



18 Basic Rules for Adding Suffixes

1. **Use –est when comparing three or more things.**
pretty: prettiest old: oldest smart: smartest fast: fastest
2. **Use –ist for people who do things.**
art: artist science: scientist anthropology: anthropologist
3. **Use –an for the suffix sound /n/ that indicates a person, nationality, or religion.**
American, Alaskan, Mexican, republican, Lutheran
4. **Use –ian when the word sounds like /eyun/.**
Indian, Cambodian, Rastafarian
5. **Use –ous when the word is an adjective.**
dangerous, courageous, famous
6. **Use –us when the word is a noun.**
sinus, ruckus
7. **Use –ize as the suffix to add to whole words or to root words.**
customize, idolize, modernize, criticize
8. **“–cise” is not a suffix and cannot stand alone. It must be used with a prefix and a suffix.**
incised, incisor, excised
9. **Use –er as a suffix for one-syllable words when you mean a person who does.**
jumper, runner, swimmer, teacher
10. **Usually use –or for two or more syllable words when you mean a person or thing that does.**
editor, professor, compactor
(Exceptions include: *actor, doctor, hairdresser*)
11. **Use –ar to form an adjective.**
angular, regular, popular
12. **Usually use the suffix –able when you are adding to an entire word and the new word means “able to.”**
workable, doable, attainable, manageable
13. **Usually use the suffix –able when the root ends in the “hard” sound of c or g.**
despicable
14. **When adding to a root, use the suffix –ible.**
visible, edible, credible
15. **Usually use the suffix –ible when the root ends in the “soft” sound of c or g.**

forcible, legible, crucible

16. The following suffixes mean “people who do:”

-ist: pianist

-ee: employee

-cian: magician

-eer: engineer

-ier: brigadier

-er: swimmer

-or: actor

-ess: princess (female)

17. Use wr as opposed to r for words that imply the meaning “twist.”

wrench, wrestle, wrap, wreck, wrought, write, wrong, wrist, wry

18. These are generalities. Exceptions are everywhere.