## Root words

A **root word** is a word that has nothing added at the beginning or the end. It is a freestanding word with its own meaning. New words can be made from root words by adding beginnings (prefixes) and endings (suffixes).

> **A root word is a real word and you can make new words from it by adding prefixes and suffixes.**

For example, **clear** is a root word. By adding prefixes and suffixes you can make these new words:

un**clear**, **clear**ly, **clear**ed.

All of these words have developed from their **root word**. They share parts of the same spelling and they are linked in terms of meaning. Together, they are known as a **word family**.

> **In a word family the spelling and meaning of all the words are linked.**

Root words are helpful because:

- You can use a root word to help you with spellings.
- If you recognise the root of a word when you are reading it can help you to work out what the word means.

There are spelling rules for adding suffixes and prefixes to root words.
**To find out more about these topics look at the Prefixes and Suffixes factsheets.**

Here are some more examples of root words and their word families:

**use**: **use**less, **us**able, **use**d, **us**ing, **use**r, mis**use**

**employ**: **employ**ment, un**employ**ment, **employ**er, **employ**ee, **employ**ing

**manage**: **manage**r, **manag**ing, **manage**s, **manage**able, un**manage**able

**beauty**: **beaut**iful, **beaut**ifully, **beaut**ician

**faith**: **faith**ful, **faith**fully, un**faith**ful, un**faith**fully