Noun Formation

CEFR C2 · Nominalization at the limits: morphology, productivity, corpus and style
WS1 Morphology & Productivity · WS2 Corpus, Register & Variation · WS3 Coinage, Stance & Style · WS4 Scholarly Analysis & Writing · Answer Key

Worksheet 1: Morphology & Productivity

Name: _____ Date: _____ Level: C2 (CEFR)

Reference: How Noun-Forming Suffixes Behave

Noun-deriving suffixes differ in **productivity**, **base selection** (Latinate vs Germanic; verb vs adjective vs noun), and phonology. **-ness** is maximally productive and stress-neutral, attaching to almost any adjective; **-ity** is Latinate-restricted and stress-shifting; **-th** is frozen. **-tion** is highly productive on Latinate verbs; **-al** (nominal) is semi-productive. Constraints include **blocking**, **allomorphy** (*-ic* → *-icity*), and the **Latinate restriction**.

Suffix	Productivity / base	Note
-ness	very high; any adjective; native	stress-neutral (HAPpiness)
-ity	high but Latinate-only	stress-shifting (aBILity); allomorphy
-tion/-ation	very high on Latinate verbs	stress-shifting (organiZAtion)
-th	frozen	warmth, width — coins nothing
-ment	declining productivity	mostly established forms

Part A – Theoretical Analysis

1. Contrast **-ness** and **-ity** on productivity, base selection and stress. Why can we coin *Zoom-ness* or *meh-ness* freely but not **Zoomity*? Refer to the Latinate restriction and stress-neutrality.
2. Explain **allomorphy** in *-ity* derivations: *electric* → *electricity*, *opaque* → *opacity*. What conditions the base alternation, and how does it interact with class-1 suffixation?
3. **-tion** nominalizations often permit an argument structure (*the destruction of the city by the army*). Analyse how such "complex event nominals" retain verb-like properties, and what this implies for the verb–noun boundary.

Score: _____ / 20

Worksheet 2: Corpus, Register & Variation

Name: _____ *Date:* _____ *Level: C2 (CEFR)*

Reference: What Corpora Reveal

Corpus data show that **-tion/-ity/-ment** nominalizations cluster in academic, scientific, bureaucratic and legal registers — indeed, nominalization density is a classic marker of "informational" (vs "involved") production. **-ness** spreads across all registers and coins freely in speech and social media (*the whateverness of it*). **-ism** proliferates in political and critical discourse, often pejoratively (*-ism* as an accusation). Productivity is measurable via hapax legomena.

Register	Favoured nominalizers	Example
Academic / scientific	-tion, -ity, -ance	quantification, elasticity
Legal / bureaucratic	-tion, -ment, -al	termination, remittal
Political / critical	-ism	populism, whataboutism
Informal / spoken	-ness (nonce)	the meh-ness of it all
Productivity proxy	hapax / neologism count	-ness, -ism coin freely

Part A – Diagnose Register & Productivity

#	Noun in context	Register / productivity note
1	the quantification of uncertainty	
2	the sheer meh-ness of the sequel	
3	critics decried its whataboutism	
4	upon termination of the agreement	

Part B – Rate the Coinage

For each nonce noun, say whether the suffix licenses it and how transparent it is.

1. scrollability _____
2. nowness _____
3. *explainity _____

Part C – Register-Corpus Map

Place each in its most likely corpus: *remittal* · *togetherness* · *elasticity* · *doomerism* · *findability*

Corpus	Forms
Legal / bureaucratic	
Academic / scientific	
Political / critical	

Tech / media (neologism)	
Informal / everyday	

Score: _____ / 25

Worksheet 3: Coinage, Stance & Style

Name: _____ Date: _____ Level: C2 (CEFR)

Reference: Nominalization as a Rhetorical Resource

Coined nouns do rhetorical work: transparent **-ness/-ity** abstractions compress and intellectualise; **-ism** coinages label and often condemn a tendency (*whataboutism, doomerism*); reifying nominalizations turn processes into debatable "things" (*the productivity problem*). The C2 writer coins forms a reader accepts effortlessly, exploits nominalization for cohesion and stance, and can diagnose reification in others' prose.

Device	Effect	Example
-ness / -ity (nonce)	compression, abstraction	the nowness of live TV
-ism (coinage)	labels & often condemns	whataboutism, solutionism
reifying nominalization	process → contestable thing	the immigration question
-tion for cohesion	packs prior clause as theme	…prices rose. This inflation…

Part A – Interpret the Coinage

1. "the relentless solutionism of tech culture" _____
2. "a strange nowness pervaded the footage" _____
3. "the framing reduced it to the migration problem" _____
4. "prices climbed; this escalation alarmed markets" _____

Part B – Coin with Control

Coin a transparent noun for each meaning and name the suffix.

1. (the quality of being easy to find) → _____
2. (the belief that every problem has a tech fix) → _____
3. (the state of being "in the present") → _____

Part C – Diagnose the Reification

Explain how the nominalization turns a debate into a "thing", and rewrite to restore the agents and the action.

> *The normalisation of surveillance and the erosion of privacy have produced widespread resignation.*

_____

Score: _____ / 30

Worksheet 4: Scholarly Analysis & Writing

Name: _____ Date: _____ Level: C2 (CEFR)

Part A – Critical Text Analysis

There is a paradox at the heart of nominalization: the device that gives a language its capacity for abstraction is the same one that lets it evade. To speak of the acceleration of change is to grant change a life of its own, independent of anyone who might be accelerating it; the -tion, in packaging a process as a thing, quietly deletes the doer. Yet without such packaging there could be no science of change at all, no generalisation, no theory — only an endless recitation of who did what to whom. The abstraction is the achievement; the evasion is its shadow.

1. Identify every nominalization (including complex event nominals) and give the source verb or adjective for each.
2. "the acceleration of change … deletes the doer" — analyse how the -tion nominal achieves this, and de-nominalize to restore agency.
3. The passage argues abstraction and evasion "share one root". Reconstruct and evaluate the argument with reference to complex event nominals.
4. Assess how the passage's own dense nominalization enacts — and thereby demonstrates — its thesis.

Part B – Extended Scholarly Writing

Write the opening two paragraphs (220–260 words) of a scholarly essay on: "Nominalization is the engine of abstraction and the instrument of evasion — and grammar cannot tell the two apart." Requirements — include and underline: (1) one **complex event nominal** retaining argument structure (e.g. *the X of Y by Z*); (2) one **-ness** coinage you justify; (3) one **Latinate -ity** derivative with correct stress/allomorphy; (4) one precise **metalinguistic term** (nominalization, productivity, allomorphy, reification, complex event nominal, Latinate) used correctly; (5) two **epistemic hedges** calibrated to each claim; (6) one **conjunct** that maps the argument's logic precisely.

#	Line
1	
2	
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7	
8	

Features: _____ / 6 Word count: _____ Score: _____ / 35

Answer Key & Teacher Notes

For teacher use only — C2 Level, Noun Formation

Worksheet 1 – Part A (model)

1 -ness is maximally productive, stress-neutral, and attaches to virtually any adjective regardless of etymology, so it coins nonce abstractions freely (Zoom-ness, meh-ness); -ity is highly productive but restricted to (mostly) Latinate bases and is stress-shifting, so it resists native/novel bases — hence *Zoomity is blocked while Zoom-ness is fine. · 2 -ity is a class-1 (stress-shifting) suffix that triggers base allomorphy: -ic → -icity (electric→electricity), and vowel/consonant alternations (opaque [eɪ] → opacity [æ]). The alternation is phonologically conditioned by the Latinate stratum and the stress-shift that -ity imposes on the base. · 3 Complex event nominals (the destruction of the city by the army) retain the verb's argument structure: an object (of the city) and an agent (by the army), plus aspectual/adverbial modification (its rapid destruction). This shows nominalization preserves predicate-argument relations, blurring the verb–noun boundary: the noun still "means" an event with participants, not a concrete thing.

Worksheet 2 – Part A (model)

1 academic/scientific — -tion + -ty, informational density. · 2 informal/media — nonce -ness (meh-ness). · 3 political/critical — -ism (whataboutism), pejorative. · 4 legal — termination, formulaic.

Worksheet 2 – Part B (model)

1 scrollability — licensed (-able→-ity chain on a coined base); transparent though jargonish. · 2 nowness — licensed (-ness attaches even to a non-adjective for effect); transparent, marked. · 3 *explainity — ill-formed: -ity needs an adjective/Latinate base, not the verb "explain" (cf. explanation, explicability).

Worksheet 2 – Part C

Legal/bureaucratic: remittal. · Academic: elasticity. · Political/critical: doomerism. · Tech/media: findability. · Informal/everyday: togetherness.

Worksheet 3 – Part A (model)

1 -ism labels and condemns a tendency (the ideology that everything needs a tech "solution"). · 2 -ness coins an abstract quality (the quality of feeling present/immediate); marked, evocative. · 3 reification — "the migration problem" packages a contested issue as a single thing. · 4 -tion ("escalation") packs the prior clause as the theme of the next, aiding cohesion.

Worksheet 3 – Part B (model)

1 findability (-ability/-ity) · 2 solutionism (-ism) · 3 nowness / presentness (-ness).

Worksheet 3 – Part C (model)

"Normalisation", "erosion" and "resignation" turn ongoing, agent-driven actions into fixed things and delete who is doing them. Restored: "As companies and governments normalise surveillance and erode privacy, people increasingly give up resisting." Annotate each nominal → clause with a restored agent.

Worksheet 4 – Part A (model)

1 nominalization (nominalize), abstraction (abstract), acceleration (accelerate), generalisation (generalise), recitation (recite), packaging (package), evasion (evade), achievement (achieve). "the acceleration of change" is a complex event nominal (retains the object "of change"). · 2 The -tion noun turns "X accelerates change" into "the acceleration of change", dropping the subject X

entirely; only "of change" (the object) survives, so no agent is expressed. De-nominalized: "someone/something is accelerating change" restores the doer. · 3 Argument: the same operation that lets us package a process as a manipulable abstraction (enabling theory/science) also, by that packaging, deletes the agent (enabling evasion); complex event nominals show both at once — they keep the event but can omit the agent. Sound, though a critic might note agents can be reinstated (…by Z), so evasion is optional, not entailed. · 4 The passage is itself densely nominalized (acceleration, abstraction, generalisation, evasion), performing the abstraction it praises and the agent-deletion it warns of — self-exemplifying, and mild evidence for the thesis.

Worksheet 4 – Part B: Marking Rubric

Criterion	Descriptor at C2	Marks
Complex event nominal	Argument structure retained, correct	0–5
-ness coinage	Justified, transparent	0–5
Latinate -ity derivative	Stress/allomorphy handled correctly	0–5
Metalinguistic accuracy	Term used correctly, no overclaiming	0–5
Epistemic calibration	Two hedges matched to claim strength	0–5
Argument & length	220–260 words; contestable claim developed	0–5

The C2 benchmark is conscious control of nominalization: a student who deploys a complex event nominal and can explain, in a footnote, how it retains argument structure while optionally deleting the agent has demonstrated mastery.