

**Word of the Week**

**spectacle** (spek' ti kəl) *n.*, eye-catching display of public drama

*Bjorn made a complete spectacle of himself today at school, but he doesn't embarrass easily.*

The word *spectacle* contains the morpheme *spect* (a word root meaning "look"). Other words that share this root include *spectator*, *inspect*, and *speculate*. Together, these words make up a word group.

**Tip** A **prefix** is a word part that links to the front of a word (*dis-*, *un-*, *re-*). A **suffix** is a word part that links to the end of a word (*-er*, *-est*, *-able*).

A **word root** is a word part (such as *leg* in *illegible* or *pop* in *popular*) that cannot stand alone but that combines with prefixes and suffixes to make words. A **base word** is a word (such as *view* in *review*) that can stand alone, but can also link to other word parts to create new words.

**Tip** You will find common prefixes, suffixes, and word roots on the **Word Parts Charts** provided by your teacher.

**LESSON 5**

**Morphemes and Word Families**

**Understand the Concept**

The parts of a word are called **morphemes**. Types of morphemes include **prefixes**, **suffixes**, and **word roots**. Morphemes that can stand on their own are known as **base words**.

Breaking a word down into its morphemes can help you figure out what the word means. For example, the word *illegible* can be broken down into three morphemes: *il-*, meaning "not," *leg*, meaning "read," and *-ible*, meaning "able to be." By looking at each of its parts, we can determine that the word *illegible* means "not able to be read."

By recognizing the morphemes in a word, you can identify other words that share a morpheme and therefore share meaning. The words in the following word group all contain the Latin word root *aud*, meaning "to hear."

**WORD GROUP**

- auditorium
- audition
- auditory
- audiotape
- inaudible

**Try It Yourself**

**EXERCISE A**

For each word in the following word groups, circle the morpheme that the group has in common. Then describe how the words in the group are similar in meaning.

1. repay                      paying  
     payment                 payable  
     overpay

How are these words similar?

\_\_\_\_\_

2. aquarium                 aquatic  
     aqualung                aquaplane  
     aquamarine

How are these words similar?

\_\_\_\_\_

3. prejudice      preheat  
preteen          premature  
prewashed      predawn  
How are these words similar?
- 

4. readable      attainable  
touchable      lovable  
drinkable      portable  
How are these words similar?
- 

5. projector      objected  
eject            dejected  
rejection      inject  
How are these words similar?
- 

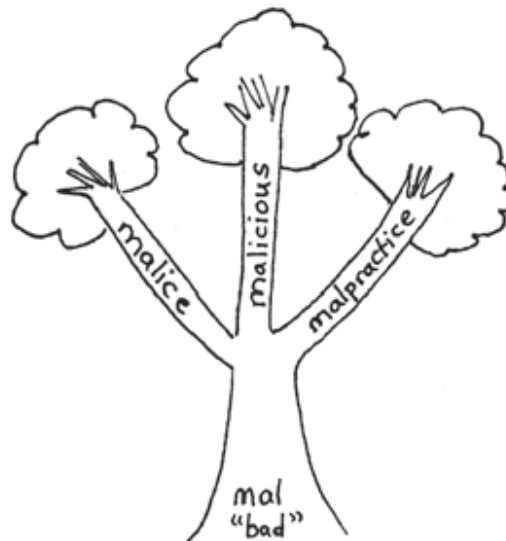
Imagine that you want to write the word *progressive*, but you can't remember if the word has one *s* or two. Think of other words you know that contain *gress*. You may remember how to spell *progress*, *aggressive*, or *congress*. As you jot down the other words that contain *gress*, you see the pattern and realize that *progressive* is correct, not *progresive*.

### Just for Fun

Choose one of the word roots listed below and create a root family tree with three branches, listing three words that have grown from the word root. You may display your "Root Family Trees" in the classroom.

EXAMPLE    mal—"bad"

- chron—"time"
- path—"feeling"
- spec, spic, spect—"to look"
- cosm—"universe; order"
- log, logue—"word, speech"



**Tip** You can often identify the meaning of a word by breaking it into its separate parts. Consider the word *projector*. If you split the word into its parts (pro- / ject / -or), you can look at each part on its own. *Pro-* is a prefix meaning "forward." *Ject* is a word root meaning "throw." The suffix *-or* means "one that [does something]." Based on the meanings of the word parts, a projector is a device that throws something forward. In effect, a projector "throws forward" an image onto a screen.

**Tip** Becoming familiar with common word parts can also help with your spelling. When you are trying to remember how to spell a word, think about the morphemes in the word. Are those morphemes in any words you already know how to spell? Spelling patterns typically carry over from word to word.