

Morphology: The Unsung Hero of Literacy



Contact Me:



Dr. Shelley Blackwell, SLP.D
MTSS Literacy Support Specialist
shelleyblackwell05@gmail.com
[@slblackwellslpd](https://www.instagram.com/slblackwellslpd)

OCTOBER 13, 2023

Learning Intention:

Deepen my understanding of how morphology relates to literacy and how to support its development across the instructional tiers in MTSS and in Special Education.

Success Criteria

I can explain how morphological awareness affects literacy development.

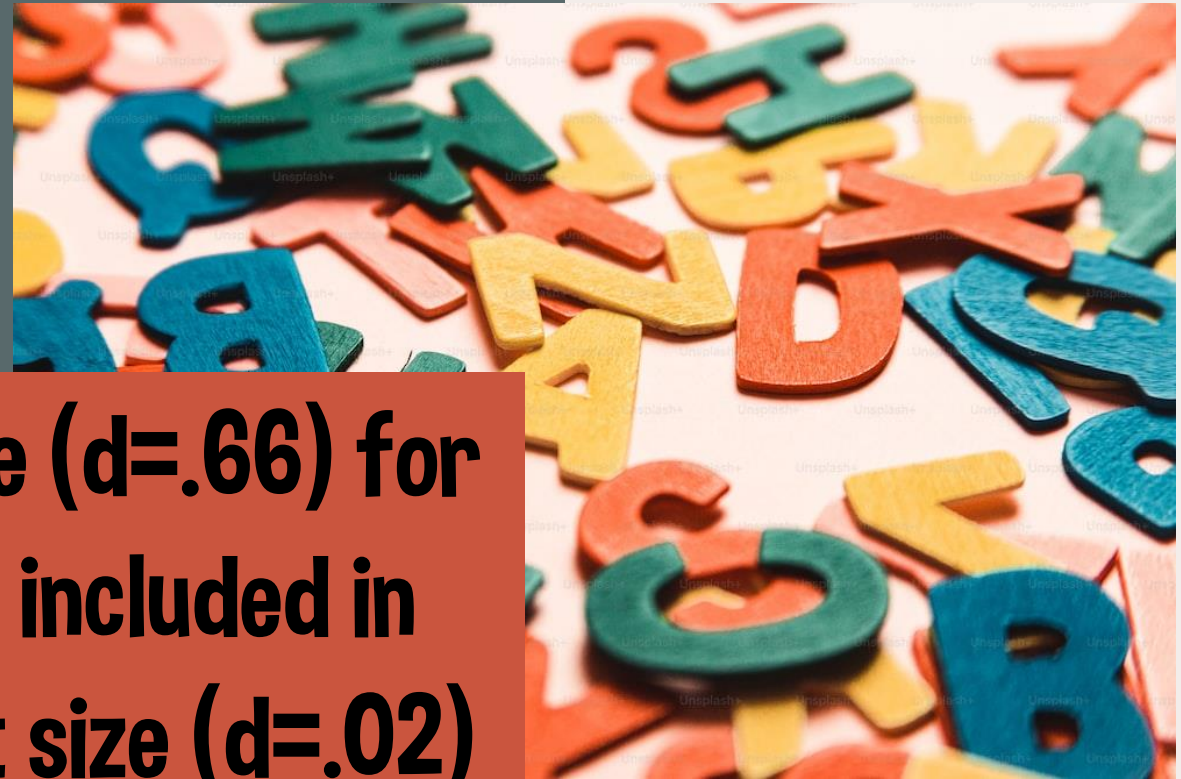
I have some tools I can use and share with teachers to explicitly teach morphology.

Layers of Language

Word

Unit of Analysis

“There was a medium effect size ($d=.66$) for spelling when morphology was included in interventions and a small effect size ($d=.02$) for the orthographic-only intervention.”



What are the Tiers?

Tier 3: whole class core differentiated instruction + additional targeted instruction (often small group in addition to core instruction) + intensive support

Tier 2: whole-class differentiated instruction + small group targeted instruction (in addition to core instruction)

Tier 1: whole class data-driven differentiated core instruction

Intensive Support

Strategic Support

Differentiated Core

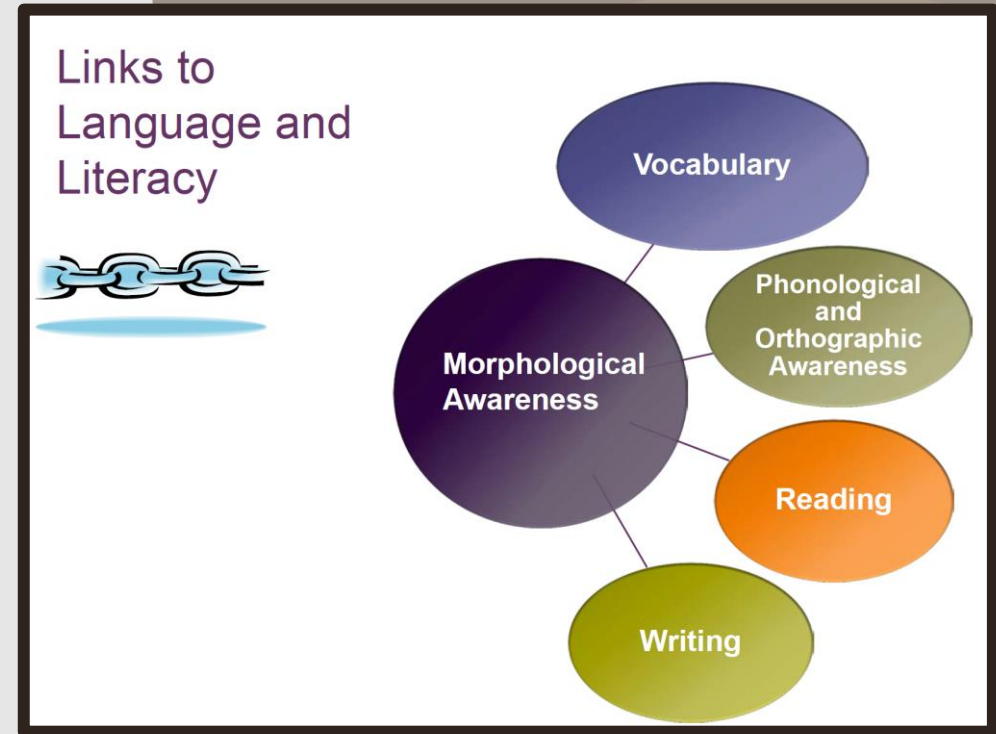


“By 10 years of age, a child’s knowledge about the structure of words is a better predictor of decoding ability than is phonological awareness.”

Kirk, C., & Gillon, G. T. (2009). Integrated Morphological Awareness Intervention as a Tool for Improving Literacy. *Language, Speech, and Hearing Services in Schools*, 40(3), 341–351. doi: 10.1044/0161-1461(2008/08-0009)

Why address morphology?

- **Multi-syllabic words**
- **Decoding, Vocabulary, Comprehension, Spelling**
- **Increased linguistic demand of curricular vocabulary**
- **Technical words in middle school starts at 8-10 per page.**
- **Technical words in high school increases to 22 per page.**
- **Morphology connects vocabulary, sounds, spelling, comprehension, and writing**



Types of Morphemes

FREE MORPHEMES

- **Lexical** (teach, dog, deliver)
- **Functional** (a, the, and, but)

BOUND MORPHEMES

- **Derivational** (re-, pre-, -ful, -ly)
- **Inflectional** (-ed, -ing, -est)

What's up with Base Words vs. Root Words?
(inside) (transport)

Types of Bound Morphemes

Inflectional Morphemes

- Change what the word does in terms of grammatical properties, but do not create a new word
- They can pluralize the word (**number**)
apartment → *apartments*
- They can change the verb **tense**
shout → *shouted*
- They can show **possession**
Kate → *Kate's*
- They can show **comparison**
sweet → *sweeter*

Derivational Morphemes

- Added to words to form new words
- They can change the meaning of the word.
correct → *incorrect*
- They can also change the grammatical category of the root word
friend → *friendly*
(noun) (adjective)
- Prefixes and suffixes can be derivational
- Examples:

-ness	re-
-ly	pre-
-less	un-

Morphosyntactic: Syntax is encoded into the suffixes

- Suffixes that form **verbs**:

-ate: graduate, educate, exaggerate

- Suffixes that form **adjectives**:

-ic: heroic, fantastic, exotic

-ive: expensive, active, creative

- Suffixes that form **nouns**:

-ate: graduate

-ity: purity, security, salinity

-ion/ian: nation, vision, musician

- Suffixes that form **adverbs**:

-ly: slowly, quickly, carelessly

interruptions

How many morphemes are there? **4**

What are they? **inter** **rupt** **ion** **s**

What do they mean?

inter = between

rupt = break or burst

ion = characterized by

s = plural form

→ *tion/tian, cion/cian, sion/sian*





Tier 1 Instruction & the SLP

Weave morphology conversations into existing instruction:

Academic Vocabulary

T: Yes, that's an **octagon**. How did that word tell you how many sides it has?"

S: **Because 'oct-' is a prefix that means 'eight', and 'gon' is a root that means sides, so an OCTagon has EIGHT sides.**

Decoding

T: What do these words all have in common? prevention, prepare, present, preview, pretest, predict

S: **They all have 'pre' at the beginning of the word.**

T: So, you know that part, let's attack the rest of the word now!

Comprehension

From text: ***The gardener is a naturalist.***

T: "Naturalist. That word has nature in it. Nature has to do with the physical world. I also know that -ist has something to do with a person who does a specific action. He must be a person that believes in using things from the earth in his gardening."

Spelling

The weekly word list includes the word 'highest'. Explain the spelling pattern of **'igh'** makes the long i sound, but add that the morpheme **-est** makes it the superlative form (greatest degree of an adjective) and therefore will be spelled 'est', never 'ist'

- **Pronounce the word. Students pronounce the word. Write the word to read. Talk about syllables, morphemes, spelling, part of speech, etymology.**
- **Define the word using a student-friendly definition.**
- **Say more about the word using different examples.**
- **Ask students “yes” or “no” questions about the word’s meaning.**
- **Elicit word use by students (e.g., Think-Pair-Share)**

Vocabulary Routine

Include morphology in your discussion about words.

Model curiosity about words and why they have certain morphemes in them.

Include students in that discussion and with each other.

Ex.= interruptions

Example:

When he struck out in the bottom of the 9th, he conceded defeat.

How could you incorporate syntax AND morphology in your whole group instruction?



Parsing Sentences

Syntax + Morphology!

POLL—True or False

**Teaching morphology
requires the
preparation of separate
and additional lesson
plans.**





Tier 2 Targeted Instruction

Instructional Questions:

How do we know what morphemes to teach?

How can we connect these to standards?

What materials can we use?

How do we integrate syntax, orthography, and comprehension with morphology?

Building Knowledge through Words:

**Context Clues, Word Building,
Word Function, Application**

Grade 4

Student Workbook

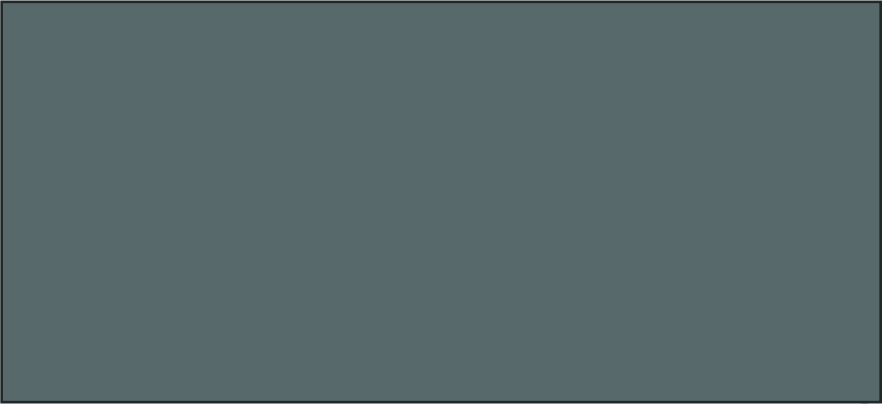
Name

Uncover the Meaning (Using Context Clues)

Prefixes uni- in-	Root form to shape, mold	Suffixes -er -ly -s
-------------------------	---------------------------------------	------------------------------

Context	Clues to help find the meaning of the underlined word.	Working Definition of word
I used new software to <u>format</u> the appearance of my essay.		
I could see the strong outline of the rock <u>formation</u> from far away.		
The letter said that my science fair project must <u>conform</u> to the rules of the contest.		

Write a sentence using a word with the root **form** in it to show its meaning.



Week 1—Level A

Day 1: Uncover the Meaning (U)

Prefixes	
uni-	
in-	to

Discuss each sentence listed in the table below. Underline the word's meaning. Facilitate think-aloud conversations to record their thoughts in their book.

- "What were the hints in the sentence? How does that help me understand?"
- "How does knowing the root word help?"
- "What meaning do all these words have?"
- Utilize rich discussion to apply how

Context	Clues to Meaning of the Word
I used new software to <u>format</u> the appearance of my essay.	api
I could see the strong <u>outline</u> of the rock formation from far away.	far away
The letter said that my science fair project must <u>conform</u> to the rules of the contest.	rule

Ask students to generate a sentence using the word.

Week 1—Level A

Day 2: Word Building

Introduce Root	"Today we are going to build some words with the root word 'form'. What does 'form' mean?"
Power Prefixes	"I can add prefixes to it to change the root word's meaning. Our power prefixes this week are: 'uni-'. The prefix 'uni-' means 'one' (which is one). The prefix 'in-' means 'into' (which is inside)." <p>"The function of a suffix is to change the root word's meaning. Our power suffixes this week are: '-ly'. '-ly' usually describes an action (called a verb). The suffix '-er' can either be added to compare (like 'faster') or to indicate that an action is happening (more than one). We have to look at the word in the context to know which one it is."</p>
Power Suffixes	"When we add a prefix and/or suffix to a word, we create a new word meaning family. Notice that the root word is still there. Which means they will all share that meaning." <p>"Let's build some words. Look at the table below. Each column moving from left to right, we need to pick one from each column, but we can't pick the same word twice. Some of the words you create will be real words and that's okay. We will still discuss how the meaning of the root can be seen in the words you created, we are going to talk about how the prefix/suffix changes the overall meaning of the word. How the meaning of the root can be seen in the words you build."</p> <p>"Generate a list of words and then write down where to divide words into syllables. What does the new words you build mean?"</p>
Word Building	
Discussion	After the students create their words, ask them: "What do you know? What does the suffix/prefix to ___ mean? How does that change the meaning of the word? Discuss if the words they built are real words."

Week 1—Level A

Day 3: Connect to Function

"Today we are going to talk about the function of words in sentences. When we write, it's important that we create sentences that are grammatically correct and communicate the message you are intending to send. To do that, we need to know the parts of speech words have, but also, it's important to know the function of the words."

"Let's practice using some of these words with our target root word. Write a sentence on the slides and your job will be to consider what the word is telling you. Is it describing something? Is it the person/place/thing/i word have a different function if we put it in a different sentence?"

"Let's try some: (Have students circle the function and then write a sentence.)"

In student workbook:

What is the purpose of the bolded word in each sentence?

1. She will be **informing** her supervisor about her new project.
name show action
I know this because informing is something that "sh" something
2. The **reformed** team took on new tasks in its first year.
name show action
I know this because it tells me more about the team
3. This program looks good in its **reforming**.
name show action
I know this because the program is changing and then
4. You are going to need **informed** consent before you can participate.
name show action
I know this because it is telling me what kind of con

After each sentence, discuss how the students determined the function of the word in the sentence and see if it has the same flexibility in the functions of words/parts of speech in context and expression development.

Week 1—Level A

Day 4: Expand and Explore

Develop short phrases with students (or independently) that include words built on the root word that can challenge students' thinking about vocabulary in context. This expands the students' familiarity with morpheme word families and contextual clues. Use the questions below to guide your discussion. You may need to help with defining the phrase, but see if the students can answer "How does the meaning of our root help explain the meaning of the word/phrase?" Have the students choose one sentence to explain on their own after the class discusses all of them.

- "What does that phrase mean? How do you know?"
- "What word has our root in it? What does that word mean?"
- "How does the meaning of our root help explain the meaning of the word/phrase?"
- "Can you think of another phrase using the word with our root in it?"

In Student Workbook:

Choose one sentence/phrase and explain how the bolded word's meaning is connected to its target morpheme's meaning.

1. **informational** text
Since **form** means shape or mold, **informational** means text that shapes our knowledge
2. **conform** to the fashion trends
Since **form** means shape or mold, **conform** means to match or shape your behaviors to what is happening around you
3. the **formative** years
Since **form** means shape or mold, **formative** means having to do with shaping or molding behavior and expectations during the early years of life
4. political **reform**
Since **form** means shape or mold, **reform** means to shape again; to make things different

R.11: Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grade level reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies

Parts of Sp

Noun

A noun **names** a thing, person,

Verb

A verb **shows action**. It tells w
is doing.

Adjective

An adjective **describes** a thing
or idea.

Adverb

An adverb **describes** how an a
carried out

BREAKING NEWS

Prefixes have 3 functions:
















- **Negation** (examples: uncooperative, nonsense, disho
- **Direction** (examples: revise, preview, eject)
- **Intensity** (examples: intense, extreme—*in-, ex-* mean 'very')

Suffixes have 2 functions:

- **Change number, tense, or degree**
(examples: dogs, jumped, happier)
- **Change the part of speech**
(examples: fame (noun) → famous (adjective), quick (adjective) → quickly (i

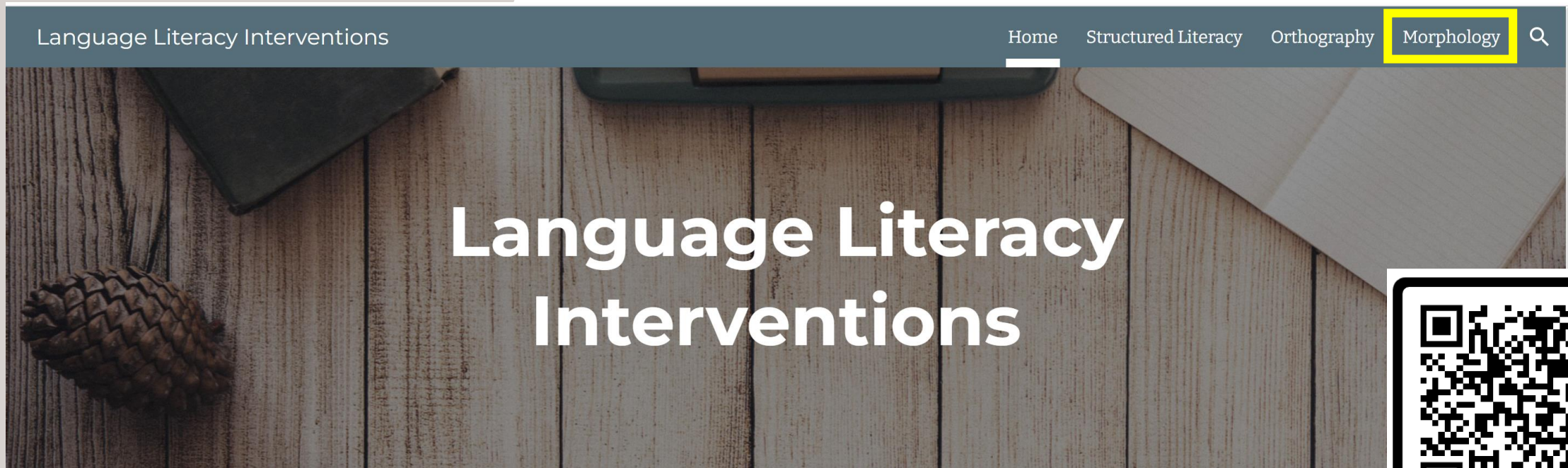
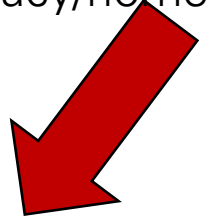
Roots:

- **Anglo-Saxon base words can star
alone as words by themselves**
- **Latin roots cannot stand alone**
- **Greek roots can be combined to i
new words and cannot stand alon**

Latin Roots	Visual Cue	Meaning
form		
port		
scrib/script		
spec/spect		
struc/struct		
flect/flex		
dic/dict		
mit/mis		
duc/duce/ duct		
pel/puls		
fac/fic/ fact/fect		
cur/curs		
aud		
pos/pound		
plic/ply		

Website Access:

<https://sites.google.com/view/tier3language-literacy/home>





Let's do a little practice.

Uncover the Meaning (Using Context Clues)

<u>Prefixes</u>	<u>Root</u>	<u>Suffixes</u>
inter- con- pre- re-	cede/cess/ceed to go, yield, or surrender	-ing -s -ed

Context	Clues to help find the meaning of the underlined word.	Working Definition of word
After the candidate lost the election, he <u>conceded</u> and went home.		
Watching the bridal <u>procession</u> come in the church was breathtaking.		
His <u>receding</u> hairline made it look like he was bald.		

Write a sentence using a word with the root **cede/cess/ceed** in it to show its meaning.

Day 1

Word Building

con inter pre re	cede <i>to go, yield, or surrender</i>	ed ing s
---------------------------	--	----------------

What words can you build? List them here:

Day 2

Connect to Function

What is the purpose of the bolded word in each sentence? Circle the function and explain.

1. The **preceding** sentence is a rather lengthy one in comparison.

name show action describe

I know this because _____

2. I was happy that someone had **interceded** on my behalf the other day.

name show action describe

I know this because _____

3. After thirty years of marriage, he looked at his latest pictures and could no longer doubt his **receding** hairline.

name show action describe

I know this because _____

4. When he struck out in the bottom of the ninth, his team **conceded** defeat.

name show action describe

I know this because _____

Day 3

Expand and Explore

Choose one sentence/phrase and explain how the bolded word's meaning is connected to its target morpheme's meaning.

1. **proceeded** down the hallway
Since **ceed** means _____, **proceeded** means _____.
2. waters began to **recede**
Since **cede** means _____, **recede** means _____.
3. **successful** completion of a degree
Since **cess** means _____, **successful** means _____.
4. time for **recess**
Since **cess** means _____, **recess** means _____.

Day 4



Tier 3 Intensified Instruction

Morpheme Madness

Name _____

Small Group
Activities

[Link](#)

Morpheme Madness: Suffixes-Lesson 1

Activity 1 – Word Sort

Complete the word sort using the cards and begin thinking about how to explain the words and discussed as a group, answer the questions below.

1. What is the targeted morpheme?

2. What does it mean?

3. Does it change the part of speech when added?

yes

no

4. What are the spelling rules when using this morpheme?

Activity 2 – Word Sums

Suffix:

Example Word	

Activity 3 – Word Building

Use [ed] to build regular past tense verbs for the present tense verbs listed below. Make sure you follow the spelling rules as you write the regular past tense forms.

Present Tense Verb	Regular Past Tense Verb
play	
comment	
present	
bleach	
use	
study	
approve	
admit	



Word Sorts

To introduce new roots/affixes, start with receptive identification and awareness to word structures. One way to address this is through word sorts.

UN Not, opposite of	RE Again, back	IN/IM Not
unhappy	rewrite	inactive
unsure	rebuild	immobile
unrest	restart	inoperable
unfair	reappear	immature
unable	recheck	insecure
unplug	reapply	inaccurate

Word Matrices

A word matrix is a visual way to illustrate morphological families. This is another reliable tool to investigate and make sense of the English writing system.

en over	joy "a happy feeling"	able ed ing	
		ful ous	ly ness



Word Analogies

Analogies can be used to address vocabulary structures and support recognition of syntactic relationships between words.

Name: _____

Analogies

Directions: Complete each analogy by adding your own comparison.

1. act : acting :: snow : _____

2. bake : baked :: walk : _____

3. dog : dogs :: ride : : _____

4. baby : babies :: candy : _____

5. paint : painted :: weed : _____

Directions: Use the words to write three analogies.

song wash ponies girls songs daisy
girl pack washed packed pony daisies

6. _____ : _____ :: _____ : _____

7. _____ : _____ :: _____ : _____

8. _____ : _____ :: _____ : _____



Word Sums

A **word sum** shows the pieces of (morphemes) of a word to make a multi-morphemic result. This improves word structure awareness, which in turn helps students with spelling, decoding, and meaning of multi-morphemic words.

Split the words

re | fresh
un | born
spending
lightest
depressing
hopeless
unhappy
refillable

Write the word sums

friendly = +

misspelling = + +

quietly = +

reminded = +

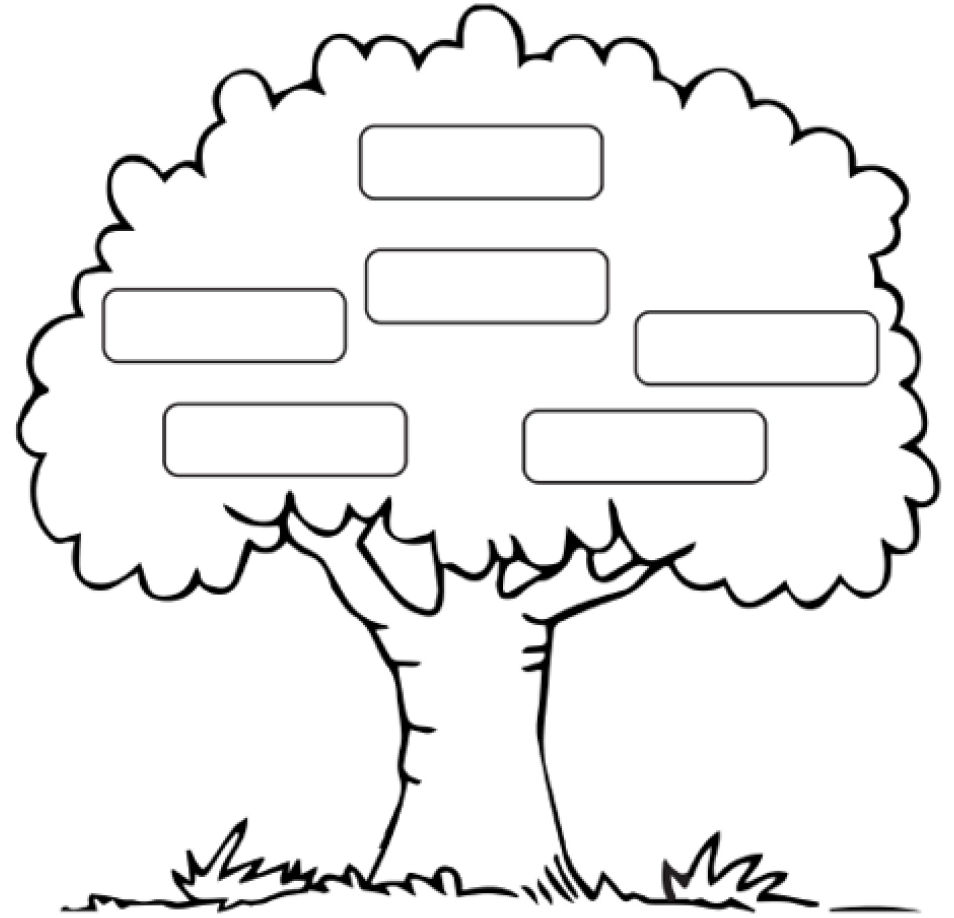
loveable = +

freshness = +



Word Families

Word families help students develop a network of related words, which aids in vocabulary, comprehension, and spelling.



Affix: _____

Meaning: _____



Word Building

Students practice combining affixes with base words to make new, longer words. They begin to recognize common prefixes and suffixes and understand how they function within words.

Name: _____

Build bigger words.



_____ vise _____

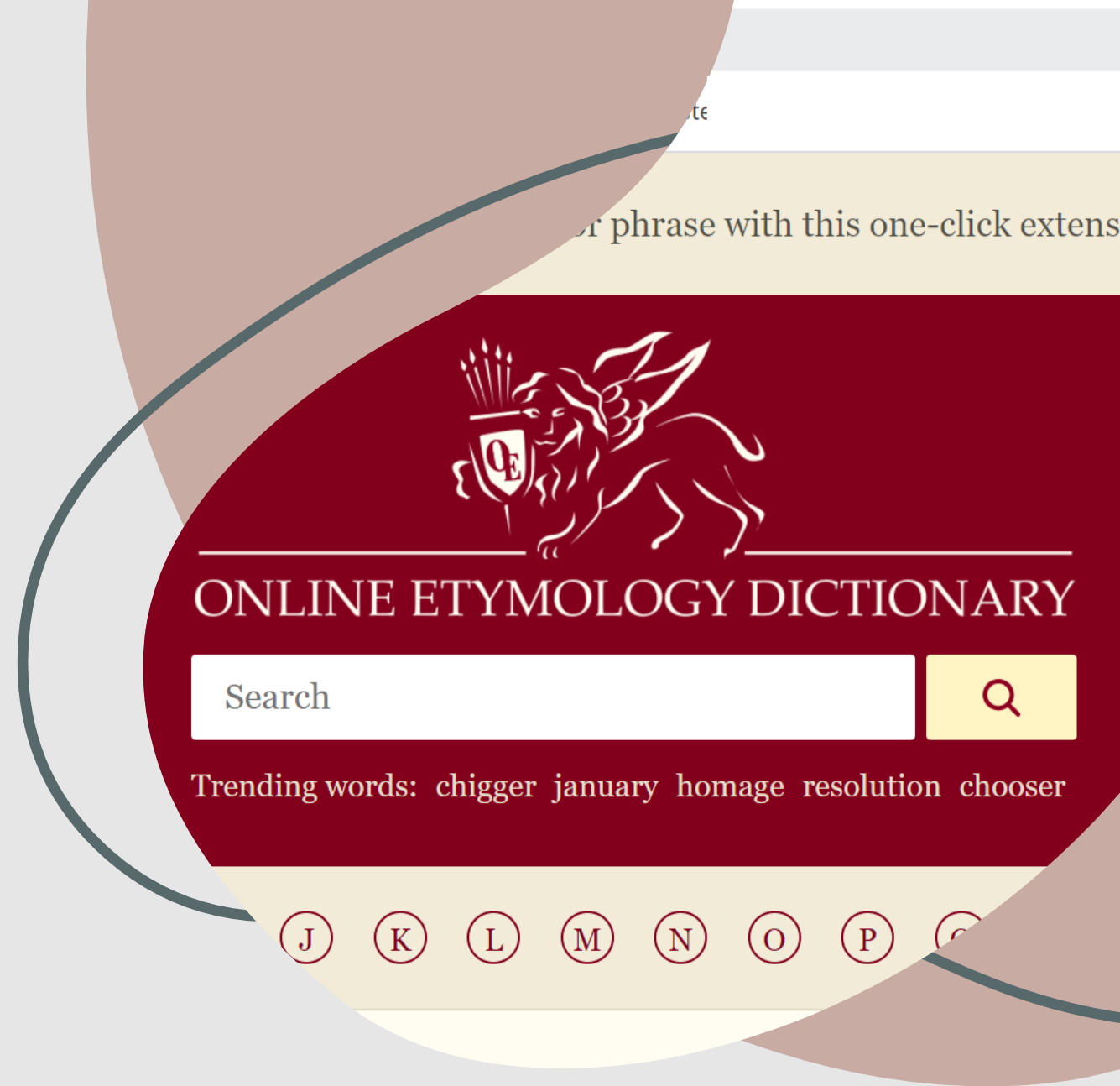
or ion re ing ad super

Write the words you build.

1 _____	5 _____	9 _____
2 _____	6 _____	10 _____
3 _____	7 _____	11 _____
4 _____	8 _____	12 _____

Etymonline.com

Examples: recess, adventure



IEP Learning Targets for Reading Standards

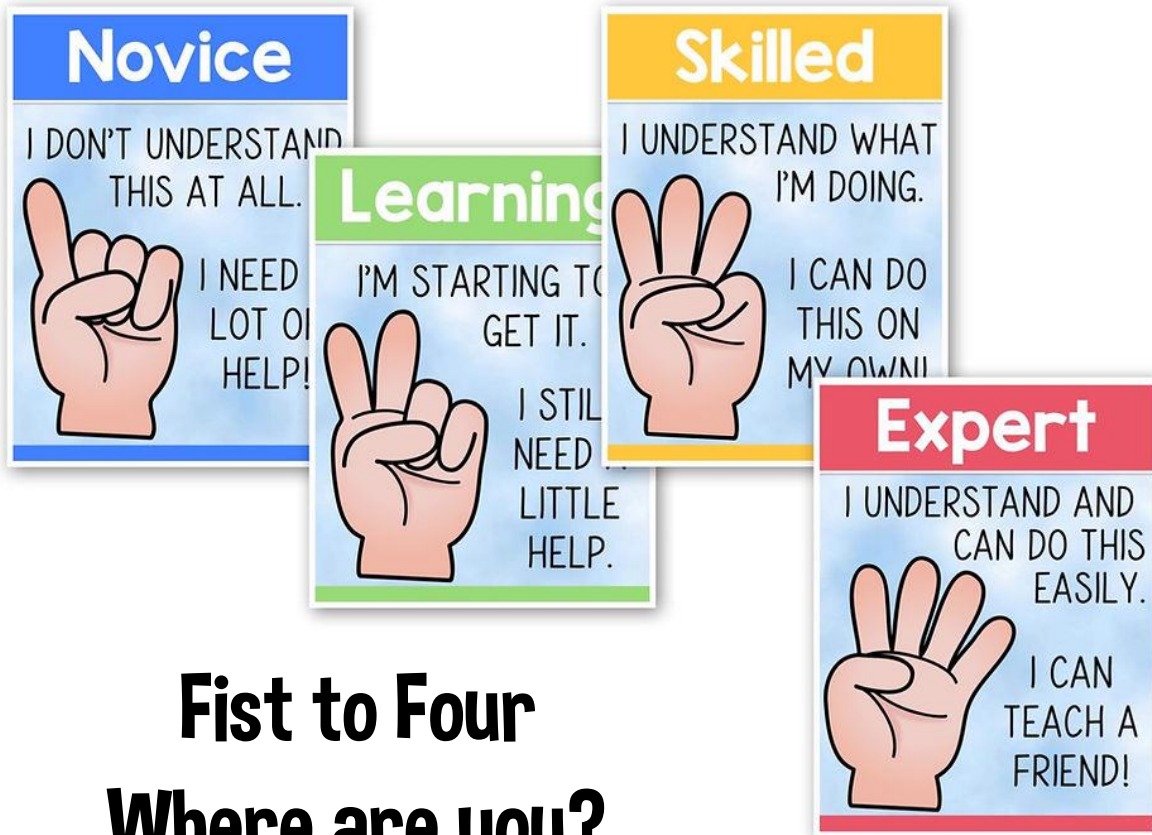
Essential
Elements for
ELA

Word Recognition

Reading Fluency

Reading
Comprehension

Ongoing Language Comprehension Development



Fist to Four
Where are you?

Success Criteria

I can explain how morphological awareness affects literacy development.

I have some tools I can use and share with teachers to explicitly teach morphology.



"Like a good conversation, good
instruction is interactive; it is not Input
Input → Input → Input."

—Anita Archer

Contact Me



Dr. Shelley Blackwell, SLP.D
shelleyblackwell05@gmail.com
@sblackwellSLPD

References

Good, J. E., Lance, D. M., & Rainey, J. (2014). The Effects of Morphological Awareness Training on Reading, Spelling, and Vocabulary Skills. *Communication Disorders Quarterly*, 36(3), 142–151. doi: 10.1177/1525740114548917

Kirk, C., & Gillon, G. T. (2009). Integrated Morphological Awareness Intervention as a Tool for Improving Literacy. *Language, Speech, and Hearing Services in Schools*, 40(3), 341–351. doi: 10.1044/0161-1461(2008/08-0009)

McCutchen, D., Stull, S., Herrera, B. L., Lotas, S., & Evans, S. (2013). Putting Words to Work: Effects of Morphological Instruction on Children's Writing. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 47(1), 86–97. doi: 10.1177/0022219413509969

Wolter, J. A., & Dilworth, V. (2013). The Effects of a Multilingualistic Morphological Awareness Approach for Improving Language and Literacy. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 47(1), 76–85. doi: 10.1177/0022219413509972