

MORPHEME EXERCISE

In this exercise, you will be dividing words into their morphemes and to place those morphemes under the correct headings (“Root,” “Derivational,” or “Inflectional”). For example,

Word	Root(s)	Derivational	Inflectional
personalizes	person	-al, -ize	3RD SINGULAR (-s)
buildings	build	-ing	PLURAL (-s)
accepting	-cept	ad-	PROGRESSIVE (-ing)
fortunate	fortune	-ate	—
misallocations	loc-	mis-, ad-, -ate, -tion	PLURAL (-s)
blackballed	black, ball	—	PAST (-ed)

To be able to do this kind of analysis correctly, you need to understand the concept of **morphemes** and to know the difference between **derivational** and **inflectional** morphemes. The inflectional morphemes are easier, because there’s a finite number: **PLURAL** (usually -s), **POSSESSIVE** (usually 's), **PAST** (usually -ed or -en), **PROGRESSIVE** (-ing), **COMPARATIVE/SUPERLATIVE** (-er or -est), and **OBJECTIVE CASE** (me, us, her, him, them). Remember, however, that “-ing” and “-ed” are sometimes derivational morphemes that change verbs into nouns (as in the noun “buildings”) or into adjectives (as in the adjective “accepted”). Sometimes you can tell definitely that these morphemes are derivational (“the buildings” or “the accepted way”) rather than inflectional (“he is building a log cabin” or “she accepted the proposal”), but other times, you cannot know one way or the other out of context.

The other trick to morphology is getting down to the smallest root in a word. But just remember that roots must be morphemes (morpheme = the smallest unit of meaning). I recommend that you keep breaking the word down until you reach something that no longer means anything or that isn’t used as a unit of meaning anywhere else. Take the word “misallocations,” for example. You can easily take off the “mis-,” the plural ending, and the “-tion.” At that point, you’re left with “allocate.” But doesn’t that word break down further? There’s a prefix “ad-” that tends to elide with whatever consonant it precedes (the prefix in “advertise,” “accepted,” “affix,” and “annunciate”). I bet it’s also in “allocate.” So, is “locate” the root? It’s a word. But I see “-ate” in it. That’s a derivational morpheme that often changes nouns to adjectives (“fortunate”) and other roots to verbs (“generate,” “create,” “congregate”). That leaves “loc-.” Even though “loc-” isn’t a word, are there words that have “loc-” and have some relation to the idea of “allocate” (putting something into a particular place)? If not, “locate” is probably the root of the word despite the “-ate.” But how about “locus” and “local”? It would seem that “loc-” is the root of “misallocations” and has something to do with “place.” If we couldn’t find other words with that root used to mean roughly the same thing, we’d have to say that it wasn’t a unit of meaning and therefore wasn’t the root of the word. But since there are other words with “loc-” for a root, it is the root of “misallocations.”

On the other hand, take “fortunate.” You might think that “tune” is the root, since “for-” is a common derivational prefix (in “forgive” and “forget”), and “tune” is a root in other words (“he tuned the guitar”). But does the meaning of “fortune” in have anything to do with the meaning of “tune” in “he tuned the guitar”? Not really. Since it doesn’t, it’s not the same unit of meaning in both places, and in “fortunate,” it isn’t a unit of meaning at all (what would it mean?). So, it can’t be the root; the root has to be “fortune.”

For each of the following words, identify the word's morphemes and place them in the appropriate columns below. For the Chinese words, also indicate whether the morphemes are Bound or Free. (While not a standard way of referring to Chinese morphemes, we will for the time being use the same terms as those used for English morphology below, i.e., "derivational" and "inflectional".)

Word	Root(s)	Derivational	Inflectional
coffee			
mother's			
begotten			
misconceives			
mysterious			
flakier			
classroom			
haplology			
isolating			
monosyllabicity			
我們／我们			
第一百			
電腦／电脑			
記者／记者			
中國化／中国化			
阿哥			
可能性			
吃過／吃过			
化學／化学			
書本／书本			