Morphology is the linguistic study of words. We can distinguish two meanings of 'word':

- The big notion (lexemes):
  - notion of something we can look up in a dictionary. Lexicographers describe words as **the largest unpredictable combination of form and meaning.** In this context words are *lexemes* or *lexical items* which comprise a *lexicon* (dictionary)
- The smaller notion (morphemes):
  - morphemes are the **smallest unpredictable combinations of form and meaning**. Linguists call these units morphemes and the study of them is morphology

For example *RABBIT HOLE* when viewed as a lexeme is a single word. We have used spaces but we could have used a hyphen to separate the words. In German, compound words are simply squashed together with no space. Viewed morphologically, it actually comprises two morphemes *RABBIT* and *HOLE* (which also have several meanings) which together make up a larger morpheme.

In contrast DEEP and HOLE are both lexemes but DEEPHOLE is not.

Consider now FALLING. This is a single lexeme yet it comprises two morphemes. In contrast to RABBIT HOLE both morphemes (FALL and ING) are not lexemes (only FALL is) however ING does have a meaning, denoting the duration of a process or some related modification of a verb.