



Word Formation

Affixes (Prefixes & Suffixes)

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Prefixes

A prefix is a letter or a group of letters that attaches to the beginning of a word and helps to indicate or modify its meaning. An easy example would be the word 'prefix' itself! It begins with the prefix *pre-*, which means '**before**'.

It is quite important to understand what different prefixes mean as they can help to understand the meanings of any new vocabulary that you learn. However, you do need to be careful, as sometimes a prefix can have more than one meaning!

An example would be *im-*, this can mean '**not**' or '**into**'.

Here is a list of the most common prefixes:

PREFIX	MEANING	EXAMPLES
ante-	before	antenatal, anteroom, antedate
anti-	against, opposed to	antibiotic, antidepressant, antidote, anti-racist, anti-war
auto-	self	autobiography, automobile
circum-	around	circumstance, circumvent, circumnavigate
co-	with	co-worker, co-pilot, co-operation
de-	off, down, away from/reverse or change	devalue, defrost, derail, demotivate, decontaminate

PREFIX	MEANING	EXAMPLES
dis-	opposite of, not	disagree, disappear, disintegrate, disapprove, displeasure, disqualify
down-	reduce or lower	downgrade, downhearted
em-, en-	cause to, put into	embrace, encode, embed, enclose, engulf
epi-	upon, close to, after	epicentre, episcopes, epidermis
ex-	former, out of	ex-president, ex-boyfriend, exterminate
extra-	beyond, more than	extracurricular, extraordinary, extraterrestrial
fore-	before	forecast, forehead, foresee, foreword, foremost
homo-	same	homosexual, homonuclear, homoplastic
hyper-	over, above, extreme	hyperactive, hyperventilate, hypertension
il-, im-, in-, ir-	not	impossible, illegal, irresponsible, indefinite, insecure, irregular
im-, in-	into	insert, import, inside
infra-	beneath, below	infrastructure, infrared, infrasonic, infraspacial,
inter-, intra-	between	interact, intermediate, intergalactic, intranet, interactive, international
macro-	large	macroeconomics, macromolecule
micro-	small	microscope, microbiology, microfilm, microwave
mid-	middle	midfielder, midway, midsummer, midday
mis-	Wrongly/ incorrectly, badly	misinterpret, misfire, mistake, misunderstand, misaligned, mislead, misspelt
mega-	very big, important	megabyte, mega-deal, megaton
mono-	one, singular	monotone, monobrow, monolithic
non-	not, without	nonsense, nonentity, nondescript, non-payment, non-smoking
omni-	all, every	omnibus, omnivore, omnipotent

PREFIX	MEANING	EXAMPLES
out-	go beyond	outdo, out-perform, outrun
over-	too much	overcook, overcharge, overrate
para-	beside	parachute, paramedic, paradox
post-	after	post-mortem, postpone, post-natal, post-election, post-war,
pre-	before	prefix, predetermine, pre-intermediate, prehistoric, pre-war
pro-	in favour of	pro-communist, pro-democracy
re-	again	return, rediscover, reiterate, reunite, reconsider, redo, rewrite
semi-	half	semi-final, semiconscious, semicircle, semi-retired
sub-	under / below / less than	submerge, submarine, sub-category, subtitle, submarine, sub-Saharan, suborbital
super-	above, over, beyond	superfood, superstar, supernatural, superimpose, super-hero, supermodel
tele-	at a distance	television, telepathic
trans-	across	transatlantic, transfer
therm-	heat	thermometer, thermostat, thermodynamic
trans-	across, beyond	transport, transnational, transatlantic
tri-	three	triangle, tripod, tricycle
ultra-	extremely	ultra-compact, ultrasound
un-	remove, reverse, not	undo, unpack, unhappy, unfinished, unfriendly, unknown
under-	less than, beneath	undercook, underestimate
uni-	one	unicycle, universal, unilateral, unanimous
up-	make or move higher	upgrade, uphill

Suffixes

A suffix is a letter or a group of letters that is usually attached to the end of a word to form a new word, as well as alter the way it functions grammatically.

Depending on whether it is a noun, verb, adjective or adverb, a different suffix would be required. For example, the verb *read* can be altered to become the noun *reader* by adding the suffix *-er*. The same verb can also be turned into the adjective *readable* by adding the suffix *-able*.

SUFFIX	MEANING	EXAMPLE
NOUN SUFFIXES		
-acy	state or quality	democracy, accuracy, lunacy
-age	the action or result of something	baggage, village, postage, blockage, shrinkage, wastage
-al	the action or process of	remedial, denial, trial, criminal, arrival, burial, deferral
-ance, -ence	state or quality of	nuisance, ambience, tolerance, reliance, defence, insistence
-dom	place or state of being	freedom, stardom, boredom, kingdom
-ee	Refers to the person to whom the action is being done	employee, payee, trainee
-er, -or	person or object that does a specified action	reader, creator, interpreter, inventor, collaborator, teacher, driver, writer, director

SUFFIX	MEANING	EXAMPLE
-hood	state	brotherhood, childhood, neighbourhood
-ism	doctrine, belief	Judaism, scepticism, escapism, capitalism, Marxism, socialism (philosophies)
-ist	person or object that does a specified action	Geologist, protagonist, sexist, scientist, theorist, communist, capitalist, Marxist, socialist (followers of philosophies)
-ity, -ty	quality of	extremity, validity, enormity, brutality, equality, cruelty
-ment	condition	enchantment, argument, amazement, disappointment, parliament
-ness	state of being	heaviness, highness, sickness, happiness, kindness, usefulness
-ry		entry, ministry, robbery
-ship	position held	friendship, hardship, internship, friendship, membership, workmanship
-sion/-tion/-xion	state of being	position, promotion, cohesion, expression, population, complexion
VERB SUFFIXES		
-ate	become	mediate, collaborate, create, complicate, dominate, irritate
-en	become	sharpen, strengthen, loosen, harden, soften, shorten
-ify, -fy	make or become	justify, simplify, magnify, satisfy, beautify, clarify, identify
-ise, -ize	become	publicise, synthesise, hypnotise, economise, realise, industrialize (-ise is most common in British English; -ize is most common in American English)
ADJECTIVE SUFFIXES		

SUFFIX	MEANING	EXAMPLE
-able, -ible	capable of being / apt to	edible, fallible, incredible, audible, drinkable, portable, flexible
-al	having the form or character of	fiscal, thermal, herbal, colonial, brutal, formal, postal
-en	Increase the stated quality	broken, golden, wooden
-ese	Of a place or the spoken language in a place	Chinese, Japanese, Vietnamese
-esque	in a manner of or resembling	picturesque, burlesque, grotesque
-ful	notable for	handful, playful, hopeful, skilful, forgetful, helpful, useful
-i		Iraqi, Pakistani, Yemeni
-ic, -ical	having the form or character of	psychological, hypocritical, methodical, nonsensical, musical, classic, Islamic, poetic
-ious, -ous	characterised by	pious, jealous, religious, ridiculous
-ish	having the quality of	squeamish, sheepish, childish, British, Spanish
-ive	having the nature of	inquisitive, informative, attentive, active, passive, productive
-an	Connected with place, group, type	Canadian, Malaysian, Peruvian
-less	without	meaningless, hopeless, homeless, useless
-y	characterised by	dainty, beauty, airy, jealousy
ADVERB SUFFIXES		
-ly	related to or quality	softly, slowly, happily, crazily, madly, daily, monthly, yearly, calmly, easily, quickly
-ous	A quality or condition	cautious, famous, nervous
-y	Lke the stated think	cloudy, rainy, windy, cheesy
-ward, -wards	direction	towards, afterwards, backwards, inward, downwards, homeward(s), upwards

SUFFIX	MEANING	EXAMPLE
-wise	in relation to	otherwise, likewise, clockwise, anti-clockwise, clockwise, edgewise