

Lesson 10: The Building Blocks of Language

Building the Toolbox: Bases, Prefixes, and Suffixes

Lesson Snapshot

Opening Review Word	SUNFLOWER
Primary Bridge Word	PLAYGROUND
New Tools	BASE • PREFIX • SUFFIX
Core Builds	REPLAY • PLAYFUL • GROUNDED • UNGROUNDED • HELPFUL • UNHELPFUL
Optional Practice	KIND • CARE
Established Principle	Different breaks reveal different things.

Teacher Introduction

Lesson 10 returns to the language toolbox and asks students to look at written word structure. Students already know that compound words can be taken apart into whole words:

SUN + FLOWER → SUNFLOWER
PLAY + GROUND → PLAYGROUND

This lesson adds a new question:

HOW WAS THIS WORD BUILT?

Students learn that a familiar word can serve as a **base**. A meaningful part can be added before the base or after it. Those parts are called **prefixes** and **suffixes**. The lesson begins with words children understand and lets the terminology emerge from the building.

The Teacher’s Deeper Handle

A **base** is the form being built on at a particular stage. In **PLAY + FUL → PLAYFUL**, PLAY is the base. In **UN + HELPFUL → UNHELPFUL**, HELPFUL is the base.

A **prefix** is a meaningful part added before a base. A **suffix** is a meaningful part added after a base. Prefixes and suffixes are kinds of affixes.

For children, keep the working definitions simple:

A BASE IS SOMETHING WE CAN BUILD ON.
A PREFIX IS ADDED BEFORE A BASE.

A SUFFIX IS ADDED AFTER A BASE.

The lesson is primarily about structure: **What are we building on? What was added? Where was it added?**

If students notice that the added parts affect meaning, accept the observation. Lesson 10 remains focused on: **What are we building on? What did we add? Where did we add it?** Questions about why spelling changes, what individual affixes contribute to meaning, and how bases behave in more complicated words remain open for later investigation.

NOTICE IT.

NAME WHAT WE KNOW.

LEAVE THE NEW QUESTION OPEN.

The lesson does not have to answer everything the investigation reveals.

Lesson Purpose

Students will:

- review syllable and compound-word breaks;
- identify PLAY and GROUND inside PLAYGROUND;
- use PLAY as a base;
- add a prefix before a base and a suffix after a base;
- build words in more than one stage;
- recognize that a newly built word can become the next base; and
- read and check the words they build.

SEE THE STRUCTURE.

BUILD IT.

READ IT.

USE THE TOOL.

Word-Building Reference

Build	Structure
PLAY + GROUND → PLAYGROUND	base + base → compound word
RE + PLAY → REPLAY	prefix + base
PLAY + FUL → PLAYFUL	base + suffix
GROUND + ED → GROUNDED	base + suffix
UN + GROUNDED → UNGROUNDED	prefix + new base
HELP + FUL → HELPFUL	base + suffix
UN + HELPFUL → UNHELPFUL	prefix + new base

The Repeating Teacher Move

1. Hold the base still.
2. Add one piece.
3. Ask where the piece went.
4. Name the structure.
5. Read the completed word.
6. Remove, rebuild, or build again.

The Lesson

1. Return to SUNFLOWER

After the established morning routine and class song, say:

“Investigators, we’re going back to our language toolbox. Today we’re going to add some new tools.”

Write:

SUNFLOWER

Ask: “**What word is this?**” Read it together.

Say: “**CLAP IT.**” Recover:

SUN | FLOW | ER

Then say: “**BREAK IT.**”

Ask: “**If we are looking for whole words, can we break SUNFLOWER another way?**”

SUN + FLOWER

Ask: “**What kind of word is that?**”

COMPOUND WORD.

Compare the two breaks. Ask: “**Did CLAP IT and BREAK IT give us the same thing?**”

Return briefly to the established principle:

DIFFERENT BREAKS CAN REVEAL DIFFERENT THINGS.

Move SUNFLOWER aside.

2. Introduce PLAYGROUND

Write:

PLAYGROUND

Use the familiar routine:

SEE IT. Let students look.

SAY IT. Read PLAYGROUND.

CLAP IT. Recover **PLAY | GROUND.**

BREAK IT. Ask: “**Can we find whole words inside it?**”

PLAY + GROUND

Ask: “**Can PLAY stand by itself? Can GROUND stand by itself? What kind of word is PLAYGROUND?**”

COMPOUND WORD.

Notice that the syllable break and compound break line up this time. The tools are still doing different jobs.

3. Name the Base

Keep PLAY and move GROUND aside.

Ask: **“Is PLAY already a word?”**

Then say: **“We can build other words using PLAY.”**

Write:

BASE

Say:

“A BASE IS SOMETHING WE CAN BUILD ON.”

Point to PLAY.

“PLAY is our base.”

4. Build Before PLAY

Place RE before PLAY:

RE + PLAY

Ask:

- “What stayed?”
- “What did we add?”
- “Where did we put it?”

Build and read:

REPLAY

Say: **“The part we added before the base has a name.”**

PREFIX

Give the child-facing handle:

“A PREFIX IS ADDED BEFORE A BASE.”

Ask: **“What is our base? What is our prefix?”**

5. Build After PLAY

Remove RE-. Return to PLAY. Place FUL after the base:

PLAY + FUL

Ask:

- “What stayed?”
- “What did we add?”
- “Where did it go?”

Build and read:

PLAYFUL

Say: **“The part we added after the base has a name.”**

SUFFIX

Give the child-facing handle:

“A SUFFIX IS ADDED AFTER A BASE.”

Ask: **“What is our base? What is our suffix?”**

6. Compare the Builds

Display:

PLAY + GROUND → PLAYGROUND

RE + PLAY → REPLAY

PLAY + FUL → PLAYFUL

Ask: “Where do you see **PLAY** each time? Did we build the same way every time?”

Recover:

- **PLAY + GROUND**: whole word + whole word; compound word.
- **RE + PLAY**: prefix + base.
- **PLAY + FUL**: base + suffix.

Do not yet label **GROUND** as a base. That discovery comes when the class returns to the other half of **PLAYGROUND**.

WORDS CAN BE BUILT IN DIFFERENT WAYS.

7. Return for GROUND

Go back to:

PLAY + GROUND

Ask: “**PLAY** was one whole word inside **PLAYGROUND**. What was the other?”

GROUND.

Move **PLAY** aside and keep **GROUND**.

Ask: “Can **GROUND** be something we build on too?”

Add:

GROUND + ED → GROUNDED

Ask:

- “What are we building on?”
- “What did we add?”
- “Where did it go?”
- “Prefix or suffix?”

Recover:

GROUND — base

-ED — suffix

Now keep **GROUNDED**.

Ask: “We built a new word. Can **GROUNDED** become our base now?”

Add:

UN + GROUNDED → UNGROUNDED

Recover:

GROUNDED — base for this build

UN- — prefix

Make the stages visible:

GROUND

↓ add suffix

GROUNDED

↓ new base

↓ add prefix

UNGROUNDED

A WORD WE BUILD CAN BECOME THE NEXT BASE.

8. Build in Stages — HELP

Write:

HELP

Ask: **“Can HELP be our base?”**

Place FUL after HELP:

HELP + FUL → HELPFUL

Ask: **“What was our base? What did we add? Prefix or suffix?”**

Leave HELPFUL on the board.

Ask: **“We built a new word. Can HELPFUL become our base now?”**

Place UN before HELPFUL:

UN + HELPFUL → UNHELPFUL

Ask: **“What are we building on this time? What did we add? Where did it go?”**

Make the stages visible:

HELP

↓ add suffix

HELPFUL

↓ new base

↓ add prefix

UNHELPFUL

Say:

“A WORD WE BUILD CAN BECOME THE NEXT BASE.”

9. Student Build

Create three spaces:

PREFIX BASE SUFFIX

Use word cards, magnetic pieces, or students standing in position.

Begin with KIND or CARE as the base. Offer one or two pieces at a time.

Possible builds:

UN + KIND → UNKIND

KIND + NESS → KINDNESS

CARE + FUL → CAREFUL

CARE + LESS → CARELESS

Teacher note: When we build or change words, the spelling of the base may sometimes change too. Students do not need to investigate why that happens in this lesson. If they notice it, acknowledge the observation and keep moving.

For each build, ask:

- “What is the base?”
- “What did we add?”
- “Where did it go?”
- “Prefix or suffix?”
- “Read what we built.”

If students build an unfamiliar combination, do not simply say, **“Wrong.”** Ask:

“Is that a word we know? Have we heard people use it? Can we check? Would another piece work better?”

INVESTIGATORS CHECK WHAT THEY BUILD.

10. Return to PLAYGROUND

Bring back PLAYGROUND.

Say: **“We started with PLAYGROUND and found two whole words. We tested PLAY and learned it could be a base. Then we came back and tested GROUND. It could be a base too.”**

Then rebuild:

PLAY + GROUND → PLAYGROUND

Say:

BASE + BASE → COMPOUND WORD

Explain: **“We already knew PLAYGROUND was made from two whole words. Now we also know that both words can serve as bases.”**

11. Put the Idea Back Together

Return to the language toolbox.

Ask: **“What new things can we look for now?”**

Recover: **base, prefix, suffix.**

Ask:

- “What is a base?”
- “Where does a prefix go?”
- “Where does a suffix go?”
- “Can a new word become the next base?”

Close with:

A BASE IS SOMETHING WE CAN BUILD ON.

A PREFIX IS ADDED BEFORE A BASE.

A SUFFIX IS ADDED AFTER A BASE.

A NEWLY BUILT WORD CAN BECOME THE NEXT BASE.

Teacher Language Bank

Use these as handles rather than a script.

- “What are we building on?”
- “What stayed?”
- “What did we add?”
- “Where did we add it?”
- “Before or after the base?”
- “Prefix or suffix?”
- “Take the added piece away. What is left?”
- “We built a new word. Can it become our base now?”
- “Read what we built.”

Participation Handles

Students may say, clap, point, circle, hold a card, place a word part, move magnetic pieces, write a word sum, remove an affix, rebuild a word, sort parts, or read the completed word.

PRESERVE THE FUNCTION.

Students are manipulating and investigating word structure.

Student Packet Direction

The packet should support **building, sorting, identifying, and reconstructing**. It should not primarily become a definitions worksheet.

Useful tasks:

- Break PLAYGROUND into PLAY + GROUND.
- Build RE + PLAY and identify the prefix and base.
- Build PLAY + FUL and identify the base and suffix.
- Build GROUND → GROUNDED → UNGROUNDED and identify the base at each stage.
- Build HELP → HELPFUL → UNHELPFUL and identify the base at each stage.
- Sort pieces into PREFIX, BASE, and SUFFIX.
- Build one real word and read it.

THE PAPER SHOULD NOT OVERTAKE THE DRILL.

What Becomes Available for Lesson 11

Lesson 10 establishes the physical structure:

BEFORE THE BASE.

THE BASE.

AFTER THE BASE.

Students can now identify and manipulate prefixes and suffixes. The next natural question is:

WHAT DO THESE PARTS DO?

Lesson 11 can investigate how meaningful parts contribute to the words they build.

Hold On To This

FIND THE BASE.

ADD A PIECE.

SEE WHERE IT GOES.

BUILD THE WORD.

READ WHAT YOU BUILT.

THEN SEE WHAT ELSE YOU CAN BUILD.