Spelling Shed

SCHEME GUIDANCE

2026



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If you have any further questions, please contact **support@edshed.com**

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Welcome to Spelling Shed

In 2017, Spelling Shed was launched as a standalone app for Apple and Android devices by founders Rob Smith and Martin Saunders. It quickly became the number one spelling app in the UK and has since supported millions of learners around the world.

As Spelling Shed has grown, so too has our understanding of how children learn to spell effectively. Ongoing developments in literacy research, alongside valuable feedback from teachers, have helped shape the scheme into a comprehensive programme that combines explicit teaching with meaningful word investigation.

Today, Spelling Shed is used by schools across a wide range of educational settings and supports pupils in becoming confident, accurate and independent spellers. Rather than focusing solely on memorising words, the scheme encourages pupils to investigate how English spelling works by exploring spelling patterns, word structure, meaning and word origins.

This guidance has been written to help teachers understand the principles behind the scheme, make informed decisions about classroom practice and get the most from the teaching resources provided.

What is included in a Spelling Shed lesson?

We recognise that every school organises spelling differently. Some schools teach spelling in a single weekly lesson, while others prefer shorter sessions spread throughout the week. With this flexibility in mind, every Spelling Shed lesson has been designed using modular components that can be delivered together or adapted to suit individual timetables.

Each lesson follows a consistent structure:

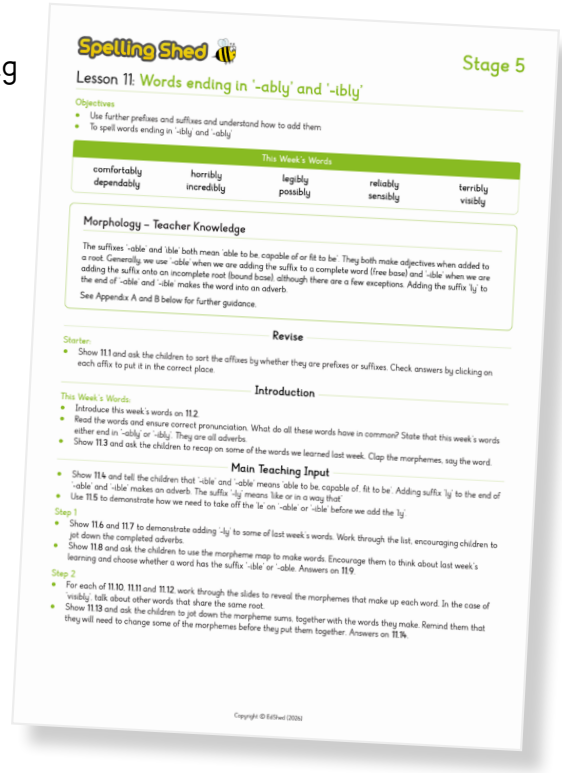
- Revise
- Introduction
- Main Teaching Input
- Independent Practice
- Consolidation

Although each section has a distinct purpose, together they form a carefully sequenced lesson that builds understanding, provides opportunities for practice and strengthens long-term retention.

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Revise

Each lesson begins with a short retrieval activity designed to revisit previously taught words, spelling patterns and concepts from across the scheme.


Spelling Shed

Stage 5

Lesson 11: Words ending in '-ably' and '-ibly'

Objectives
- Use further prefixes and suffixes and understand how to add them
- To spell words ending in '-ibly' and '-ably'

This Week's Words

comfortably dependably	horribly incredibly	legibly possibly	reliably sensibly	terribly visibly

Morphology – Teacher Knowledge

The suffixes '-able' and 'ible' both mean 'able to be, capable of or fit to be'. They both make adjectives when added to a root. Generally, we use '-able' when we are adding the suffix to a complete word (free base) and '-ible' when we are adding the suffix onto an incomplete root (bound base), although there are a few exceptions. Adding the suffix 'ly' to the end of '-able' and '-ible' makes the word into an adverb.

See Appendix A and B below for further guidance.

Revise

Starter:
- Show 11.1 and ask the children to sort the affixes by whether they are prefixes or suffixes. Check answers by clicking on each affix to put it in the correct place.

Introduction

This Week's Words:
- Introduce this week's words on 11.2.
- Read the words and ensure correct pronunciation. What do all these words have in common? State that this week's words either end in '-ably' or '-ibly'. They are all adverbs.
- Show 11.3 and ask the children to recap on some of the words we learned last week. Clap the morphemes, say the word.

Main Teaching Input

- Show 11.4 and tell the children that '-ible' and '-able' means 'able to be, capable of, fit to be'. Adding suffix 'ly' to the end of '-able' and '-ible' makes an adverb. The suffix '-ly' means 'like or in a way that'.
- Use 11.5 to demonstrate how we need to take off the 'le' on '-able' or '-ible' before we add the 'ly'.

Step 1
- Show 11.6 and 11.7 to demonstrate adding '-ly' to some of last week's words. Work through the list, encouraging children to jot down the completed adverbs.
- Show 11.8 and ask the children to use the morpheme map to make words. Encourage them to think about last week's learning and choose whether a word has the suffix '-ible' or '-able'. Answers on 11.9.

Step 2
- For each of 11.10, 11.11 and 11.12, work through the slides to reveal the morphemes that make up each word. In the case of 'visibly', talk about other words that share the same root.
- Show 11.13 and ask the children to jot down the morpheme sums, together with the words they make. Remind them that they will need to change some of the morphemes before they put them together. Answers on 11.14.

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Rather than reviewing only the previous lesson, these low-stakes activities encourage pupils to retrieve knowledge from different points in their learning. This spaced retrieval strengthens long-term memory while helping pupils reconnect with prior knowledge before new learning begins.

Activities vary throughout the scheme and may include sorting words, correcting deliberate mistakes, identifying syllables, recalling prefixes or arranging words alphabetically. Many activities encourage discussion, allowing pupils to explain their thinking and reinforce their understanding through talk.

Introduction

The Introduction provides pupils with their new focus words for the week.

Teachers and pupils work together to identify any immediate connections between the words. These might include a common spelling pattern, suffix, recurring base or shared meaning.

The purpose of this section is not to teach the objective in depth, but to encourage curiosity and prepare pupils for the investigations that follow.

Main Teaching Input

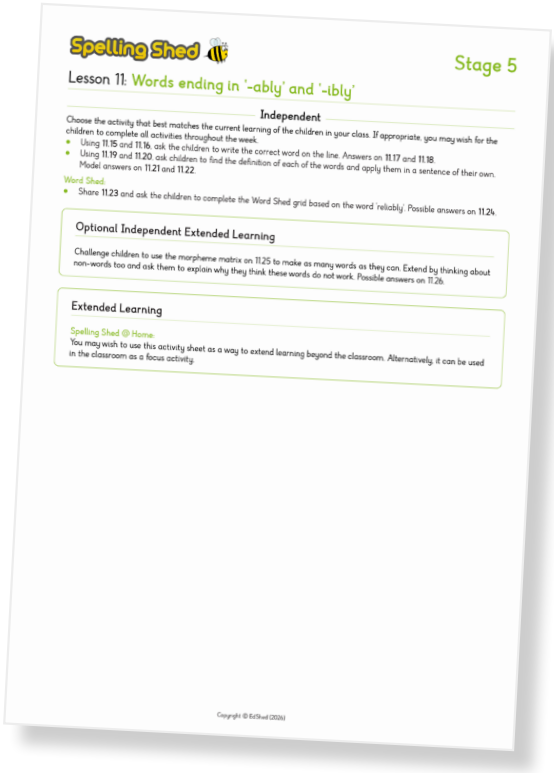
Here, teachers and pupils investigate the week's focus words through carefully selected activities that reflect the lesson objective.

Depending on the lesson focus, pupils may explore spelling patterns, syllables, morphology, etymology, orthography, word meaning or the relationships between words. Each activity has been chosen to develop a deeper understanding of how English words are constructed, helping pupils recognise patterns and apply their knowledge when spelling unfamiliar words.

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Independent

This section provides pupils with an opportunity to apply and consolidate the learning from the Main Teaching Input with minimal adult support.


Spelling Shed

Stage 5

Lesson 11: Words ending in '-ably' and '-ibly'

Independent

Choose the activity that best matches the current learning of the children in your class. If appropriate, you may wish for the children to complete all activities throughout the week.

- Using 11.15 and 11.16, ask the children to write the correct word on the line. Answers on 11.17 and 11.18.
- Using 11.19 and 11.20, ask children to find the definition of each of the words and apply them in a sentence of their own. Model answers on 11.21 and 11.22.

Word Shed

- Share 11.23 and ask the children to complete the Word Shed grid based on the word 'reliably'. Possible answers on 11.24.

Optional Independent Extended Learning

Challenge children to use the morpheme matrix on 11.25 to make as many words as they can. Extend by thinking about non-words too and ask them to explain why they think these words do not work. Possible answers on 11.26.

Extended Learning

Spelling Shed @ Home

You may wish to use this activity sheet as a way to extend learning beyond the classroom. Alternatively, it can be used in the classroom as a focus activity.

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Consolidation

The Consolidation section provides pupils with a final opportunity to revisit the key learning from the lesson.

Through short retrieval and application activities, pupils strengthen their understanding, make connections with previous learning and demonstrate what they have learned. These activities also provide teachers with an opportunity to identify and address any misconceptions before moving on.

Depending on the lesson, activities may include a 'Word Shed' investigation, cloze sentences, mixed-up sentences, word clues or other retrieval tasks.

Optional Independent Extended Learning

The Optional Independent Extended Learning activities provide additional opportunities for pupils to revisit and apply the week's learning through collaborative and independent tasks.

Designed to be used with minimal adult support, these activities encourage pupils to explore spelling concepts in different ways while reinforcing the knowledge and skills developed during the lesson. Resources may include sorting mats, word and picture cards, Roll and Read games, blank morphology matrices and Word Sheds.

These activities are intended to be flexible and may be used as part of a carousel, in small groups or pairs, or as an extension for pupils who are ready for further practice.

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Extended Learning

The optional Homework activities provide pupils with an opportunity to revisit and reinforce the week's learning beyond the classroom.

Each homework sheet has been designed to consolidate the lesson objective through purposeful practice, helping pupils strengthen their understanding and retain key spelling knowledge over time. The activities encourage pupils to apply what they have learned independently while providing opportunities to share and discuss their learning at home.

Homework activities are optional and may be used flexibly to support each school's approach to home learning.

Lesson Sequence

The lessons have been carefully sequenced to build progressively on previously taught knowledge and skills.

For the greatest impact, we recommend teaching the lessons in the order presented, beginning with Lesson 1 in each stage. This ensures pupils revisit and extend prior learning while gradually encountering increasingly sophisticated spelling concepts.

Challenge Weeks

Challenge Weeks provide pupils with opportunities to apply their spelling knowledge to words with less familiar or more unusual spelling patterns.

The words have been selected from the National Curriculum's English Programmes of Study: Key Stages 1 and 2 statutory word lists and encourage pupils to draw upon the spelling strategies developed throughout the scheme. Rather than focusing on a single spelling pattern, Challenge Weeks encourage pupils to apply their knowledge flexibly across a range of words.

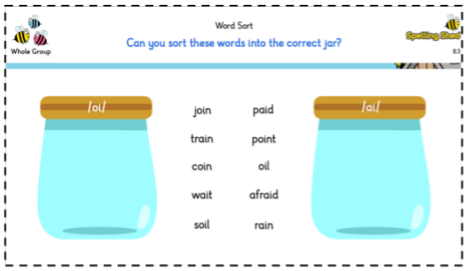
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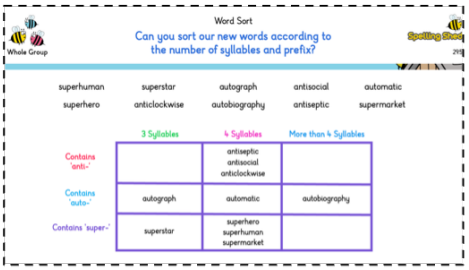
Activities

Sorting Words

Word sorting encourages pupils to compare, classify and discuss words according to shared features. Rather than learning individual spelling patterns in isolation, pupils begin to recognise patterns and relationships that exist across the English spelling system. There is often more than one valid way to sort a collection of words, providing rich opportunities for discussion.







Depending on the lesson objective, pupils may sort words according to:

- spelling patterns
- prefixes or suffixes
- morphemes
- syllable structure
- pronunciation
- meaning
- word origin

Sorting activities encourage pupils to justify their decisions and explain the similarities between words. These discussions help pupils develop orthographic knowledge and build an understanding of how English spelling is organised.

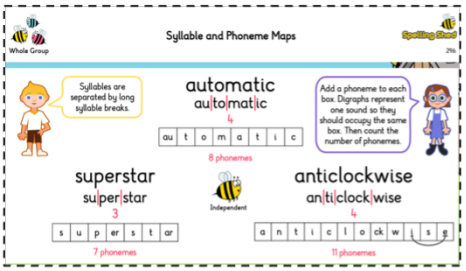
Teacher Tip

Encourage pupils to explain why they have grouped words together. The discussion is often just as valuable as the finished sort.

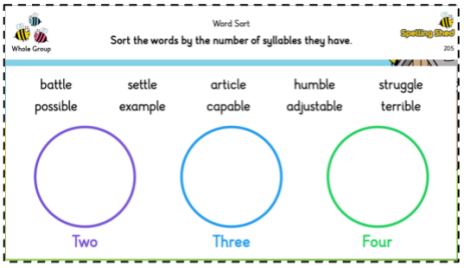
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Syllable Breaks

Syllables are the natural spoken beats within words. Learning to identify syllables helps pupils read, pronounce and spell longer words more accurately. Dividing words into syllables reduces cognitive load by breaking unfamiliar vocabulary into manageable chunks.



As pupils progress through the scheme, syllable investigations become increasingly useful for exploring multisyllabic vocabulary, supporting both spelling and pronunciation.



Syllable work is not intended to replace phonics. Instead, it builds upon pupils' existing phonics knowledge as they encounter increasingly complex words.

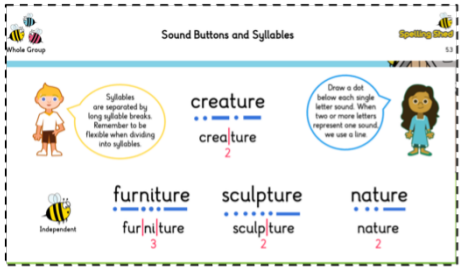
Teacher Tip

Encourage pupils to clap or tap syllables aloud before marking them on the page. Help them to hear the 'beat' of each syllable.

Orthographic Mapping

Orthographic mapping helps pupils connect sounds, spellings and meanings so that words become securely stored in long-term memory.

When pupils successfully connect a word's pronunciation, spelling and meaning, they gradually build an internal store of words that can be recognised and spelled automatically.





Throughout Spelling Shed, this is achieved through:

- sound buttons
- sound boxes
- phoneme-grapheme mapping
- repeated retrieval

These approaches help pupils strengthen the connections between sounds, spellings and meanings.

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Sound Buttons

Following the same notation as our phonics scheme, pupils will use dots, dashes and arcs to indicate individual phonemes.

For example, 'jet' has three phonemes represented by three single letter graphemes, so we place a dot beneath each grapheme.

For digraphs, trigraphs and tetragraphs, a line is used to show that multiple graphemes represent one phoneme.

Split digraphs are represented by underlined letters joined with an arc.



Sound Boxes

As children move through the scheme, they begin to use sound boxes rather that sound buttons.

In place of the dots and dashes are boxes which should contain one spelled sound in each box.

For example, 'rocket' becomes

r	o	ck	e	t

Note: Whilst grapheme/phoneme correspondence is vital for early and emergent readers, by the time students are reading more complex vocabulary they may not need to rely on the sound buttons or boxes.

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Alphabetical Order

Alphabetical order is an important organisational skill that supports spelling, vocabulary development and independent learning.



By learning to order words alphabetically, pupils become increasingly confident using dictionaries, glossaries, thesauruses and indexes.

Although simple in appearance, alphabetical order encourages pupils to look closely at complete words rather than focusing only on their initial letters.

Cloze Sentences

Cloze Sentence activities encourage pupils to apply their spelling knowledge within a meaningful context.



Rather than spelling isolated words, pupils read each sentence carefully before selecting the word that best completes its meaning. This requires them to consider spelling, vocabulary and grammar simultaneously.

Using focus words in context strengthens the connections between spelling, meaning and usage, helping pupils develop a richer understanding of vocabulary while reinforcing accurate spelling.

Teachers may wish to encourage pupils to explain why each word is the best choice before checking their answers.

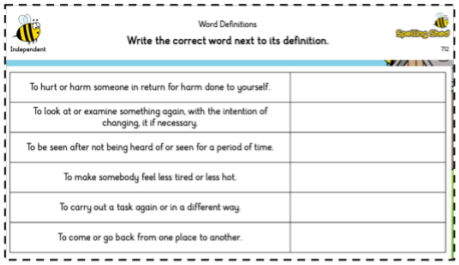
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Sentence Writing and Definitions

Writing sentences encourages pupils to apply their spelling knowledge within a meaningful context. By composing their own sentences, pupils strengthen the connections between spelling, meaning and vocabulary while demonstrating their understanding of each focus word.



Teachers should encourage pupils to write sentences that clearly show the meaning of the focus word rather than simply including it. This provides valuable opportunities to discuss vocabulary, clarify misconceptions and reinforce accurate word usage.



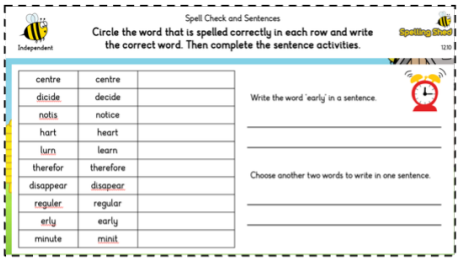
Matching words to their definitions helps pupils to strengthen the connection between spelling, meaning and vocabulary even further. By identifying the correct word from its definition, pupils retrieve both its meaning and spelling, reinforcing their understanding of the week's focus words.

Teachers may wish to encourage pupils to explain how they identified the correct answer, helping to develop vocabulary knowledge and deepen their understanding of word meaning.

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Error Analysis

Error analysis encourages pupils to become reflective, analytical spellers with the ability to think, talk, and reflect about language itself.


Spell Check and Sentences

Circle the word that is spelled correctly in each row and write the correct word. Then complete the sentence activities.

centre	centre	
dicide	decide	
notis	notice	
hart	heart	
lurn	learn	
therefor	therefore	
disappear	disapear	
reguler	regular	
erly	early	
minute	minit	

Write the word 'early' in a sentence.

Choose another two words to write in one sentence.

Rather than simply identifying an incorrect spelling, pupils are encouraged to explain why it is incorrect and justify the correct alternative.

Throughout the scheme, pupils encounter plausible spelling errors that reflect common misconceptions.

For example:

- intrest
- interest
- interrest

By discussing these alternatives, pupils draw upon their understanding of phonics, orthography and morphology to explain their reasoning.

Error analysis helps pupils develop metalinguistic awareness and provides teachers with valuable insight into pupils' understanding.

Teacher Tip

Ask pupils to justify the correct spelling rather than simply identifying it.

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What is Morphology?

As pupils progress through the Spelling Shed scheme, they begin to investigate not only how words are spelled, but **why** they are spelled that way.

One of the most powerful ways of doing this is through **morphology**.

Morphology is the study of the meaningful parts of words known as **morphemes**.
A morpheme is the smallest unit of meaning in a word.

For example: 'unhelpful' is made of three morphemes, **'un' + 'help' + 'ful'**
- **un-** the prefix is a morpheme because it changes the meaning of a word.
- **help** is a morpheme because it carries meaning on its own.
- **-ful** the suffix is a morpheme because it adds meaning to a word.

Some morphemes such as 'kind', 'play' or 'help' can stand alone without prefixes or suffixes. These are known as **'free bases'**. Other morphemes such as 'struct', 'rupt' and 'spect' must be attached to another morpheme to form a word. These are known as **'bound bases'** or **'roots'**.

Why teach morphology?
As children become more confident readers and writers, they encounter increasingly complex vocabulary. Rather than memorising every new word individually, pupils can use their knowledge of prefixes, bases and suffixes to understand how unfamiliar words are constructed.

For example, if a pupil knows that 'struct' means 'to build', they can begin to understand words such as 'deconstruct' and 'structure'.

Likewise, recognising the suffix '-ous' helps pupils identify words that often describe a quality, while understanding prefixes such as 'pre-', 're-' or 'inter-' helps them infer meaning and spell unfamiliar words more accurately.

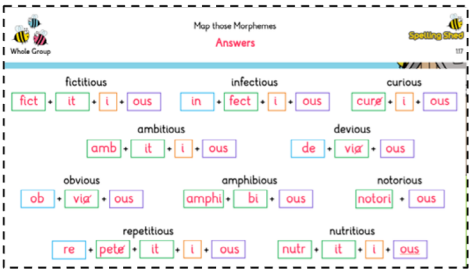
Morphology therefore supports far more than spelling. It also strengthens vocabulary, reading comprehension and word consciousness.

Not every word can be divided neatly into prefixes, bases and suffixes. Some words contain historical elements that are no longer productive in modern English. The aim is to explore meaningful relationships where they help pupils understand spelling and vocabulary.

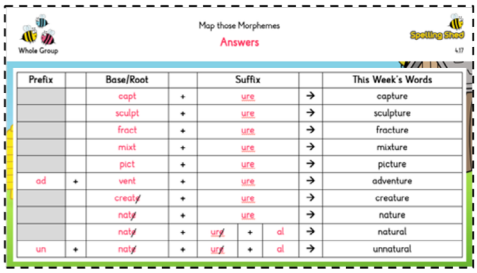
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Morphology Mapping

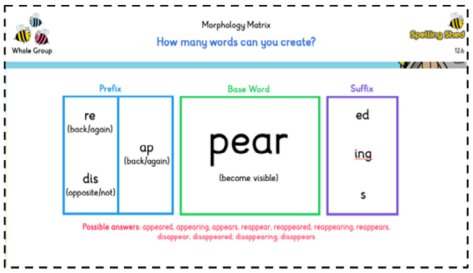
Throughout the scheme, pupils investigate and record morphemes in a variety of ways. Understanding these meaningful parts helps pupils see that English spelling is not random. Many words are built from recurring units that appear across hundreds of related words.



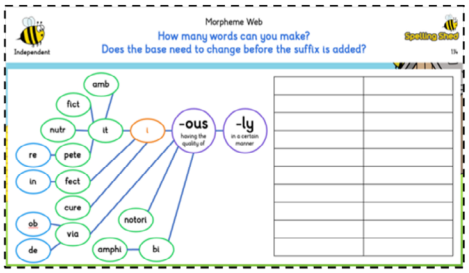
Morpheme Sums 1



Morpheme Sums 2



Morpheme Matrix



Morpheme Web

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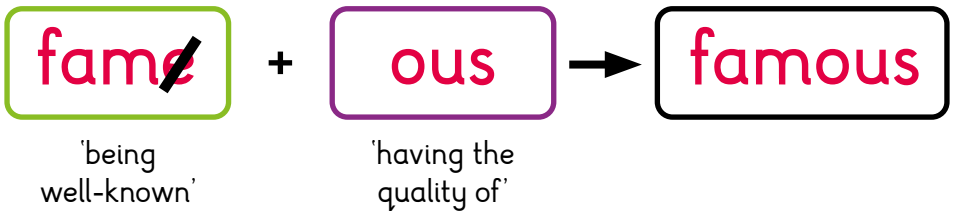
Morpheme Sums 1

A morpheme sum shows how meaningful parts combine to make a word.

For example:
The word 'unhelpful' becomes



Morpheme sums can also be used to explore what happens if a base needs to change, such as using the so-called drop 'e' convention, when a suffix is added:



How to use morpheme sums:
1. Identify the base and any prefixes or suffixes.
2. Use the blue box to represent prefixes, the green box for bases and the purple box for suffixes.
3. Discuss what each morpheme contributes to the meaning.
4. Put the morphemes together to reconstruct the word.
5. Look carefully at the spelling. Ask whether anything changes when the morphemes combine.

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Morpheme Sums 2

Morphemes sums can also be presented in a table without the coloured boxes. These tables have headings at the top to show where the prefixes, bases and suffixes should go.

For example:
The words '**unhelpful**' and '**famous**' become:

Prefix		Base		Suffix		Word
un	+	help	+	ful	→	unhelpful
	+	fame	+	ous	→	famous

How to use morpheme sums:
1. Identify the base and any prefixes or suffixes.
2. Write each morpheme in the correct box on the table.
3. Discuss what each morpheme contributes to the meaning.
4. Put the morphemes together to reconstruct the word.
5. Look carefully at the spelling. Ask whether anything changes when the morphemes combine.

Morpheme sums therefore provide an opportunity to connect morphology with spelling rather than treating spelling changes as isolated rules to memorise.

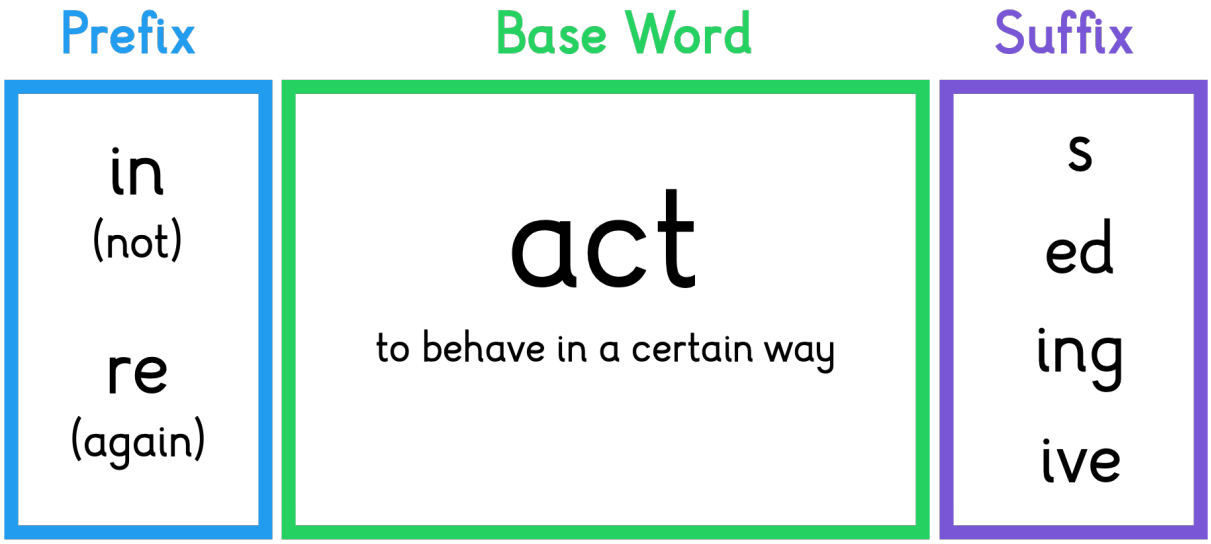
A useful question for teachers:
"What does each part contribute to the meaning?"

This helps pupils understand that morphemes are meaningful units, not simply groups of letters.

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Morpheme Matrix
A morpheme matrix shows how a base can combine with different prefixes and suffixes to create a family of related words.

For example:



Begin with adding suffixes to the base, moving down them in order:

- acts
- acted
- acting
- active

Then move to adding the prefixes. Some combinations may not produce an English word. This is useful. Pupils should not assume that every prefix can combine with every base or that every possible combination is a real word.

- inact (incorrect)
- react (correct)

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Then move to adding the prefixes and suffixes, again following a logical order so that pupils can tell when they have found all possibilities.

- inactive
- reacts
- reacted
- reacting
- reactive

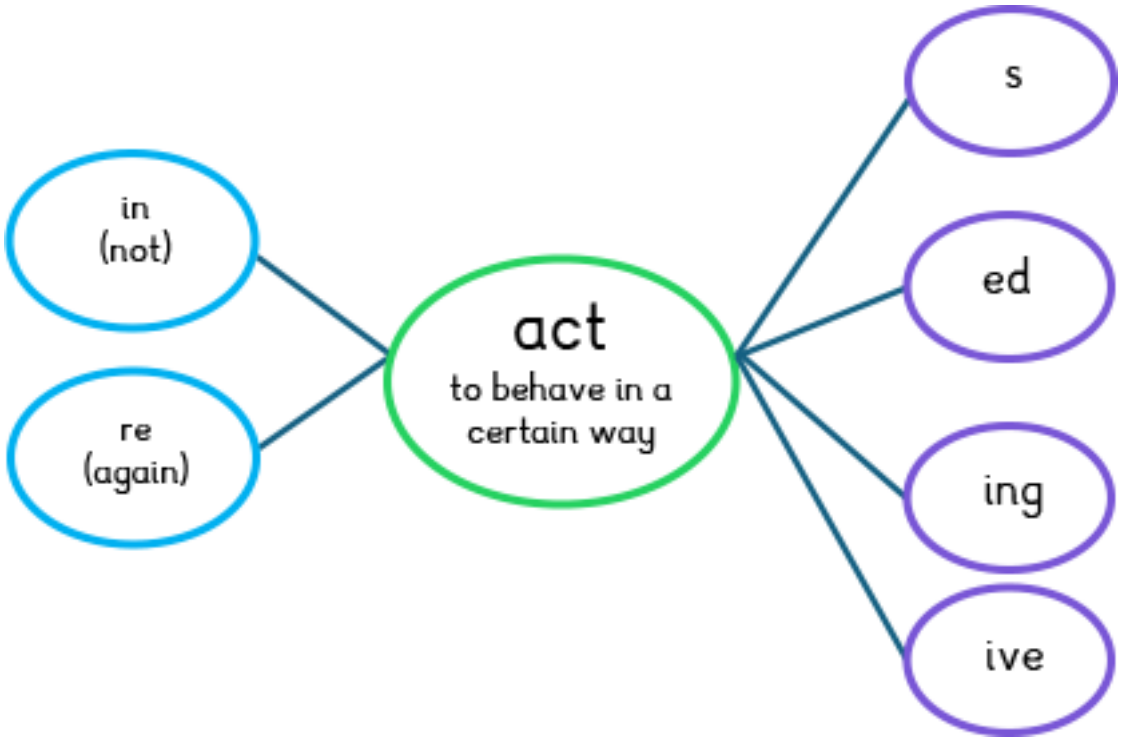
A matrix allows pupils to see that a base can participate in a network of words, rather than being taught in isolation.

Useful questions for teachers:
- "Does this make a real word?"
- "What would it mean?"
- "Is that meaning possible?"

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Morpheme Web

A **morpheme web** is a visual representation of the relationships between a group of related words. It works in a similar way to a matrix, with a base in the centre and prefixes and suffixes on either side.



Use morphology to investigate spelling, not replace phonics.

Morpheme sums, matrices and webs work particularly well when combined with orthography and phoneme-level analysis.

A word can have several layers worth investigating:
Phonology: What sounds can we hear?
Orthography: How are those sounds represented?
Morphology: What meaningful parts make up the word?
Meaning: How do those parts contribute to the whole?

This layered approach helps pupils understand why English spelling sometimes cannot be explained by sound alone.

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Useful questions for teachers:
Don't just ask pupils to find the morphemes. Ask them to explain the relationships.
Instead of: "What are the three parts of unhelpful?" Ask:
"What does each part contribute to the meaning of unhelpful?"
"What other words can we build from help and what do the added morphemes do?"
"What stays consistent across this word family, and what changes?"

That's where morphology becomes genuinely useful for spelling rather than simply becoming another set of terminology to learn.

A note for teachers
You do not need to be an expert in Latin or Greek to teach morphology effectively.

The aim is not for pupils to memorise hundreds of historical word parts. Instead, pupils are encouraged to notice recurring patterns, make connections between related words and become increasingly curious about how English words are constructed.

As teachers become more familiar with the approach, they often find themselves making these connections naturally across the curriculum.

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What is Etymology?

Etymology is the study of where words come from and how they have changed over time.



English has borrowed vocabulary from many different languages, including Anglo-Saxon, Latin, Greek and French. These historical influences help explain why English spelling often appears more complex than it first seems.



Exploring the origins of words helps pupils understand why certain spellings have been preserved and reveals meaningful relationships between seemingly unrelated words.

For example, learning that 'bene' means 'good' helps pupils recognise connections between words such as:

- benefit
- beneficial
- benevolent

Similarly, recognising that many words containing 'ph' have Greek origins helps explain why they are not spelled with 'f'.

The aim of teaching etymology is not for pupils to memorise the history of every word. Instead, it encourages curiosity about language while helping pupils understand that English spelling has developed over many centuries.

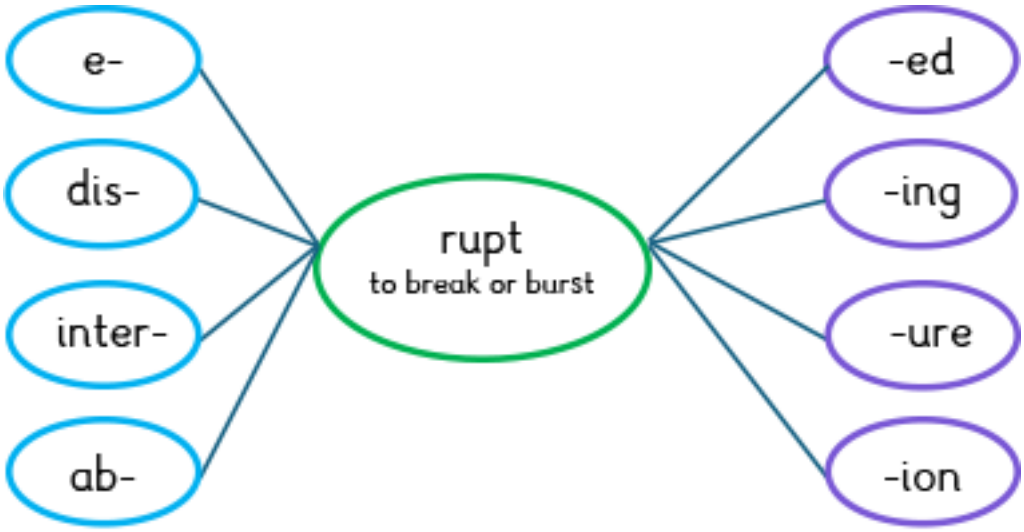
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Making Connections

Every activity in Spelling Shed encourages pupils to make connections between words. Sometimes those connections are based on sounds or spelling patterns. Other times they are based on meaning, morphology or word origins.

The more connections pupils make, the easier it becomes to understand, remember and spell unfamiliar vocabulary.

Rather than viewing each focus word as something to memorise, pupils gradually build a network of related knowledge that supports both spelling and vocabulary development.



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If you have any further questions, please contact **support@edshed.com**