

Abstract nouns

An abstract noun is one which is used to mean an idea, experience or quality rather than an object. Thus happiness, intention and shock are abstract nouns whereas, for example, pen, bed and trousers are not.

There are a number of suffixes which are used particularly frequently in the formation of abstract nouns. Some of the most common are **-ment**, **-ion**, **-ness** and **-ity**.

Note: **-ment** and **-ion** are usually used to make verbs into abstract nouns whereas **-ness** and **-ity** are added to adjectives; **-ion** sometimes becomes **-ation**, **-sion**, **-ation** or **-ition**.

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	permissiveness	hostility
replacement	recognition	tenderness	prosperity
retirement	reduction	ugliness	sensitivity

Less common suffixes associated with abstract nouns are **-ship**, **-dom**, **-th** and **-hood**.

Note: **-ship** and **-hood** are usually used in combination with other nouns whereas **-th** combines with 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

There are also a large number of abstract nouns which do not use any suffix at all. Here are some examples of these.

anger	belief	calm	chance
faith	fear	humour	idea
luck	principle	rage	reason
sense	sight	speed	thought

You will find more examples of the use of suffixes in Units 8 and 10 and of abstract nouns in Units 68 and 69.

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: affectionate *affection*

- | | | | |
|----------------|------------|-------------|--------------|
| 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 Find at least one more noun using each of the suffixes in B and C.

11.3 Which abstract noun on the opposite page is a synonym of each of the following?

Example: animosity *hostility* or *aggressiveness*

- | | | |
|-------------------|----------------|------------|
| 1 animosity | 5 substitution | 9 vision |
| 2 astonishment | 6 fame | 10 liberty |
| 3 inquisitiveness | 7 decrease | 11 fury |
| 4 fraternity | 8 area | 12 wealth |

11.4 Complete the following table.

abstract noun	adjective	verb	adverb
contentment	content(ed)	to content	contentedly
argument
emptiness
intensity
satisfaction
sentiment
strength

11.5 Which of the words in the list below is being described in the following quotations?

- | | | | | | |
|------|------------|------|----------|-----------|--------|
| love | permanence | hope | jealousy | happiness | beauty |
|------|------------|------|----------|-----------|--------|
- '..... is no more than feeling alone among smiling enemies.'
 - '..... is like coke; something you get as the by-product of making something else.'
 - '..... is the power of being cheerful in circumstances which we know to be desperate.'
 - '..... is a universal migraine.'
 - 'The British love..... more than they love.....'

11.6 Write your own quotations to describe the following abstract nouns.

- | | | | | |
|-----------|--------------|--------|-------------|---------------|
| 1 freedom | 2 friendship | 3 life | 4 curiosity | 5 imagination |
|-----------|--------------|--------|-------------|---------------|

Unit 11

- .1**
- | | | | |
|--------------|---------------|-----------------|---------------|
| 1 affection | 5 amusement | 9 attentiveness | 13 equality |
| 2 excitement | 6 grace | 10 happiness | 14 hope |
| 3 kindness | 7 originality | 11 popularity | 15 resentment |
| 4 security | 8 stupidity | 12 weakness | 16 wisdom |

.2 Some possible answers:

There are many more possibilities for the B suffixes but not many for the C ones.

- B**
- ment* (un) employment entertainment involvement requirement
 - ion* diversion attraction direction rejection
 - ness* awkwardness foolishness loveliness madness
 - ity* brutality familiarity productivity superiority

- C**
- dom* dukedom earldom
 - ship* citizenship chairmanship sponsorship championship
 - th* growth wealth stealth
 - hood* babyhood nationhood

- .3**
- | | | |
|-------------------------------|-----------------|---------------|
| 1 hostility or aggressiveness | 5 replacement | 9 sight |
| 2 amazement | 6 stardom | 10 freedom |
| 3 curiosity | 7 reduction | 11 rage |
| 4 brotherhood | 8 neighbourhood | 12 prosperity |

.4

<i>abstract noun</i>	<i>adjective</i>	<i>verb</i>	<i>adverb</i>
contentment	content(ed)	to content	contentedly
argument	argumentative	to argue	arguably
emptiness	empty	to empty	emptily
intensity	intense	to intensify	intensely
satisfaction	satisfied, satisfactory	to satisfy	satisfactorily
sentiment	sentimental	to sentimentalise	sentimentally
strength	strong	to strengthen	strongly