Verb Formation

CEFR C1 · Suffix choice, connotation and register
WS1 Near-Synonymous Suffixes · WS2 Connotation & Register · WS3 Conversion, Blocking & Nuance · WS4 Critical Analysis & Writing · Answer Key

Worksheet 1: Near-Synonymous Suffixes

Name: _____ *Date:* _____ *Level: C1 (CEFR)*

Reference: Rival Verb-Makers, Divided Meanings

Where two verb suffixes could apply, they often split by meaning or register: **-ise/-ize** (make into / conform to a system) vs **-ify** (make / render) vs **-ate** (cause / act on). Some pairs have distinct senses (*humanise* vs *humanify*?), some are register-marked (*-ise* often bureaucratic), and some rivals are simply blocked. Precise selection is a mark of advanced control.

Contrast	Distinction	Example
-ise / -ify	systematise vs render	standardise vs clarify
-ise / -ate	make-into vs cause/act	activise? → activate; formalise vs formulate
en- / -en	put into vs make-more	enlarge vs widen
-ify (make) / -ify (fill with)	two senses	clarify (make clear) / glorify (fill with glory)
register	-ise often institutional	prioritise, incentivise, operationalise

Part A – Choose with Precision

1. to make a process official/standard → _____ (formal → -ise)
2. to work out / express in a formula → _____ (formula → -ate)
3. to make something larger → _____ (large → en-)
4. to make wider → _____ (wide → -en)
5. to make (a text) clear → _____ (clear → -ify)

Part B – Explain the Split

#	Pair	Difference
1	formalise / formulate	
2	enlarge / widen	
3	classify / class	

Score: _____ / 20

Worksheet 2: Connotation & Register

Name: _____ Date: _____ Level: C1 (CEFR)

Reference: Coined Verbs Carry a Tone

Newly derived verbs — especially in **-ise** — often sound bureaucratic, technical, or even pejorative (*incentivise, operationalise, weaponise*). Some are neutral and established (*organise, realise*); others are marked as jargon or attract criticism. **-ify** can sound playful or informal (*fancify, uglify*). C1 users match the derived verb to register and know which coinages carry baggage.

Register / tone	Verbs	Comment
Neutral / established	organise, realise, identify	unremarkable
Institutional / jargon	incentivise, operationalise	management/policy register
Pejorative / loaded	weaponise, politicise, sanitise	often critical
Playful / informal	fancify, prettify, zombify	colloquial, humorous

Part A – Neutral, Jargon, Loaded, or Playful?

#	Verb in context	Register/tone + why
1	The debate has been thoroughly politicised.	
2	We aim to operationalise the framework.	
3	They've prettified the old station.	
4	Please organise the files.	

Part B – Choose for Register

1. (policy document) The scheme aims to _____ good behaviour. (reward / incentivise)
2. (neutral) Could you _____ the meeting? (set up / organise)
3. (critical essay) The report tries to _____ the failures. (hide / sanitise)

Part C – Flag the Loaded Verb

Rewrite neutrally to remove the loaded connotation.

1. The issue has been weaponised by both sides. → _____
2. The account was sanitised before release. → _____

Score: ____ / 25

Worksheet 3: Conversion, Blocking & Nuance

Name: _____ *Date:* _____ *Level: C1 (CEFR)*

Reference: Zero-Derivation and Its Limits

Conversion (verbing a noun) is highly productive in English (*to platform, to onboard, to gaslight*), but constrained: an existing derived verb often **blocks** a converted rival (**to strong* is blocked by *strengthen*). Some conversions are lexicalised and neutral (*to email*); others read as jargon or slang. C1 users recognise which conversions are accepted and which will jar.

Phenomenon	Explanation	Example
Productive conversion	noun → verb, no affix	to platform, to onboard
Blocking	existing verb bars conversion	*to strong → strengthen
Lexicalisation	conversion becomes neutral	to email, to host, to text
Register jarring	conversion reads as jargon	to architect, to action, to leverage
Semantic drift	verb sense diverges	to friend / to unfriend (social media)

Part A – Accepted or Jarring?

#	Converted verb	Accepted / jarring + why
1	to email a colleague	
2	to action the request	
3	to host an event	
4	to architect a solution	

Part B – What Blocks the Conversion?

Give the established verb that blocks the starred conversion.

1. *to strong → _____
2. *to wide → _____
3. *to deep → _____

Part C – Register Repair

Replace the jargon conversion with an established verb or phrase.

1. We will action your feedback. → _____
2. Let's leverage our network. → _____
3. They architected a new system. → _____

Score: _____ / 30

Worksheet 4: Critical Analysis & Writing

Name: _____ Date: _____ Level: C1 (CEFR)

Part A – Critical Reading

English makes verbs with a promiscuous ease. It suffixes them (prioritise, diversify), prefixes them (deregulate, outsource), and — most freely of all — simply converts a noun where no verb existed: to platform, to onboard, to gaslight. The last of these is the language's growing edge, and also its battleground. To some, action as a verb or leverage as a verb is a useful compression; to others it is management cant, a way of sounding busy while saying little. The suffix -ise attracts the same suspicion: to operationalise is either to make usable or to obscure, depending on who is listening.

1. Identify each derived verb and classify it by process (suffixation, prefixation, conversion).
2. The writer calls conversion the language's "growing edge" and "battleground". Unpack both metaphors.
3. Analyse why *-ise* coinages "attract suspicion". Is the objection linguistic or stylistic?
4. Evaluate: "a useful compression" vs "management cant". Can the same derived verb be both?

Part B – Extended Analytical Writing

Write a formal analytical paragraph of 160–200 words on: "The ease with which English coins verbs is both its strength and its curse." You must include and underline: (1) one **-ise/-ify/-ate** suffix verb used precisely; (2) one **prefix verb** with a clear semantic contribution; (3) one **converted verb** discussed for register; (4) one **blocked or jarring** coinage named as such; (5) two **epistemic hedges** calibrated to claim strength.

#	Line
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	
7	
8	

Features: _____ / 5 Word count: _____ Score: _____ / 35

Answer Key & Teacher Notes

For teacher use only — C1 Level, Verb Formation

Worksheet 1 – Part A

1 formalise · 2 formulate · 3 enlarge · 4 widen · 5 clarify

Worksheet 1 – Part B (model)

1 formalise = make official/standard; formulate = express precisely / devise (a plan, theory). · 2 enlarge = make bigger (general, often physical/photographic); widen = make wider specifically (side to side, or figuratively "widen the gap"). · 3 classify = sort into classes (verb, -ify); "class" as a verb is rare/archaic — classify is the established form.

Worksheet 2 – Part A (model)

1 loaded/pejorative — implies distortion for political ends. · 2 institutional jargon — management register. · 3 playful/informal — colloquial coinage. · 4 neutral — established.

Worksheet 2 – Part B

1 incentivise · 2 organise · 3 sanitise

Worksheet 2 – Part C (model)

1 …has been exploited for advantage by both sides. · 2 The account was edited/cleaned up (to remove awkward details) before release.

Worksheet 3 – Part A (model)

1 accepted — lexicalised, neutral. · 2 jarring — "action" as a verb is management jargon. · 3 accepted — established. · 4 jarring — "architect" as a verb reads as corporate coinage (use "design").

Worksheet 3 – Part B

1 strengthen · 2 widen · 3 deepen

Worksheet 3 – Part C (model)

1 We will act on / address your feedback. · 2 Let's make use of / draw on our network. · 3 They designed a new system.

Worksheet 4 – Part A (model)

1 prioritise/diversify/operationalise (suffixation), deregulate/outsource (prefixation), to platform/onboard/gaslight/action/leverage (conversion). · 2 "growing edge" = the most active site of change/innovation in the lexicon; "battleground" = the site of usage disputes (prescriptivists vs innovators). Both cast conversion as where the language is most alive and most contested. · 3 The objection is largely stylistic/sociolinguistic: -ise coinages are morphologically well-formed, so the suspicion targets their association with jargon and evasive institutional speech, not their grammar. · 4 Yes: the same form (operationalise, leverage) can compress a real meaning economically in one context and serve as empty buzzword in another; register and intent, not the morphology, decide.

Worksheet 4 – Part B: Marking Rubric

Criterion	Descriptor	Marks

Suffix verb	-ise/-ify/-ate used precisely	0–5
Prefix verb	Clear semantic contribution	0–5
Converted verb	Register discussed	0–5
Blocked/jarring coinage	Identified as such	0–5
Argument & length	160–200 words; developed with hedges	0–5