Vocabulary for Literacy

CfE

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Contents

1 How to decode words

When we read or listen, we all encounter words that we don't know. This chapter will help you develop the skills you need to **decode** a new or unfamiliar word: how to break it down and work out its meaning.

The individual letters in each word are either **vowels** or **consonants**. However, it is by breaking words down into *groups*, or chunks, of letters that we are able to decode them. Some simple words stand on their own. These are often known as **root words**, for example, 'form'.

Other, longer, words are often made up of different elements. There are names for these added elements: a **prefix** comes at the beginning of a word and a **suffix** comes at the end. To stick with the example of 'form', adding a prefix might make it read 'reform'. Adding a suffix could make it read 'formulate'.

Learning how to decode unfamiliar words is a very useful skill. That's why this chapter comes first in the book.

▶ Prefixes

Lots of words in English contain prefixes. This means they have a certain group of letters at the start of the word. You could remove this group of letters and the root word would still make sense on its own.

Some prefixes are part of the word, such as 'dis-' in 'discomfort', 'disintegrate' or 'disconnected'. Other prefixes may be joined to the word by a hyphen, for example, 'extra-terrestrial', 'self-service' or 're-enter'.

> *Prefix*
>
> A group of letters placed at the **beginning** of a word to affect its meaning.
>
> For example, the prefix 'un-' can be added to words such as 'happy', in order to create a slightly different word.

🔨 Building

Which of the following words have **prefixes**?

unkind	stealthy	leisure	forewarned
pillow	rewind	bearable	impossible
scissors	indefinite	nonsense	rebel

Strengthening

Look at your answers to the *Building* task and list the **prefixes** that appear.

To get you started, the first prefix is 'un-'. This was present at the start of the word 'kind' to make the word 'unkind'.

The prefixes you identified in the task above can all be used in other words too. For example, 'un-' is regularly used to mean 'not' in words like 'unnecessary' and 'uneventful'.

You are now going to work with some more common prefixes. Look carefully through the following list:

Prefix	Meaning	Examples
anti-	against	antisocial, antibacterial
co-	with	co-worker, coexist
dis-	not	dislike, dishonest
ex-	former or out of	ex-boyfriend, ex-directory
extra-	more than	extraordinary, extracurricular
fore-	before	forecast, foreword
im-	not/opposite	impossible, impolite
inter-	between	interact, interstellar
mis-	wrong/bad	misbehave, misunderstand
mono-	singular	monotone, monobrow
non-	not	nonsense, non-existent
post-	after	postpone, post-mortem
pre-	before	prejudge, pre-date
re-	again	rewrite, rerun
sub-	under	submarine, subtitle
trans-	between or across	transport, transform
un-	not	undone, unkind
uni-	one	unicycle, universal

Building – group task

Working with a group, think of more example words for each of the **prefixes** in the table.

Once you have thought of as many words as possible, use a **dictionary**. You should be able to find at least **one** more example word for each prefix.

Clearly there are a lot of possible answers here! Discuss your list with your teacher and the rest of your class. Your teacher may list the suggestions on the board or screen.

▶ Suffixes

> ## *Suffix*
>
> A group of letters added at the **end** of a word to form another word.
>
> For example, the suffix '-ship' can be added to words such as 'friend', in order to create a slightly different word.

🔨 Building

Which of the following words have **suffixes**?

civility	suspicious	box	cautiously
number	sharp	delightful	about
hopeless	temperature	movement	weather

🏋 Strengthening

Look at your answers to the *Building* task above and list the **suffixes** that appear.

To get you started, the first suffix is '-ity'. This was present at the end of the word 'civil' to make the word 'civility'.

The suffixes you identified in the task above can all be used in other words too. For example, '-ity' is regularly used in words like 'responsibility' and 'individuality'.

You are now going to work with some more common suffixes. Look carefully through the list which appears on the next page:

3

Suffix	Meaning	Examples
-able	able to be	presentable, adaptable
-ate	become	regulate, animate
-dom	a place or a state of being	freedom, kingdom
-ence	a state or quality	difference, persistence
-ery	a type or place of work	bakery, brewery
-esque	like/suggests	statuesque, picturesque
-ful	notable for	wonderful, doubtful
-hood	state or quality	neighbourhood, adulthood
-ify	to make or become	satisfy, terrify
-ious	characterised by	nutritious, studious
-ish	a little	snobbish, childish
-ist	a person with certain skills or a person with certain principles or beliefs	novelist, feminist
-ity	the state or condition of	equality, reality
-less	without	careless, endless
-ly	the way in which something is being done	bravely, honestly
-ment	the result or product of an action	punishment, argument
-ness	state of being, behaviour or feeling	sadness, rudeness
-ship	position held	internship, ownership
-wise	in relation to	clockwise, otherwise

Building – group task

Working with a group, think of more example words to add for each of the **suffixes** in the table.

Once you have thought of as many words as possible, use a **dictionary**. You should be able to find at least **one** more example word for each suffix.

Clearly there are a lot of possible answers here! Discuss your list with your teacher and the rest of your class. Your teacher may list the suggestions on the board or screen.

▶ Roots

Now that you have learned about prefixes and suffixes, you are ready to spend some time roots, and specifically **root words**. Some small words often crop up as part of a bigger word. For example, the word 'act' is a word on its own but also appears in words such as 'actor', 'acting' and even 're-enact'. In each of these examples, the root 'act' means to **do** something.

4 Inclusive language

This chapter is a little different from others in the book. You will notice that there is quite a lot of text and there are fewer tasks. Before we get started, let's take some time to think about what this chapter is trying to do, and why it is important.

We already know that the words we choose are powerful. In the previous chapters, we have seen how using the right **vocabulary**, in the right way, at the right time, makes our communication clearer.

Being accurate is always important, but even more so when we are referring to personal characteristics or **identity categories**.

▶ What is inclusive language?

Words have the power to make us feel excluded or misunderstood, or accepted and included. When we are not careful, the words that we use can hurt or offend; this is something that we surely all want to avoid. We live in **diverse** communities and individuals are unique: the language we use should reflect this. In many cases, choosing the right vocabulary is about more than being accurate with meaning, spelling and grammar: we want to use **inclusive language**.

🔨 Building

This first task is just for you. You will have the chance to talk about these topics in groups later, if you feel comfortable doing so. Your teacher may ask you to think about these questions, or write down some notes in your jotter:

➤ What do you think we mean by **identity categories**?

➤ What sort of personal characteristics should we be careful about describing?

➤ What is **inclusive language**?

➤ Why is it so important?

Remember, you won't be asked to share your ideas now – and you won't need to discuss them at all, if you prefer not to.

You may find some of the ideas in this chapter new, or surprising. Thinking about these ideas, talking them through, and asking questions, is an important part of ensuring that you understand why, and how, to use language in a way that makes everyone feel included.

This chapter aims to:

➤ Make you comfortable with useful words, phrases and other elements of language used about identity categories and diverse personal characteristics

➤ Offer opportunities to think about your own identity categories and personal characteristics, and the language you would like to use about these

➤ Look into how and why some of us have faced, and face, **discrimination** based on elements of our identity

➤ Explain how the law is designed to protect us from discrimination

➤ Start a conversation about the **representation** of different identities in stories and the media.

No one expects you to read this chapter on your own. Your teacher will probably want to read it with your class, section by section. Even if there isn't a question or a task on the page, you can always stop to discuss things with your teacher. All of these topics, tasks and discussions will come together help you improve your skills in using inclusive language about yourself, and other people.

›› Useful vocabulary

We are now going to look in detail at some important words and **phrases** linked to the topic of inclusive language. Throughout this chapter, you will encounter language that is used to be inclusive, as well as language that we use to *talk about* being inclusive. We need to be able to do both.

Once you are happy with these definitions, you can use this vocabulary in your notes and discussions. Here is the first set:

Activist (noun)

A person who campaigns for social and/or political change. Activism can take many different forms.

Ally (noun)

Someone who is not a member of a group that is discriminated against but who actively works to help end oppression and injustice, amplifying the voices of those who are discriminated against before their own.

Discrimination (noun)

To discriminate is to treat certain categories or groups of people differently and unfairly on the grounds of race/ethnicity, sex, age, etc.

Diverse (adjective)

When we talk about diversity in society, we mean a mix different kinds of people, for example: people of all ages, ethnicities, and genders; people with or without disabilities.

Equality (noun)

Everyone having the same chances to do or achieve what they can. However, some people might need extra help or support in order to have those same chances.

Equity (noun)

When different levels of support are offered to different people in order to achieve a fair and impartial, or equitable, outcome.

Identity categories (noun)

This term describes the different elements that make up our personal identity. These can include, for example, gender, religion, race/ethnicity and culture.

Intersectionality (noun)

This refers to the way that someone can be disadvantaged, or have advantages, based on several different identity categories. Having advantages like this is often referred to as privilege. It may not be possible to separate a person's characteristics to talk about discrimination or privilege. For example, if a bisexual Black woman is facing discrimination, or a heterosexual white man enjoys certain privileges, this could be connected to their sexual orientation, their race/ethnicity and/or their sex.

Prejudice (noun)

An opinion that is not based on reason or experience; dislike or unfair behaviour based on such opinions. Prejudice can involve unfair generalisations, or stereotypes, about others. Prejudice often involves jumping to conclusions based on knowing, or thinking you know, just one thing about someone, for example their race/ethnicity or gender.

Privilege (noun)

A special advantage for a particular person or group. You may hear this in the context of 'white privilege' which means that, although a white person may face many struggles, their skin colour can bring them many advantages in life.

Protected characteristic (noun phrase)

Specific aspects of a person's identity that cannot legally be used to discriminate against them, for example their age or disability.

Representation (noun)

An image, model or depiction of something, including in literature, news, films and TV and other media. This is relevant to all of the different characteristics discussed in this chapter. All people should see themselves represented in stories and in the media.

›› Protected characteristics

Although it is wrong, people still face discrimination based on their identity categories. To help counter this, many **activists** and **allies** have worked to ensure we are all legally entitled to fair treatment. In the UK, a law called the Equality Act 2010 replaced previous laws about discrimination. This Act listed nine particular **protected characteristics** and made it very clear that it was against the law to discriminate against people on the basis of these characteristics.

Group task

First, your group should discuss your knowledge and awareness of discrimination in your community, society and the wider world. What kinds of discrimination have you experienced or heard reported? You don't have to talk about anything personal if you would find it difficult or upsetting.

Next, try to list what you think the nine protected characteristics are. It may help to remember that these protected characteristics are linked to identity categories, i.e. aspects of our individual identity.

Now discuss your list with your teacher and the rest of your class. Your teacher will make an overall list on the board or screen.

Once everyone has shared their ideas, look at page 114 to compare your class list with the one in the Equality Act 2010. Does anything surprise you? Are there characteristics on the official list that you did not expect? Do you think the official list misses anything out?

As you continue working through this chapter, you will think in some detail about each of the protected characteristics. In some cases, you will encounter a range of language specific to that characteristic. In others, you will be thinking more about general guidelines and things to keep in mind when talking about that topic.

›› Staying up to date

As we said on page 111, all of this will help you learn about the most inclusive language to use when you are talking about yourself, or talking to and about other people. However, it's important to note that language is always evolving, and may change according to **context**. Words and phrases can mean very different things to different people, in different places, at different times. Any **definitions** included here are only as correct as they can be at the time this book was published.

> ⤬ **Crossover**
>
> On pages 117–8, we will be looking in more detail at some examples of language that has had different meanings at different times - and can mean different things now depending on who is using it, and why.

Even if some of the words and ideas in this chapter become out of date, the work you do here will help you to develop an awareness of language and become more sensitive to how language can be used to include different people and create a kinder society.

To ensure you are being inclusive in the language you use, you should:

➤ to the best of your ability, avoid outdated, patronising, or insulting terms

➤ try to keep up to date with how language changes in these areas.

❯❯ Identity categories

Being inclusive involves being aware of your own identity categories, as well as those of others. The next activity is designed to get you thinking about your identity and some of the things that make you *you*. Once you have reflected on your own identity, you will be ready to think more deeply about identity and culture in a broader sense.

race/ethnicity
disability
sex
gender reassignment
religion or belief
age
sexual orientation
marriage and civil partnership
pregnancy and maternity

As a reminder, here is a full list of all of the characteristics that are protected in law. You may find this helpful as you think about your identity categories:

Note: This activity is for you alone and you do not need to share your thoughts, or what you write, with anyone else.
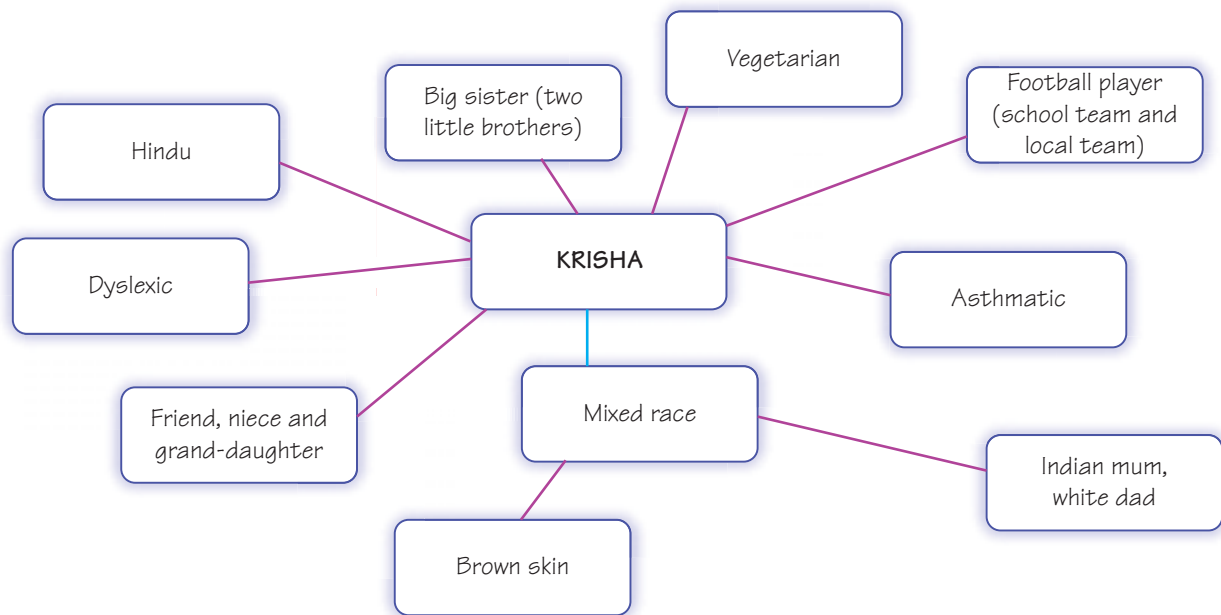
> 🔨 **Building**

Your task is to map out your own, personal identity categories. The list of characteristics protected by the Equality Act will give you a very good place to start, but you will probably want to include additional categories, ideas and aspects of who you are, particularly if they feel like a significant part of your identity. For example, are you a sibling? Do you have close friends? Are you fluent in more than one language? Do you play a sport or have a hobby?

This is a creative task and there are many ways to go about it. You might want to simply to write a list. Alternatively, you might like to put your name in the middle of a sheet of blank paper and write or draw all of the different aspects of your identity around it.

There is an example below to give you an idea of how this might look. Remember that your answers – and even how you lay them out – will probably look much different!

```
                              Vegetarian
        Big sister (two                          Football player
        little brothers)                         (school team and
Hindu                                              local team)

Dyslexic                  KRISHA
                                                  Asthmatic

Friend, niece and
grand-daughter         Mixed race
                                          Indian mum,
                                          white dad
            Brown skin
```

The reason that the task you have just done comes so early in this chapter is because learning about inclusive language is very closely linked to identity: how we see our own identity and how we see other peoples'.

When mapping out your identity in the previous task, you hopefully listed or mind-mapped a variety of different things that make you the very individual person that you are.

When thinking about our own identity categories, we may realise that we personally have certain privileges. It is also likely that many of us identify with elements different from the **default position**, or 'assumed normal'. For example, very often in our society being white is taken for granted as a default position to view the world from; so too are elements like being male, heterosexual, middle-class or a user of standard English. In reality, while our individual identity may contain all of these elements, it is very likely it will contain only some – or none at all: we may not use standard language, we might not be wealthy, we might not be heterosexual or we might not share the ethnic background of most people in the community in which we live. It is possible to that some areas of our identity come with **privilege**, and others with disadvantage. Each of us has a unique identity and our experiences of privilege and disadvantage can vary within our communities and within society.

> ## Default position (noun phrase)
> This refers to what often seems to be presented as the 'normal' or 'standard' to exist in the world. This can be driven by media; for example, many Hollywood films are made about – and by – white people. In this way, they take being white as a default position.