

Roots

The root is the irreducible core of a word, with absolutely nothing else attached to it. It is the part that is always present, possibly with some modification, in the various manifestations of a lexeme. For example, *walk* is a root and it appears in the set of word-forms that instantiate the lexeme *walk* such as *walk*, *walks*, *walking* and *walked*.

Types of roots

1. Free morphemes

Many words contain a root standing on its own. Roots which are capable of standing independently are called free morphemes. For example, *man* in *man*, *manly*, *manhood*, *manned*, *mankind*.

2. Bound morphemes

While only roots can be free morphemes, not all roots are free. Many roots are incapable of occurring in isolation. They always occur with some other word-building element attached to them. Such roots are called bound morphemes. Examples of bound morphemes are given below:

-mit in *permit*, *remit*, *commit*, *admit*

Exercise

Underline roots in the following words. For each root, determine if it is a free morpheme or a bound morpheme:

perceive, *receive*, *conceive*

predator, *predatory*, *predation*, *depredation*

sedan, *sedate*, *sedentary*, *sediment*

consent, *assent*, *dissent*

sweet, *sweetie*, *sweeten*, *sweetly*, *sweetness*

sun, *sunning*, *sunned*, *suns*, *sunburn*, *sunny*, *sunflower*

Bases

A base is any unit whatsoever to which affixes of any kind can be added. The affixes attached to a base may be inflectional affixes selected for syntactic reasons or derivational affixes which alter the meaning or grammatical category of the base. *Boy* can be a base since it can have attached to it inflectional affixes like *-s* to form the plural *boys* or derivational affixes like *-ish* to turn the noun *boy* into the adjective *boyish*. In other words all roots are bases. *-ness* and *-er* can be attached to the base *friendly* to form *friendliness* and *friendlier*.

Stems

The stem is that part of a word that is in existence before any *inflectional affixes* have been added. For example, the underlined parts of the following words are stems:

hyenas,

receivers,

Maria looked at him and laughed.

The idea only deepened his gloom.

Exercise

Identify the inflectional affixes, derivational affixes, roots, bases, and stems in the following:

faiths faithfully unfaithful millstones footballers restlessness hardships

friendlier

<u>words</u>	<u>Inflectional affixes</u>	<u>Derivational affixes</u>	<u>Roots</u>	<u>Stems</u>	<u>Bases</u>
books	-s	book	book	book