Suffixes: -er and -est

Getting Ready

Ask students to find the Reading Rods® base word wash and the suffix er. Have them build washer. Demonstrate how to figure out the meaning of washer by examining its word parts. Take off the suffix, read the base word, and reattach er, concluding that washer must mean “someone or something that can wash.” In order to confirm your definition, use the word in a sentence. [I looked up and saw the window washer on the outside of the building.] Point out that washer is a noun in the sentence. By adding er, you changed the verb wash into the noun washer.

Have students find soft and build softer. Work with students to figure out the meaning of softer by examining its word parts. ["more soft"] Encourage them to use the word orally in sentences to check the definition. [This new towel is softer than my old one.] Inform students that soft is an adjective in their sentences. When they added er to the adjective soft, it stayed an adjective. Explain that softer is called a comparative adjective. It compares one thing with another. Adjectives that compare more than two things are called superlative adjectives.

Inform students that, in this activity, they will make and use nouns and adjectives by adding -er and -est to base words.

Exploring the Concept

Ask students to add est to wash and soft. Have them share their observations about the words they formed. Are the new words real? [Softest is real; washest is not real.] Inform them that -est can only be added to adjectives. Challenge a volunteer to use softest in a sentence. [Which animal is softest: a kitten, a turtle, or a lizard?] Point out that softest describes a noun, so it is an adjective in the sentence. As a class, conclude that softest is a superlative adjective because it compares more than two animals.

Assist students as they add er and est to stop, help, and kind. Remind them to double the final consonant in stop when adding ed and ing. Ask them if they should do the same for er and est. [Yes, because these suffixes also begin with a vowel.] If necessary, show students how to use a blue consonant Reading Rod to double the final p. Encourage students to use each new word in a sentence. Have students check whether each new word they formed is a noun or an adjective.

Note: ◼ indicates a nonsense word that students may form with the given rods.
Invite students to make as many -er words as they can. Have them sort their words as they record them, putting nouns in one column and adjectives in another. Encourage them to use each word in a sentence to determine its part of speech. When they are done, take a poll to see who made the most nouns and the most adjectives.

Assessing Understanding
Ask students to generate five new adjectives and five new nouns ending in -er. Inquire about their strategies as they work. Ask how they identified the parts of speech of selected words.

Extending the Activity
Add the Suffixes -er and -est Display page 6 of the Prefixes, Suffixes, and Root Words Flipbook and the listed Reading Rods in a language arts center for independent practice. Use the activity to give students more practice building words with er and est, such as kinder, kindest, friendlier, and friendliest. As students record the words, they can sort them into pairs of related words. Have them select and use words in a story.

Reading Rods Trains Invite students to build two Reading Rods trains with their green rods. First, ask them to connect base words that form nouns when er is added. Then ask them to dismantle their rods and build a train from base words that form adjectives with er. If in doubt about a base word, students can apply the following -est test: You can only attach -est to an adjective. See who can make the longest train for each category.

Word List

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>noun</th>
<th>verb</th>
<th>adjective</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>helper</td>
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