

# Morphemes

## Classification of Morphemes

Words consist of morphemes.  
The term '**morpheme**' is  
derived from Greek morphe  
— 'form' + **-erne**.

The Greek suffix -erne has  
been adopted by linguists to  
denote the smallest unit (cf.  
phoneme, sememe).

Morphemes occur in speech only as constituent parts of words but not independently. Morphemes may have different phonetic shapes

In the word-cluster **please, pleasing, pleasure, pleasant** the root morpheme is represented by the phonetic shapes:

**[pli:z-]** in **please, pleasing;**

**[pleʒ-]** in **pleasure;**

**[plez-]** in **pleasant.**

1) **Root-morphemes** are the lexical nucleus of words.

For example, in the words **remake**, **glassful**, **disorder** the root-morphemes **-make**, **glass-** and **-order** are understood as the lexical centres of the words

Non-root morphemes include **inflectional morphemes** and **affixational morphemes** .

Inflections carry only **grammatical** meaning and are thus relevant only for the formation **of word-forms**, whereas affixes are relevant for building various types of stems'.

A prefix is a **derivational morpheme** preceding the root-morpheme and modifying its meaning (pronounce — **mis-pronounce, safe — un-safe**).

A suffix is a derivational morpheme following the root and forming a new derivative in a different part of speech or a different word class (cf. **-en, -y, -less heart-en, heart-y, heart-less**).



1) **Free morpheme** is defined as one that coincides with the stem or a word form. For example, the root-morpheme **friend-** of the noun friendship is naturally qualified as a free morpheme because it coincides with one of the forms of the word **friend**.

2) **Bound morpheme** occurs only as a constituent part of a word. Affixes are bound morphemes for they always make part of a word. For example, the suffixes **-ness, -ship, -ize** in the words **darkness, friendship, to activize**, the prefixes **im-, dis-, de-** in the words **impolite, to demobilize**.

3) **Semi-bound** (semi-free) morphemes are morphemes that can function in a morphemic sequence both as an affix and as a free morpheme. For example, the morphemes **well** and **half** on the one hand occur as free morphemes that coincide with the stem and the word-form in the utterances to sleep well, half an hour, on the other hand well and half occur as bound morphemes in the words well-known, half-done.