentence](#), “He was breathing heavily from the climb and his hand rested on one of the two heavy packs they had been carrying (*For Whom the Bell Tolls*, by Earnest Hemingway), all additions of -ing, -ly, -ed and -ing are examples of suffixes.

## Types of Suffix

There are two types of suffix:

### Derivational Suffix

This type of suffix changes the meaning of a word, making it a different part of speech. For instance, when -ly is added to an [adjective](#), it transforms its meanings as well as its own type and makes it an [adverb](#).

### Inflectional Suffix

Inflectional suffix transforms the base word into a different tense, but without changing its meaning. For instance, by adding -s to the noun “dog,” it only changes the number of animals, not the meaning of the word.

## Examples of Suffix in Literature

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Example #1: *Waiting for Godot* (by Samuel Beckett)

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“No, personally. I do not need them any more. (*Estragon takes a step towards the bones.*) But . . . (*Estragon stops short*) . . . He is therefore the one to ask. (*Estragon turns towards Lucky, hesitates.*) (*in raptures*). Mister! (*Lucky bows his head.*) Reply! Do you want them or don't you? (*Silence of Lucky. To Estragon.*) They're yours. (*Estragon makes a dart at the bones, picks them up and begins to gnaw them.*)... It's a scandal! *Silence. Flabbergasted, Estragon stops gnawing, looks at Pozzo and Vladimir in turn. Pozzo outwardly calm.*”

This example contains both types of suffix. See the underlined words with derivational suffixes -er, -al, and -ly. The inflectional suffixes are -s, -s, and -ing.

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#### **Example #2: *Gulliver's Travels* (by Jonathan Swift)**

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“Two days after this adventure, the emperor, having ordered that part of his army which quarters in and about his metropolis, to be in readiness, took a fancy of diverting himself in a very singular manner. He desired I would stand like a Colossus, with my legs as far asunder as I conveniently could. He then commanded his general (who was an old experienced leader, and a great patron of mine) to draw up the troops in close order, and march them under me ...”

In this instance, the derivational suffixes are -ness, -ly and -ed, while inflectional are -s and -ing.

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#### **Example #3: *Heart of Darkness* (by Joseph Conrad)**

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“We were on deck at the time, and the headman of my wood-cutters, lounging near by, turned upon him his heavy and glittering eyes...I assure you that never, never before, did this land, this river, this jungle, the very arch of this blazing sky, appear to me so hopeless and so dark, so impenetrable to human

thought, so pitiless to human weakness. ... he did not know exactly in what direction.”

Here the derivational suffixes are -less, -able, -ness, and -ion, while inflectional is used in glittering.

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#### **Example #4: *Macbeth* (by William Shakespeare)**

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“And fixed his head upon our battlements.  
As whence the sun ‘gins his reflection  
Shipwrecking storms and direful thunders break..  
As cannons overcharged with double cracks,  
So they doubly redoubled strokes upon the foe.  
Except they meant to bathe in reeking wounds.”

Here Shakespeare has used mostly inflectional suffixes, which are used in the words “cannons,” “strokes,” and “wounds.” However, “reflection” and “direful” have used derivational suffixes as their meanings change.

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#### **Example #5: *Ode to Autumn* (by John Keats)**

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“Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness,  
Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun..  
To bend with apples the moss’d cottage-trees,  
And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;  
Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,  
Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind...”

In this example, there are two derivational suffixes -ness, -less, and three inflectional suffixes -ing, -s, and -ing.

### **Function of Suffix**

A suffix is not a word, but it adds to and changes the meaning of a root or base word, making the word longer. It also shows the way a word is used, formed, and changed into another word with a different meaning to suit

grammatical role of lexis by changing nouns into adjectives or making verbs of nouns – the reason that a suffix has an important impact on the meanings of the words.

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