

English: Verbs ending with -en

Some English verbs, usually made from adjectives or nouns, end with *-en*, and they mean “to increase something”. Here are some examples:

- lengthen = to make longer
- shorten = to make shorter
- straighten = to make straighter
- fatten = to make fatter
- darken = to make darker
- whiten = to make whiter
- harden = to make harder
- soften = to make softer
- thicken = to make thicker
- ripen = to make riper
- sweeten = to make sweeter
- worsen = to make worse
- strengthen = to make stronger
- weaken = to make weaker
- tighten = to make tighter
- loosen = to make looser

Interestingly, some of these verbs start with “en” in Portuguese:

encurtar
endireitar
engordar
endurecer
engrossar
enfraquecer

These are all “*ergative*” verbs, which means they can be *transitive* or *intransitive*. Also, they are all regular verbs (simply add ‘ed’ for the past tenses). For example:

- The sun ripened the fruit. (to ripen – transitive: object – the fruit)
- The fruit ripened quickly in the sun. (to ripen – intransitive: no object)

Note that these verbs have nothing to do with the past participles of some irregular verbs such as *break/broken*, *choose/chosen*, *drive/driven*, *eat/eaten*, etc.

Nouns/Actors

Some of these verbs can be used to define an ‘actor’ - something or somebody who executes an action. Here are some examples:

Adjective	Verb (+ 'en')	Noun/Actor (+ 'er')	Translation
damp	dampen	dampener	<i>amortecedor</i>
hard	harden	hardener	<i>endurecedor</i>
moist	moisten	moistener	<i>hidratante</i>
soft	soften	softener	<i>amaciante</i>
straight	straighten	straightener	<i>alisador</i>
sweet	sweeten	sweetener	<i>adoçante</i>
white	whiten	whitener	<i>branqueador</i>
wide	widen	widener	<i>alargador</i>
sharp	sharpen	sharpener	<i>apontador/afiador</i>

Exercise 1. Use these verbs to complete the sentences, conjugating as necessary:

darken	fatten	harden	lengthen
lessen	quicken	tighten	loosen
sharpen	shorten	strengthen	sweeten
thicken	widen	whiten	worsen

1. Can you pass me a screwdriver? I need to _____ these screws.
2. You can _____ the effect of jet lag by drinking a lot of water.
3. Is there something I can buy to _____ my teeth?
4. I need to _____ my pencils.
5. I need to _____ these pants, they're too long.
6. You can use honey as a healthy way to _____ your food.
7. While the papier-mâché dries, it _____ .
8. Heat the sauce gently until it _____ like porridge.
9. The economic situation was _____ by the pandemic.
10. These exercises will _____ your biceps.
11. The farmer feeds the pigs with high protein food to _____ them.
12. Can you please _____ my shorts by 2cm? They are too short for me.
13. The speed of the river _____ as the storm approached.
14. He _____ the earth with a spade before planting the trees.
15. At 2pm yesterday, the rain-clouds _____ the city.
16. The council is _____ the road because it carries a lot of traffic.

Note: Many English verbs also start with "en". See next page.

English: Verbs starting with *-en*

Many English verbs start with *-en*. They usually mean “to change a characteristic of something or somebody in a specific way”. Here are some examples:

- enable = to give somebody the means or knowledge to do something
- encircle = to form a circle around somebody/something
- encode = to convert something into code
- encourage = to persuade somebody to do something beneficial
- encrypt = to convert something into a cipher for security purposes
- endanger = to expose somebody to danger
- enforce = to impose obedience
- enhance = to improve something, adding to its value or usability
- enjoy = to like an event or activity
- enlarge = to make something bigger
- enlighten = to give spiritual or intellectual insight
- enrich = to make somebody or something richer

These are transitive verbs, meaning that they must have an object. Also, they are all regular verbs (simply add ‘ed’ for the past tenses). For example:

- John **encouraged** his son to study hard.
- They **endangered** their children by not using seatbelts.
- The eye-drops **enlarged** his pupils.

Exercise 2. Use the verbs above to complete the sentences, conjugating as necessary.

1. The King’s army _____ the enemy’s castle before dusk.
2. Watching documentaries is a good way to _____ your knowledge about the world.
3. A teacher must _____ the school rules, otherwise chaos would quickly follow.
4. WhatsApp automatically _____ messages before they are sent.
5. The retreat that I attended last weekend has _____ my life!
6. Computerization should _____ us to cut production costs by half.
7. We need to _____ the doorway, because the new sofa is enormous, and it certainly won’t fit through the existing doorway.
8. I need you to _____ the new subroutine before Friday.
9. I use glasses to _____ my eyesight when I’m driving at night.
10. The giant panda is an _____ species.