

II

Abstract nouns

A An abstract noun represents an idea, experience or quality rather than an object that you can touch. For example, **happiness**, **intention** and **shock** are abstract nouns but **pen**, **bed** and **trousers** are not.

B Suffixes are letters added to the end of words to make new words. Certain suffixes are used frequently in abstract nouns. The most common are **-ment**, **-ion**, **-ness** and **-ity**. The suffix **-ion** sometimes becomes **-tion**, **-sion**, **-ation** or **-ition**. **-ment**, and **-ion**, are usually used to make verbs into abstract nouns.

The suffixes **-ness** and **-ity** are added to adjectives.

Here are some examples of abstract nouns using those suffixes.

| | | | |
|----------------|-------------|----------------|-------------|
| achievement | action | aggressiveness | absurdity |
| adjustment | collection | attractiveness | anonymity |
| amazement | combination | bitterness | complexity |
| discouragement | illusion | carelessness | curiosity |
| improvement | imagination | consciousness | generosity |
| investment | production | friendliness | hostility |
| replacement | recognition | tenderness | prosperity |
| retirement | reduction | ugliness | sensitivity |

C Less common suffixes that form abstract nouns are **-ship**, **-dom**, **-th** and **-hood**.

The suffixes **-ship** and **-hood** are usually added to other nouns to form abstract nouns. The suffix **-th** is added to an adjective to form an abstract noun and **-dom** can combine with either a noun or an adjective.

Here are some examples of abstract nouns using those suffixes.

| | | | |
|----------------|-----------|----------|---------------|
| apprenticeship | boredom | breadth | adulthood |
| companionship | freedom | depth | brotherhood |
| membership | kingdom | length | childhood |
| ownership | martyrdom | strength | motherhood |
| partnership | stardom | warmth | neighbourhood |
| relationship | wisdom | width | (wo)manhood |

D Many abstract nouns do not use any suffix at all. Here are some examples.

| | | | |
|-------|-----------|--------|---------|
| anger | belief | calm | chance |
| faith | fear | humour | idea |
| luck | principle | rage | reason |
| sense | sight | speed | thought |

TIP When you learn a new adjective, find out if it has an abstract noun based on the same root and note it down in your vocabulary book with the adjective, for example, **warm**, **warmth** (abstract noun).

You will find more examples of the use of suffixes in Units 8 and 10 and of abstract nouns in Units 64 and 65.

Exercises

- 11.1** What is the abstract noun related to each of the following adjectives? All the nouns are formed in ways described on the opposite page although not all are listed opposite.

EXAMPLE tender *tenderness*

- | | | | |
|----------------|------------|-------------|--------------|
| 1 affectionate | 5 amused | 9 attentive | 13 equal |
| 2 excited | 6 graceful | 10 happy | 14 hopeful |
| 3 kind | 7 original | 11 popular | 15 resentful |
| 4 secure | 8 stupid | 12 weak | 16 wise |

- 11.2** Which verbs are related to these abstract nouns?

EXAMPLE argument *argue*

- | | | | |
|----------------|-------------|--------------|----------------|
| 1 collection | 4 intensity | 7 action | 10 ownership |
| 2 emptiness | 5 strength | 8 excitement | 11 imagination |
| 3 satisfaction | 6 boredom | 9 production | 12 adjustment |

- 11.3** On the opposite page, find a synonym with the suffix in brackets, for each of the following nouns.

EXAMPLE animosity (-ity) *hostility*

- | | | |
|---------------------------|------------------------|----------------------|
| 1 astonishment (-ment) | 5 substitution (-ment) | 9 vision (no suffix) |
| 2 inquisitiveness (-ity) | 6 fame (-dom) | 10 liberty (-dom) |
| 3 fraternity (-hood) | 7 decrease (-tion) | 11 fury (no suffix) |
| 4 possibility (no suffix) | 8 community (-hood) | 12 wealth (-ity) |

- 11.4** Complete each of the quotations with one of the words in the box.

imitation advice injustice kingdom darkness

- 'Better to light a candle than to curse the
- 'Do not ask of the ignorant.'
- 'Better to suffer than to commit it.'
- '..... is the sincerest form of flattery.'
- 'It's easy to govern a but difficult to rule one's family.'



- 11.5** Write your own quotations to describe the following abstract nouns. Perhaps you know a saying in your own language that you could translate into English?

- 1 freedom 2 love 3 life 4 curiosity 5 imagination

Follow-up: Find at least one more noun using each of the suffixes in B and C.

Follow-up: Some possibilities:

SPECT: circumspect behaviour; a retrospective exhibition; a fresh perspective.

VERT: an extroverted person; inverted commas; to pervert the innocent.

PORT: a railway porter; reported speech; transportation costs.

DUC, DUCT: to reduce taxes, to induce labour; a railway viaduct.

PRESS: blood pressure; compressed air; an original expression.

POSE, PONE: to pose for a photograph; to suppose something to be true; to repose peacefully.

Unit 11

- 11.1**
- | | | | |
|--------------|---------------|-----------------|---------------|
| 1 affection | 5 amusement | 9 attentiveness | 13 equality |
| 2 excitement | 6 grace | 10 happiness | 14 hope |
| 3 kindness | 7 originality | 11 popularity | 15 resentment |
| 4 security | 8 stupidity | 12 weakness | 16 wisdom |

- 11.2**
- | | | |
|-------------|--------------|------------|
| 1 collect | 5 strengthen | 9 produce |
| 2 empty | 6 bore | 10 own |
| 3 satisfy | 7 act | 11 imagine |
| 4 intensify | 8 excite | 12 adjust |

- 11.3**
- | | | |
|---------------|-----------------|---------------|
| 1 amazement | 5 replacement | 9 sight |
| 2 curiosity | 6 stardom | 10 freedom |
| 3 brotherhood | 7 reduction | 11 rage |
| 4 chance | 8 neighbourhood | 12 prosperity |

- 11.4** 1 darkness 2 advice 3 injustice 4 Imitation 5 kingdom

- 11.5** How you answer this question is a matter of your own originality. Here are some 'real' quotations about these abstract nouns, however:

- 1 Freedom is an indivisible word. If we want to enjoy it, and to fight for it, we must be prepared to extend it to everyone.
- 2 Love is a universal migraine. (Migraine = bad headache)
- 3 Life is a foreign language; all men mispronounce it.
- 4 Four be the things I'd be better without:
Love, curiosity, freckles and doubt.
- 5 Where there is no imagination, there is no horror.

Follow-up: Some possible answers:

There are many more possibilities for the B suffixes but not many for the C ones.

- | | | | | |
|---------|----------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|
| B -ment | (un)employment | entertainment | involvement | requirement |
| -ion | diversion | attraction | direction | rejection |
| -ness | awkwardness | foolishness | loveliness | madness |
| -ity | brutality | familiarity | productivity | superiority |
| -ship | citizenship | chairmanship | sponsorship | championship |
| C -dom | dukedom | earldom | | |
| -th | growth | wealth | stealth | |
| -hood | babyhood | nationhood | | |