

Word Study: Conference

A good word to study with which students will likely be familiar and which will expose them to many different prefixes is 'conference.'

1. What does it mean?

Conference: A formal meeting or discussion

2. What are the letters doing?

The final replaceable 'e' and all the reasons why it is used will be covered in detail in a later activity, but for now, have students consider how this word would be pronounced if the 'e' were not there. The final 'e' clearly changes the pronunciation of the 'c' before it.

Further, if a vowel suffix were to be added, like '-ing,' the final e would be removed as that suffix would fulfill the same need.

3. How is it built?

Once again, have students look the end first to see if they can identify any common suffixes that can be isolated. In this case, the suffix '-ence' can be peeled off.

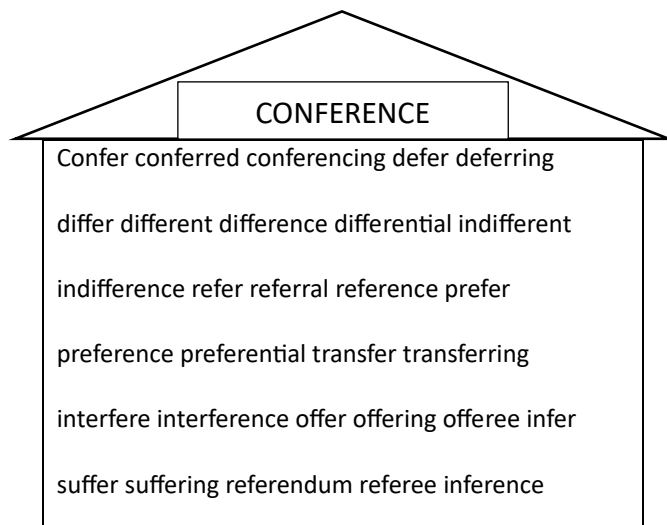
At this point, hopefully a bit of experience will kick in because if not, students might be inclined to remove the '-er' calling it a second suffix. However, they should see that would leave just 'conf' which is impossible to break down morphologically.

The con- prefix is once again active as was the case in the last word study on 'contract,' so hopefully they recognize that. 'Conference' is built like this:

con + fer(e) + ence → conference

4. What is its family?

For this question, encourage students to focus on brainstorming words with a variety of prefixes



As a reminder, the initial word used in a study should be relatively accessible with the goal being to build bridges to less common words but still ones that students are ready to add to their working vocabulary.

The base 'fer(e)' carries the feeling of 'carry, bring, or bear.' The replaceable 'e' must be included in the word sum even though it is rarely used in full spellings of words in the family (interfere).

The prefix con- carries the meaning of 'together or with,' and the suffix -ence carries the meaning of 'act or condition of,' so given the meanings of its morphemes, the meaning of the whole word makes sense.

