

NOUN-SENSE

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Normally, to change an adjective into a noun, we add NESS (cute, cuteness) or ITY (popular, popularity). But there are many exceptions, some of which seem to follow a pattern and some of which seem to be unique.

Adjectives that end in ANT or ENT, for example, generally become nouns that end in ANCE (elegance, importance, significance, militance, arrogance, fragrance, ignorance, relevance, dominance) or ENCE (silence, violence, penitence, innocence, independence, pertinence, confidence, diffidence, eloquence, absence, obedience, adolescence, magnificence, obsolescence, negligence, diligence, difference), but occasionally in ANCY (constancy, vacancy, redundancy) or ENCY (delinquency, frequency, efficiency, decency, urgency, adjacency, currency). With some words (brilliant, dependent) there is a choice between NCE and NCY. In at least three cases (pleasant, recent, ancient), the noun ends in NESS. And one eight-letter adjective ending in ANT takes TION to make it a nominative. Can you think of it?

Similarly, adjectives that end in ATE usually turn into nouns that end in ACY (accuracy, intimacy, effeminacy, legitimacy, privacy, adequacy, literacy, immediacy, confederacy, indeterminacy), but some take ION instead (desperation, moderation, desolation, corporation). Again, there are anomalies: appropriate and ultimate take NESS, while one nine-letter adjective replaces ATE with ANCE, not ANCY or ATION. What is it?

Where the NESS suffix boasts no variations, ITY has many, including TY (----ty, cruelty, subtlety, frailty, loyalty, certainty, entirety, novelty), TE (-----te), RY (----ry, -----ry), ERY (----ery) and just Y (difficulty, orthodoxy, -----y). When we add NESS, the only change we have to make is a Y to I (messy, messiness). When we add ITY, we must similarly change an E to an I (sane, sanity), but ITY often necessitates other, internal changes (proper, propriety; sober, sobriety; brief, brevity; clear, clarity; noble, nobility; humble, humility; pompous, pomposity; generous, generosity). In at least one case, we change the stem and drop the I in the suffix. The adjective has four letters, the noun seven. Can you name this unusual pair?

Another noun-making suffix is TH, as in warmth and many numbers (eleventh), but it is usually accompanied by an internal adjustment (true, truth; dead, death; wide, width; broad, breadth; five, fifth; nine, ninth; deep, depth; long, length; young, youth; strong, strength). In almost all of these, the vowel sound is changed.

In many cases, though, the change from adjective to noun is unexpected, even weird. Listed below are some of the most interesting cases, but we've left out the letters shared by the adjective and the noun. Can you fill in the blanks? In each case, the answer is unique. If you run out of patientness, check the answers in Answers and Solutions.

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|-----------------------|----------------------|
| 1 ----, ----eur | 25 -----d, -----a |
| 2 ----y, ----iment | 26 -----c, -----a |
| 3 ----, ----hood | 27 ---zen, ---st |
| 4 ----, ----ice | 28 -----l, ----- |
| 5 ----e, ----itude | 29 -----y, ----- |
| 6 -----e, -----acy | 30 -----ious, -----e |
| 7 ----, ----dom | 31 ----al, ---- |
| 8 ----ary, ----ude | 32 ---ual, --- |
| 9 ----o-s, ----m | 33 ----ic, ---- |
| 10 ----ic, ----edy | 34 -----some, ----- |
| 11 -----ous, -----ety | 35 -----n, ----- |
| 12 -----ous, -----sy | 36 ----en, ---- |
| 13 ----able, ----y | 37 ----ed, ---- |
| 14 ----id, ----or | 38 --ou-, --i-e |
| 15 ----tic, ----s | 39 -o-, -ea- |
| 16 ----ti-, -----e | 40 ----. -e---t |
| 17 ----ctic, ----x | 41 ---e, ---dom |
| 18 ----ic, -----es | 42 ----y, ----ihood |
| 19 ----ic, ----ry | 43 ----, ----itude |
| 20 ----y, ----e- | 44 ----, ----ism |
| 21 ----e-utic, ----y | 45 -----, -----ion |
| 22 -----al, -----on | 46 ---ious, ---y |
| 23 ---al, ---us | 47 ----etic, ----os |
| 24 ----cial, ----t | 48 -----t-c, -----s |