

4 Word formation

4.1 Suffixes

Suffixes are endings which can be added to the end of a word to modify its meaning. Not all words take suffixes.

■ **4.1.1** Some suffixes add a special meaning to the word. They often refer to size, but they can also reflect emotions, affection and intensity. They are:

Augmentative	-ón	<i>cabezón, stubborn,</i>
<i>big, great big</i>	-ote	<i>grandote, very big</i>
<i>very, extremely</i>	-ísimo	<i>carísimo, extremely expensive</i>
Diminutive	-ito/a, -illo/a, -ico/a	<i>mesita, little table</i>
<i>small, little</i>		<i>niñito, little child</i>
Pejorative	-ucha	<i>casucha, horrible house</i>
<i>horrible/bad</i>		

See 8.3 for **-ísimo** (superlatives).

■ **4.1.2** Suffixes indicate profession or occupation, or places of work:

panadero	<i>baker</i>
zapatería	<i>shoe shop</i>

4.2 Prefixes

Prefixes go before the word and also give extra meaning to it. They can be added to verbs, nouns and adjectives:

superdotado	<i>brainy</i>
antibelicista	<i>conscientious objector</i>
exmarido	<i>ex-husband</i>

5 The definite article

Articles are words that accompany nouns and go before them. They give a more concrete meaning to a noun. In English the definite article is *the*. In Spanish, articles show whether nouns are feminine or masculine, and singular or plural. This is very useful when the endings of the nouns are not obvious.

5.1 Form and meaning

■ **5.1.1** In Spanish there are four different words for *the*. There is also a neuter article **lo** (for uses of **lo** see 5.4).

		Definite article (<i>the</i>)		
		masculine	feminine	neuter
singular	el		la	lo
plural	los		las	

El restaurante está cerrado.	<i>The restaurant is closed.</i>
La estación está a la derecha.	<i>The station is on the right.</i>
Los chicos están en la calle.	<i>The boys are in the street.</i>
Las bebidas están servidas.	<i>The drinks are served.</i>

■ **5.1.2** **El** can be used with feminine nouns instead of **la** when these start with the stressed vowel **a** or **ha** (note the **h** is silent):

El agua está fría.	<i>The water is cold.</i>
El hambre es una lacra de nuestra sociedad.	<i>Hunger is a disease of our society.</i>

This does not happen in the plural when **las** is used:

Las aguas de este río están contaminadas.	<i>The water in this river is polluted.</i>
--	---