

Word Building Strategy

Practice-Based Activity

This activity is designed to be paired with the *Effective Morphology Instruction for Secondary Students Across Content Areas* slide deck.

Purpose: to provide participants practice with a high-utility morpheme family from their content area, prepare word-building materials, script a think-aloud modeling sequence, and receive feedback from colleagues

Participant materials: the Word Building Graphic Organizer, morpheme cards, access to the Word Dissector app and/or a high-utility morpheme lists, Explicit Morphology Instruction Fidelity Checklist: Lesson 4

Facilitator materials: a completed Word Building Graphic Organizer example, extra index cards and markers (to create morpheme cards if needed)

Directions

- Identify one high-utility root from an upcoming unit.
- Select appropriate affixes to combine with your root to build words and create your morpheme cards.
- Script your think-aloud for modeling the graphic organizer, deliberately including one correct example and one non-example.
- Partner up to practice your think-aloud and provide feedback using the Explicit Morphology Fidelity Checklist: Lesson 4.

Potential Participant Questions and Answers

- “What if I teach a subject like math, and words don’t always form large families like the CAP family?”

In math, you can focus heavily on prefixes and suffixes that alter meaning or part of speech (e.g., “equi,” “poly,” “ic”). You can also collaborate with science or ELA teachers to reinforce cross-disciplinary roots.

- “How much time should I dedicate to modeling the correct example and the non-example?”

The modeling phase (Step 3) should be brisk and explicit, taking about five to seven minutes total. The goal is to show the process of using the three checks, not to teach every possible word combination.

Facilitator Questions

- How did planning the non-example change the way you thought about teaching this word?
- Which of the three self-checks (Word Correct, Part of Speech, Meaning Fits) do you anticipate your students struggling with the most, and how will you scaffold it?
- How can you ensure students are actively engaged while you are modeling the Word Building Strategy?

Step 1: Select a target morpheme family.

Identify one high-utility root from an upcoming lesson or text that unlocks a large word family and transfers across disciplines. Consider using the Word Dissector app to verify the root and find related words. Write down your target root and its literal meaning (e.g., *struct* = to build).

Target Root and Variants	Meaning

Step 2: Prepare the morpheme cards and graphic organizer.

Identify 3-5 prefixes and suffixes that can combine with your chosen root. Prepare your materials by downloading the corresponding morpheme cards and the Word Building Graphic Organizer.

Prefixes (Variants)	Meanings
Suffixes (Variants)	Meanings

Select one correct example word you want to build (e.g., “construct”) and one non-example word you will use to demonstrate a deliberate mistake (e.g., using an adjective suffix when a noun is needed).

Example Words	Non-Example Words

Step 3: Script your think-aloud.

Draft what you will say to your students as you model building words and recording them on the Word Building Graphic Organizer. Be sure to script how you will model the three self-checks for your non-example: (1) recheck the morpheme meaning, (2) verify the part of speech, (3) confirm the word meaning in context.

Script

Step 4: Practice and seek feedback on your word building lesson plan.

With a partner or small group, take turns teaching your scripted think-aloud to your partner. While you are modeling, your partner should act as the observer and use the modeling section of the Explicit Morphology Instruction Fidelity Checklist: Lesson 4 to evaluate your demonstration. Record their feedback in the space below.

Notes

Word Building Strategy Teacher Planning Sheet

Step 1: Select a target morpheme family.

Target Root and Variants	Meaning

Step 2: Prepare the morpheme cards and graphic organizer.

Identify 3-5 prefixes and suffixes that can combine with your chosen root.

Prefixes (Variants)	Meanings
Suffixes (Variants)	Meanings

Select one correct example and one non-example word.

Example Words	Non-Example Words

Step 3: Script your think-aloud.

Script

Step 5: Practice and seek feedback on your word building lesson plan.

Notes