

Tools for Instruction

Explore Word Families

One way to help students expand their vocabulary and strengthen word consciousness is to explore word families, or groups of words that share the same base word. Use the following activities to help students understand how the meaning of a base word connects all the words in a family. Students can deepen their understanding of prefixes, suffixes, and base words by analyzing how they contribute to the meaning of each word in a family.

Two Ways to Teach

Build a Word Family 20–30 minutes

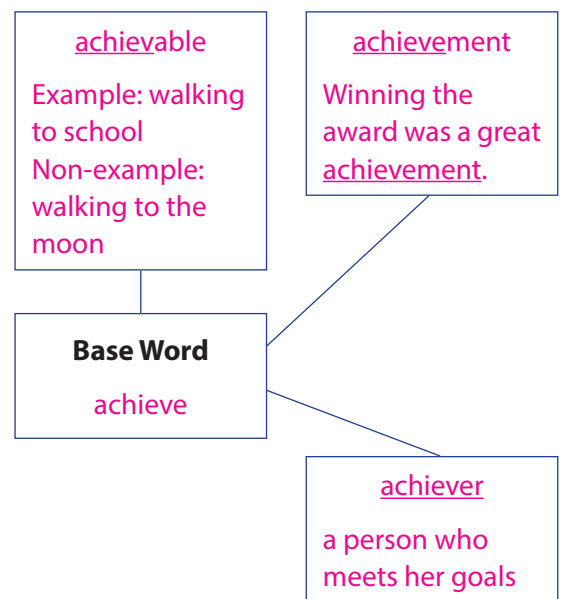
- Display the base word *inform* and discuss its meaning. (“to tell” or “to give knowledge”) As a group, brainstorm other words that include the base word *inform*. Display the list.

<u>inform</u>	
<u>in</u> formed	mis <u>in</u> formed
<u>in</u> formation	un <u>in</u> formative
<u>in</u> formative	un <u>in</u> formed

- Underline the base word *inform* in each word. Work together to break each word into its meaningful parts. Discuss how the meaning of each part relates to the whole. (Example: The prefix *mis-* means “wrong,” so someone who is *mis/inform/ed* has been told something that is wrong or not true.)
- Explain that this list is an example of a *word family*—a group of words that share the same base word. All the words in a family are connected by the meaning of the base word.
- Say, *All the words in the inform family are related to “telling” or “giving knowledge.” Something that is informative provides knowledge. The suffix -ative means the “state, quality, or act of.” Something that is uninformative does NOT provide knowledge. The prefix un- creates a word with the opposite meaning.*
- Discuss the remaining words and how they relate to the meaning of the base word *inform*.
- Divide students into small groups and provide each group with a grade-level appropriate new base word. See page 2 for example base words to use. Have the groups “race” to build a word family by listing as many words as possible in one minute.
- Ask groups to share their word lists. Brainstorm together to add more words to each group’s word family. Have students look for patterns in spelling changes (*happy* → *happiness*) and review as needed.
- Have groups work to define words in their word families. Call on a volunteer from each group to share a word and explain how the meaning of each word part relates to the meaning of the whole. Discuss connections in meaning among all the words in the family. Encourage students to consult a dictionary to verify word meanings.

Map a Word Family 30–40 minutes

- Review that word families are groups of words that share the same base word and have related meanings. Then distribute copies of the **Word Family** graphic organizer (page 3).
- Provide students with a grade-level appropriate base word to write in the center box of the organizer. (See list below.) Have students work with partners or small groups to generate words for the other boxes.
- If students need help generating words, provide them with affixes from **Prefixes, Suffixes, and Roots** (page 4).
- Model how to complete the different activity choices on the graphic organizer. (See example at right.)
- Have students work independently or with partners to complete the graphic organizer.
- Ask volunteers to share their organizers and explain one or two of their entries. Ask how the meaning of each word relates to the others. If necessary, have students use a dictionary to verify word meanings.
- Display completed Word Family organizers for students to use as a resource.



Example Base Words

achieve	construct	indicate	interpret	invest
final	legal	predict	rely	respond

Check for Understanding

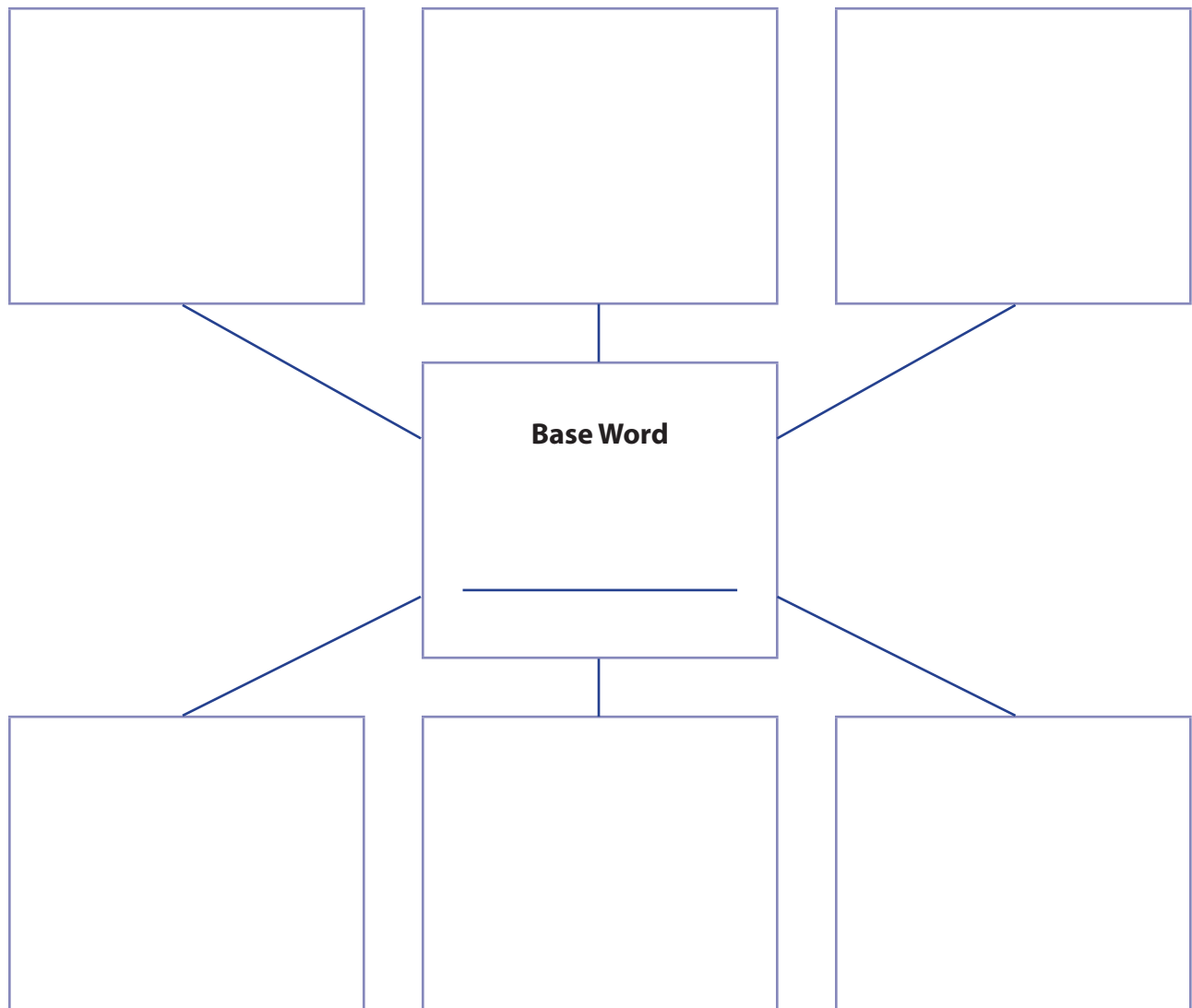
If you observe...	Then try...
difficulty generating words for a given word family	<p>providing cloze sentences that elicit specific words from the family of a specific base word.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The secret to _____ great things is to work hard.</i> (achieve) (achieving) • <i>Winning a gold medal in the Olympics is a great _____.</i> (achieve) (achievement)

Name: _____

Word Family

In each box, write a different word that includes the base word. Then complete one of these four activities in each box:

1. Draw a picture that shows an example of the word.
2. Write a sentence that shows what the word means.
3. Write a definition of the word.
4. Write an example and a non-example.



Additional words:

Prefixes, Suffixes, and Roots

Prefix and Suffix Families

This list shows prefixes and suffixes by meaning and includes example words that represent a range of grade levels, arranged from lower to higher levels. Choose words for activities that match your students' needs and abilities.

Prefix Family: "not"							
Prefix	<i>dis-</i>	<i>il-</i>	<i>im-</i>	<i>in-</i>	<i>ir-</i>	<i>non-</i>	<i>un-</i>
Meaning	not, opposite of						
Example Words	disagree disappear disloyal	illogical illegal illegible	imperfect immobile imperceptible	invisible inedible inevitable	irregular irreplaceable irrelevant	nonstop nonfiction nonviolent	unpack unafraid unjust

Prefix Family: "position"					
Prefix	<i>pre-</i>	<i>fore-</i>	<i>mid-</i>	<i>inter-</i>	<i>post-</i>
Meaning	before	before, in front	middle	between	after
Example Words	preview premade prearrange	forehead forewarn forethought	midnight midair midwinter	interact interstate interrupt	postseason postwar postmodern

Prefix Family: "over and under"						
Prefix	<i>hyper-</i>	<i>over-</i>	<i>super-</i>	<i>hypo-</i>	<i>under-</i>	<i>sub-</i>
Meaning	more than, too much	more than, too much, above	above, beyond	too little, below	too little, below	below
Example Words	hyperactive hyperextend hyperbole	overcoat overload overexert	superhuman supervise superimpose	hypothermia hypothesis hypochondria	underground underdone understatement	subway subset subside

Prefix Family: "together"			
Prefix	<i>co-</i>	<i>com-</i>	<i>con-</i>
Meaning	together, with		
Example Words	copilot coexist cooperate	compress compassion community	conform conclusion concern

Prefix Family: "against"

Prefix	<i>anti-</i>	<i>contra-</i>
Meaning	against, opposite	
Example Words	antifreeze antislip antibiotic	contrast contradict contraindication

Prefix Family: "bad"

Prefix	<i>mis-</i>	<i>mal-</i>
Meaning	bad, wrong, not	bad, ill
Example Words	misuse misunderstand misaligned	maltreat malnourished maladjusted

Prefix Family: "number"

Prefix	<i>uni-</i>	<i>mono-</i>	<i>bi-</i>	<i>tri-</i>	<i>quad-</i>
Meaning	one		two	three	four
Example Words	unicycle uniform unidirectional	monorail monotone monocle	bicycle bilingual biannual	tricycle triathlon tripod	quadrilateral quadrangle quadruped

Prefix Family: "number"

Prefix	<i>penta-</i>	<i>dec-</i>	<i>centi-</i>	<i>semi-</i>
Meaning	five	ten	hundred	half, part
Example Words	pentagon pentathlon pentameter	decade decathlon decibel	cent century percent	semicircle semiformal semiconscious

Other Useful Prefixes

Prefix	<i>de-</i>	<i>en-/em-</i>	<i>ex-</i>	<i>in-/im-</i>	<i>re-</i>	<i>trans-</i>
Meaning	away, apart	put into, cause something to be more	out of, away from	in	again, back	across, through
Example Words	decode defrost decentralize	enlarge enrich empower	export exhale exclude	intake inhale import	reheat remove reorder	transnational transport transmit

Suffix Family: "person"

Suffix	-ee	-ian	-ist	-er	-or
Meaning	a person who is or does something	a person who does or works at something		a person who does or works at something, a thing that does something	
Example Words	employee referee trainee	librarian vegetarian physician	pianist dentist therapist	writer sprinkler consumer	inventor elevator donor

Suffix Family: "state, quality, or act"

Suffix	-ance/-ence	-hood	-ity/-ty	-ment	-ness
Meaning	the state, quality, or act of	state or quality of	the state or condition of being or having something	the state or result of doing something	the state or quality of being a certain way
Example Words	performance difference existence	childhood falsehood neighborhood	similarity humanity equality	movement improvement encouragement	darkness kindness sleepiness

Other Useful Suffixes

Suffix	-ant/-ent	-age	-able/-ible	-al/-ial	-er	-est
Meaning	being or doing something	the process or result of	can be done, having or giving something	relating to, referring to	more than	the most
Example Words	student pleasant resident	usage storage voyage	breakable visible believable	natural survival trivial	faster greater larger	fastest greatest largest

Other Useful Suffixes

Suffix	-ion/-tion	-ive/-ative/-itive	-ful	-less	-ous/-eous/-ious
Meaning	the process, act, or result of doing something	tending to	full of	without, free of	having or being full of
Example Words	action collection competition	supportive imaginative inquisitive	colorful helpful suspenseful	fearless endless selfless	dangerous harmonious spontaneous

Source: Based on "Bumping Into Spicy, Tasty Words That Catch Your Tongue": A Formative Experiment on Vocabulary Instruction by James F. Baumann, Donna Ware, and Elizabeth Carr. *The Reading Teacher*, 61(2), 2007, pp. 108–122.

Common Greek and Latin Roots

Root	Meaning	Origin	Example Words
<i>aster/astro</i>	star	Greek	asteroid, astronomy
<i>aud</i>	hear	Latin	audible, audience
<i>auto</i>	self	Greek	automobile, automatic
<i>bene</i>	good	Latin	benefit, benign
<i>bio</i>	life	Greek	biology, biography
<i>chrono</i>	time	Greek	chronology, synchronize
<i>dict</i>	say	Latin	dictate, predict
<i>duc</i>	lead, make	Latin	deduce, produce
<i>fend</i>	ward off	Latin	fender, defend
<i>form</i>	shape	Latin	formation, inform
<i>gen</i>	give birth	Latin	gene, generate
<i>geo</i>	earth	Greek	geography, geology
<i>graph</i>	write	Greek	autograph, graph
<i>jur/jus</i>	law	Latin	jury, justice
<i>log/logue</i>	thought	Latin	logic, dialogue
<i>luc</i>	light	Latin	lucid, translucent
<i>man(u)</i>	hand	Latin	manual, manuscript
<i>mand/mend</i>	order	Latin	demand, recommend
<i>meter</i>	measure	Greek	thermometer, kilometer
<i>min</i>	little, small	Latin	minimum, miniature
<i>mis/mit</i>	send	Latin	mission, transmit
<i>omni</i>	all	Latin	omnivore, omnipotent
<i>path</i>	feel	Greek	empathy, sympathy
<i>ped</i>	foot	Latin	pedal, pedestrian
<i>phil</i>	love	Greek	philosophy, bibliophile
<i>phon</i>	sound	Greek	telephone, phonics
<i>photo</i>	light	Greek	photograph, photosynthesis
<i>port</i>	carry	Latin	portable, export
<i>qui(t)</i>	quiet, let go	Latin	tranquil, acquit
<i>rupt</i>	break	Latin	rupture, disrupt
<i>scrib/scrip</i>	write	Latin	scribble, script

Root	Meaning	Origin	Example Words
<i>sens/sent</i>	feel	Latin	sensation, sentimental
<i>spect</i>	see	Latin	spectator, spectacle, inspect
<i>struct</i>	build	Latin	structure, construct
<i>tele</i>	far off	Greek	telescope, television
<i>terr</i>	earth	Latin	terrain, territory
<i>therm</i>	heat	Greek	thermometer, thermal
<i>vac</i>	empty	Latin	vacuum, vacant
<i>vid, vis</i>	see	Latin	video, visible