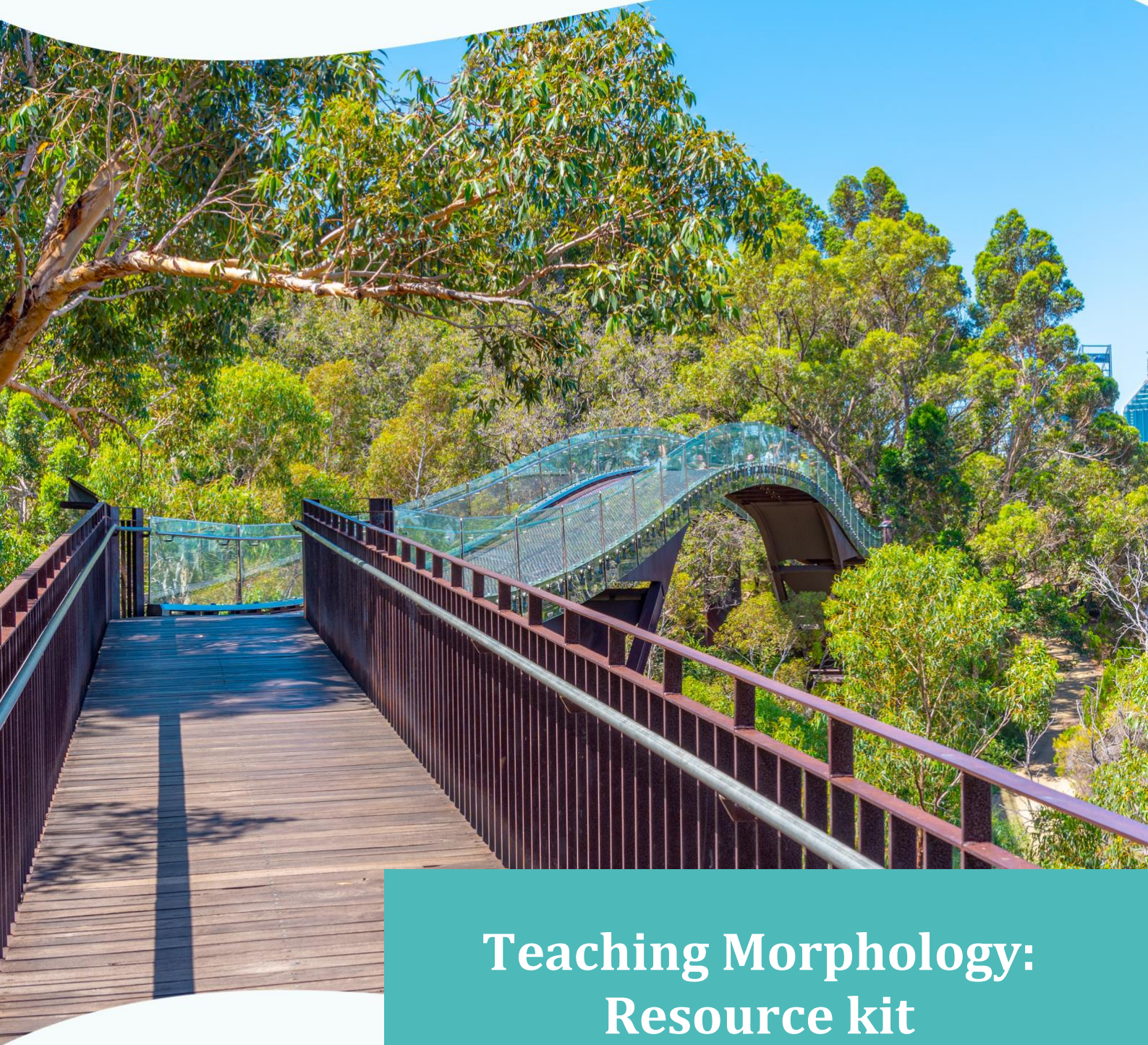




**Literacy Impact**  
Educational Services



# Teaching Morphology: Resource kit

*Bridging the gap between evidence-based research and literacy success for every student*

*~Julie Scali*

[www.literacyimpact.com.au](http://www.literacyimpact.com.au)



# Morphology

Morphology is the conventional system by which the smallest units of meaning in words - bases, prefixes and suffixes; combine to form complex words (Bowers, P. N., Kirky, J.R., & Helene Deacon, S). In its simplest form it is the study of the structure of words and their meanings.

Some studies have found that explicit teaching of morphology can have a positive impact on reading comprehension; including significant progress for students with English as an Additional Language or Dialect (Amirjalili & Jabbari, 2018). There is also evidence that explicitly teaching students the patterns for morphemes had a significant effect on improving decoding and phonological awareness (Goodwin & Anh, 2013).

It is important that children are taught the interrelation between morphology, phonology and etymology, as when we combine all three areas, it teaches children how our writing system works (Bower & Shanahan, 2021). Morphological instruction however, should never replace a structured synthetic phonics approach and the other essential elements in the Science of Reading.

During systematic phonics instruction in the early years, students can be taught the function of morphemes in reading and spelling by introducing simple plural suffixes such as 's' when reading and writing CVC words. *For example: pet= one pet    pets= more than one pet* (Shanahan, 2021).

## Definitions

**morpheme:** the smallest unit of meaning within a word. Morphemes are classified as either being a base or root word (bed, stand, rupt) or an affix (a bound morpheme that occurs before or after a base or root word)

**etymology:** the origin and historical development of a linguistic form, tracing its language from one to another.

**affix:** a bound morpheme that comes before or after a base or root word (prefix or suffix)

**prefix:** A bound morpheme that comes before a base or root word (dis- pre- un-)

**suffix:** A bound morpheme that comes after a base or root word (-ly -ing -ed)

**base word:** a word that can not be broken down into a smaller meaning eg. head, happy. Also referred to as a root word.

**root word:** a word that can not be broken down into a smaller meaning eg. rupt, astro. Also referred to as a base word.



# Layers of Language

## **Greek:**

Specialised words - especially  
in science  
eg. photosynthesis

## **Latin:**

Technical, sophisticated words used in  
formal settings eg. textbook or literature

## **Anglo Saxon:**

Common, short, everyday words used frequently in ordinary situations  
eg. book, yard, rain, head

Adapted from M. Henry, 1987;  
After Calfee & Associates, Stanford University



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# Recommended Teaching sequence

## 1. Anglo Saxon morphemes -

- Based on the vocabulary that children already use: Explicitly teach base words, prefixes and suffixes and how each influence a word's meaning
- Teach words with multiple morphemes using a Word Matrix and Word Sums
- Start with words with one base word (one morpheme only) eg. CVC words such as sit, pig, jump; and teach simple suffix plurals such as 's', 'ing' and how they change the meaning (cat, cats= 2 cats)
- Identify base words in longer words (pig, pigs, jump, jumping, jumped, play, playing, playful)
- Look at how prefixes can change meaning (misuse= use the wrong way/badly; tie a shoelace/untie a shoelace)
- Teach and review *nouns* as students need to apply knowledge of suffixes and prefixes eg. noun: -er, -hood, -ness, -or, -ist, -ment,
- Teach and review *adjectives* as students need to apply knowledge of suffixes and prefixes eg. -er, -est, -ful, -ous, -able, -ible
- Teach and review *adverbs* as students need to apply knowledge of suffixes and prefixes eg. -ed, -ing, -en, -fy, -ate, -ize

## 2. Latin morphemes - as above

3. Greek morphemes - as above plus: teach 'c' as in cyclone, 'ch' as in chemist, 'ph'- as in phone

## Word Matrix- word family map

		ful	ness
un	help	s ing ed	
		er	s

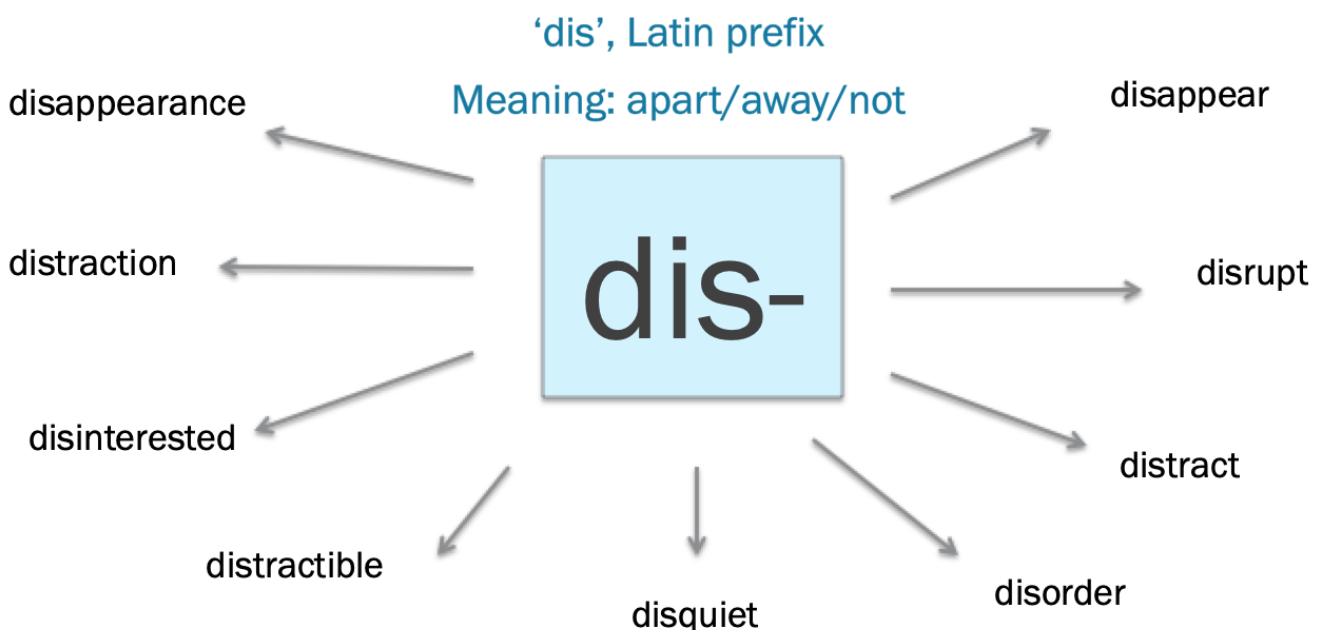


## Word Sums- *showing the underlying structure of a word with more than a base*

un + help + ful + ness → unhelpfulness

### Word Webs game:

1. Explicitly teach the new morpheme and its definition
2. Ask students to redefine the morpheme and its meaning into a sentence
3. Students draw some of the words with the morpheme in their Vocabulary Books
4. Practice reading the words with the morphemes in subsequent days
5. Play Word Webs with the targeted morpheme or review morphemes.
6. Students work in mixed ability pairs to list as many words as they can with the target morpheme.
7. Pairs share their words with the class. Students need to be able to say the meaning of the words.
8. Pair or group with the highest number of words is the winner.



# Common Morphemes

Prefixes	Meaning	Examples
in-	into; not	into, incomplete
un-	not	undo, untie
mis-	wrong	mistaken, misunderstand
dis-	away, separate, not	discolour, disappear
de-	down, away from	deescalate, depend
pre-	before	prejudice, preview
a-	not, in, on, without	atypical, aside
pro-	in favour of, positive, in front of	professional, proactive
con-	together, with	connect, confident
com-	with, together	compliment, command, company, committee
re-	back again	replay, recycle
sub-	under	submarine
ex-	out, away from	extension, extraordinary

Suffixes	Meaning	Examples
-s	more than one	cats, eats
-er	one who does; more	teacher, banker; shorter
-ly	in a certain way	quickly, naughtily
-ed	in the past	walked, cried
-ing	an action or result	painting
-less	without	boneless
-ship	how something is, to do with status	friendship
-y	a state of being	bony, shiny
-ible	ability	flexible
-ful	having qualities of, full of	beautiful
-ion	a process, state or result	decoration
-able	able to be	inflatable
-est	most	biggest
-ish	a little	childish

Root/base words	Meaning	Examples
hope	(from Greek 'elpis) to anticipate with pleasure	hoping, hopeful, hopeless
play	(From 'plega') to move at a brisk pace, move with joy	playful, player, playing
walk	German/Dutch	walked, walking, sidewalk
able	ability	unable, disable, ability
port	to carry (Latin)	transport, porter, reporter
ject	to throw, to throw down (Latin)	inject, interject, subject
rupt	to break (Latin)	disrupt, interrupt



# Prefixes: Example Lesson

1. **Write** the morpheme (prefix) dis- on the board
2. How many **syllables**? (1)
3. How many **phonemes**? (3)
4. **Explain meaning:** dis- is often found at the beginning of a word. It is a prefix. It means 'the opposite of, away/not
5. **Word building:** I am going to build a word with dis- as a prefix. What could it mean? When we see a word that starts with dis- we know it means not/away/opposite of.
6. **Word generation:** Can we think of words that begin with dis-? Model generating a list.
6. **Practice:** Let's make some more words with dis- (in mixed ability pairs), using the Word Web. Students could use magnetic morphemes.
7. **Review:** Put the dis- word in the Word Jar. Follow up activities/review in subsequent days/weeks.



# Polysyllabic/Multi-morphemic level

## Word Building Example Lesson:

*\* Could use magnetic morphemes for this lesson*

1. These are the morphemes that make the word disruptive:

dis- rupt- ive

2. Build the word: 'disruptive'

3. How many syllables? Let's clap it out.

4. What is the meaning of disruptive? Explain the meaning of each morpheme.

5. Here is a sentence with 'disruptive'. Can you think of a sentence for disruptive? Think Pair Share

6. Show the word with alternate morphemes using the Word Matrix or Word Sums graphic organiser.

7. Follow up activities/review/Word Jar in subsequent days/weeks





# Word Matrix template

~For teaching words with multiple morphemes use a Word Matrix or Word Sums (Shanahan, 2021)

		ful	ness
un	help	s ing ed	
		er	s




# Word Sums

*~For showing the underlying structure of a multi-morphemic word*

help + ful + ness = helpfulness

+ + + + = \_\_\_\_\_

+ + + + = \_\_\_\_\_

+ + + + = \_\_\_\_\_

+ + + + = \_\_\_\_\_

+ + + + = \_\_\_\_\_

+ + + + = \_\_\_\_\_



# Activity cards:

## Anglo Saxon, Latin and Greek morphemes

*Cut and laminate back and front, to make words, with magnets attached; or use them as a Card Shuffle to sort into root words, suffixes and prefixes*



# Anglo-Saxon morphemes

un	'un' Anglo Saxon prefix, Meaning: not
end	'end', Anglo Saxon Prefix, Meaning: the opposite side, limit
hand	'hand' Anglo Saxon root, Meaning: person who works with their hands
king	'king', Anglo Saxon Root, Meaning: leader of people
come	'come' Anglo Saxon Root, Meaning: together, come
head	'head' Anglo Saxon Root, Meaning: chief person, leader





hold	'hold', Anglo Saxon Root, Meaning: watch over, to keep, tend to
way	'way', Anglo Saxon Root, Meaning: path, road
rain	'rain', Anglo Saxon Prefix, Meaning: wet, moist
with	'with', Anglo Saxon Root, Meaning: back, against
hood	'hood', Anglo Saxon Root, Meaning: covering, protection, guard
court	'court', Anglo Saxon Root, Meaning: enclosed yard



high	'high', Anglo Saxon Root, Meaning: of great height, exalted
fare	'fare', Anglo Saxon Root, Meaning: food, go
cast	'cast', Anglo Saxon Prefix, Meaning: to throw
ing	'ing', Anglo Saxon Suffix, Meaning: form of verb- action
less	'less', Anglo Saxon Suffix, Meaning: without/lacking
ly	'ly', Anglo Saxon Suffix Meaning: having the quality of



some	'some', Anglo Saxon Root, Meaning: plural, same
self	'self', Anglo Saxon Root, Meaning: one's own person
farm	'farm', Anglo Saxon Root, Meaning: land-cultivated
le	'le', Anglo Saxon Suffix, Meaning: to, liable to
ward	'ward', Anglo Saxon Root, Meaning: guard, protect
bear	'bear', Anglo Saxon Root Meaning: in a satisfactory manner



wel	'wel', Anglo Saxon Root, Meaning: in a satisfactory manner
ed	'ed', Anglo Saxon Suffix, Meaning: past tense (verbs)
yard	'yard', Anglo Saxon Root, Meaning: garden, enclosure
ish	'ish', Anglo Saxon Suffix, Meaning: adjective form-belonging to/ somewhat
fore	'fore', Anglo Saxon Root, Meaning: before, front
dom	'dom', Anglo Saxon Root, Meaning: house





knight	'knight', Anglo Saxon Root, Meaning: servant, boy, youth
bow	'bow', Anglo Saxon Root, Meaning: to bend
be	'be', Anglo Saxon Root, Meaning: all round, thoroughly
play	'play', Anglo Saxon Root, Meaning: move lightly and quickly
help	'help', Anglo Saxon Root, Meaning: assistance



# Latin morphemes

rupt	'rupt' Latin Root, Meaning: break
pro	'pro', Latin Prefix Meaning: before, in favour of, on behalf of
dent	'dent', Latin Root, Meaning: tooth
struct	'struct', Latin Root, Meaning: build
dis	'dis', Latin Prefix Meaning: apart/away
centi	'centi', Latin/Greek Prefix, Meaning: one hundred/one hundredth



ive	'ive' Latin Suffix Meaning: tending to/of the quality of
pre	'pre', Latin Prefix Meaning: before
ject	'ject', Latin Root, Meaning: throw
able	'able', Latin Suffix, Meaning: capable of or worthy of
bi	'bi', Latin Prefix Meaning: two
duct	'duct', Latin/Greek Root, Meaning: lead, convey



cede	'cede' Latin Root, Meaning: go, move, yield
tract	'tract', Latin Root, Meaning: pull
con	'con', Latin Prefix, Meaning: together, with
ion	'ion', Latin Suffix, Meaning: action/process
ible	'ible', Latin Suffix Meaning: capable/worthy of
script	'script', Latin/Greek Root, Meaning: record, write, written





im	'im' Latin Prefix, Meaning: not
or	'or', Latin Suffix, Meaning: one who
vis	'vis', Latin Root, Meaning: see
flect	'flect', Latin Root, Meaning: curve, bend
ile	'ile', Latin Suffix Meaning: ability to, belonging to
mobile	'mobile', Latin Root, Meaning: moving



numer	'numer', Latin Root, Meaning: number
in	'in', Latin Prefix, Meaning: not
fer	'fer', Latin Root, Meaning: bear, carry
flect	'flect', Latin Root, Meaning: bend, curve
port	'port', Latin Root, Meaning: bear, carry, entrance
er	'er', Latin Suffix, Meaning: one who



ure	'ure', Latin Suffix, Meaning: act or result
de	'de', Latin Prefix Meaning: away, off
re	're', Latin Prefix, Meaning: again
ped	'ped', Latin Root, Meaning: foot
al	'al', Latin Suffix, Meaning: of, like, related to



## Greek morphemes

photo	'photo' Greek, Meaning: light
gram	'gram', Greek, Meaning: drawn or written
ist	'ist', Greek, Meaning: an expert in
phon	'phon', Greek, Meaning: sound
auto	'auto', Greek, Meaning: self
graph	'graph', Greek, Meaning: writing





chron	'chron' Greek, Meaning: time
tele	'tele', Greek, Meaning: distant, far
cylc	'cycl', Greek, Meaning: circle, wheel
anti	'anti', Greek, Meaning: opposed to, opposite
kilo	'kilo', Greek number, Meaning: one thousand
ite	'ite', Greek, Meaning: fossil



matic	'matic' Greek, Meaning: willing
hydro	'hydro', Greek, Meaning: water
meter	'meter', Greek, Meaning: measure, unit of measure
micro	'micro', Greek, Meaning: little, small
astro	'astro', Greek, Meaning: star
poly	'poly', Greek, Meaning: many



therm	'therm' Greek, Meaning: heat
scop	'scop', Greek, Meaning: look at, examine
cosm	'cosm', abbreviation of 'cosmo', Greek, Meaning: universe
bio	'bio', Greek, Meaning: life
ism	'ism', Greek, Meaning: state of being
logy	'logy', Greek, Meaning: study



psych	'psych' Greek, Meaning: mind, spirit, soul
path	'path', Greek, Meaning: suffer
naut	'naut', Greek, Meaning: sailor
geo	'geo', Greek, Meaning: earth
ana	'ana', Greek, Meaning: back, backward, upward
gen	'gen', Greek, Meaning: born, growing



phil	'phil' Greek, Meaning: love of
ic	'path', Greek, Meaning: of, relating to
y	
e	
o	



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