

Ling. 120

English De-adjectival Verbs in -en

English has a number of adjective-verb pairs where the verb is derived from the adjective by suffixation of *-en*. Where the adjective means "X," most verbs derived in this way can be used either transitively, with the meaning "make X" or "make X-er," or intransitively, with the meaning "become X" or "become X-er." For example, "redden" means "make red/redder" or "become red/redder."

Only a relatively small number of English adjectives have corresponding verbs derived in this way. Two conditions must hold in order for it to be possible to derive a verb with the appropriate meaning from an adjective by suffixation of *-en*. Your task in this problem is to figure out what these two conditions are.

<u>Adj</u>	<u>Derived Vb</u>	<u>Imposs Vb</u>	<u>Adj</u>	<u>Derived Vb</u>	<u>Imposs Vb</u>
black	blacken		cheap	cheapen	
red	redden		expensive		*expensiven
white	whiten		light	lighten	
blue		*bluen	heavy		*heavyen
green		*greenen	broad	broaden	
brown		*brownen	wide	widen	
			narrow		*narrowen
purple		*purplen	straight	straighten	
teal		*tealen	crooked		*crookeden
turquoise		*turquoisen	damp	dampen	
stiff	stiffen		moist	moisten	
tight	tighten		humid		*humiden
loose	loosen		dry		*dryen
bright	brighten		worse	worsen	
dark	darken		better		*betteren
sweet	sweeten		flat	flatten	
sour		*souren	short	shorten	
sharp	sharpen		deep	deepen	
dull		*dullen	shallow		*shallowen
thick	thicken		calm		*calmen
thin		*thinmen	sad	sadden	
fat	fatten		morose		*morosen
slim		*slimmen	gloomy		*gloomyen
obese		*obesen	glad	gladden	
deaf	deafen		happy		*happyen
sick	sicken		less	lessen	
well		*wellen	more		*moren
healthy		*healthyen	dead	deaden	

Some more restricted de-adjectival verbs in -en

Some verbs derived from adjectives by suffixation of *-en* are more restricted in their use, occurring most naturally with the particle *up*, e.g. *wisen up*. They are subject to the same two constraints as other de-adjectival verbs derived by suffixation of *-en*.

<u>Adjective</u>	<u>Derived Verb</u>	<u>Impossible Verb</u>	<u>Use with <i>up</i></u>
wise	wisen		wisen up
smart	smarten		smarten up
dumb		*dumben	*dumben up
stupid		*stupiden	*stupiden up
live	liven		liven up
alive		*aliven	*aliven up
fresh	freshen		freshen up
stale		*stalen	*stalen up

Your task

What are the two conditions that adjectives must satisfy in order to be converted into verbs by suffixation with *-en*? The two conditions that you are to discover allow all the well-formed *-en* verbs and rule out all the impossible ones above.

These two conditions are *necessary* but not *sufficient* conditions for an adjective to undergo suffixation with *-en* to derive a verb. That is, the two conditions must hold in order for a verb to be derived from an adjective by suffixation of *-en*, but not all adjectives that meet these two conditions can be suffixed with *-en* to derive such a verb.