

Etymology and morphology

5C - Use etymology and morphology to help pupils learn words for themselves

One of the challenges of reading in secondary schools is that as pupils progress through the key stages in the different subjects, they encounter more words that are both rarer and more specialist.

However, one of the ways we can help pupils overcome this challenge is to help them recognise and understand patterns in words.

A large proportion of the subject specific language we use at secondary level has Greek and Latin origins. In Science and Maths, this can be as high as 90%. Indeed, one of the key recommendations from the EEF's *Secondary literacy Guidance Report* is to 'organise vocabulary into meaningful patterns within and across subjects'

Looking at common prefixes and suffixes, as well as studying the etymology and morphology of words, can help pupils develop 'word-consciousness', and ultimately to learn words for themselves.

↳ Consider the prefix *poly-*.
If pupils know this, it can help them understand *polymer* in Chemistry, *polytheism* in Religious Studies, and *polygon* in Maths.

Morphology is the study of the structure and parts of words, and can be a powerful strategy in helping build the *depth* of pupils' vocabulary.

↳ Consider the word *photosynthesis*.
Learning that *photo* means 'light', *syn* means 'with or together', and *thesis* means 'setting, putting or placing' can ensure pupils build a deep knowledge of this word.

The accompanying Etymology and morphology resource (see appendix) explores common word parts and explains their etymology while also breaking down several examples.

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Ideas for the classroom

Etymology and morphology can be used in the classroom to help foster a greater 'word-consciousness' with pupils and encourage them to see patterns in words across different subjects.

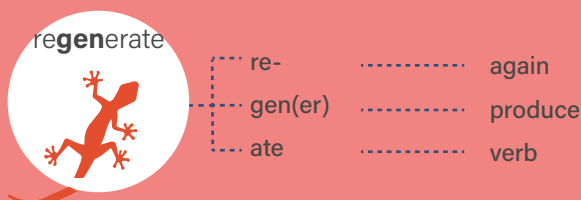
Ideas include:

- Break down the morphology of a word when teaching it for the first time
- Explore the etymology (origins) of different words and word parts
- Engage in word-building activities such as matching prefixes and root words
- Model and encourage independent word-learning strategies, such as activating knowledge and known examples of a prefix
- Engage in low stakes quizzing of previously taught prefixes and suffixes
- Give spelling instruction for common morphological patterns
- Explicitly draw links between word patterns in different subjects; allocate time for subject leaders to plan this within the curriculum.

gen

Latin: genus = kind, Greek: -genes = born

Combining forms as prefix include geno-, and as suffix -gene
Other forms derived from linked words 'generare' = to breed, and 'genitivus' = relating to birth
Linked to French 'gens' = people
Not found in: regent, agent, genuflect



regeneration
gen alpha gender
gen
degenerate engender
generalise