

# 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.

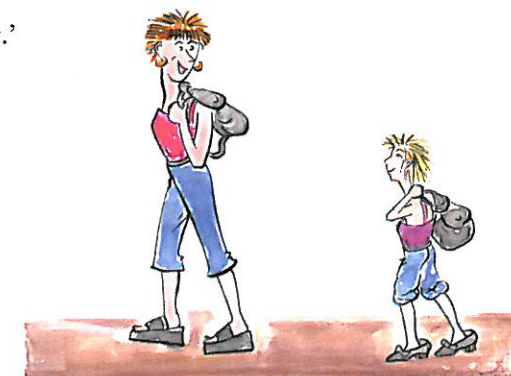
**EXAMPLE** animosity (-ity) *hostility*

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.