Helping your child with suffixes: -ful and -less

Key points

- A suffix is a group of letters added to the end of a word to change its meaning.
- Adding '-ful' to a noun (a naming word) usually means 'full of' that thing, such as 'colourful'.
- Adding '-less' to a noun usually means 'without' that thing, such as 'colourless'.
- These two suffixes often create opposite meanings, like 'careful' and 'careless'.
- When adding these suffixes, we only use one 'l' in '-ful', even though the word 'full' has two.
- Your child's teacher can tell you exactly how these are being taught in your school's spelling lessons.

Things to try at home

- Play a 'spot the opposite' game while reading a story, looking for words ending in -ful and -less.
- While tidying up, talk about being 'helpful' and imagine what a 'helpless' robot might look like.
- Look at colourful objects around the house and imagine what they would look like if they were 'colourless'.
- Use a piece of paper to 'build' a word by writing a noun and then swapping the suffix endings.

Find out more

- Your child's class teacher
- The GOV.UK website for National Curriculum guidance
- Your school's literacy or spelling policy