**Word Roots and Prefixes**

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### How Words Work

Many words are made up of a root (or base word) and a prefix. Some words also have a suffix. For example, the root word *port* means *to carry* or *to bear*. Attach the prefix *ex,* meaning *out* or *out of*, and you have the word *export, to carry out*. Attach the prefix *im,* meaning *in* or *into* and you have *import, to carry in.* Attach the prefix *trans,* meaning *across*, and you have *transport*, meaning *to carry across*. Now let's attach the suffix *able*, meaning *able to be*, and you have *importable, exportable,* and *transportable.*

The very words *prefix* and *suffix* are good examples, too. *Pre* means *before* and *fix* means *to fasten or attach*, so quite literally, a prefix is something attached to the beginning of something else. *Suf* is a variant of *sub, below or under*, so a suffix is something fastened underneath something else (in this case, behind the root).

By learning the common roots and prefixes (and a few suffixes) you will be able to discern the meaning of many new words almost immediately. (But do look them up for confirmation.) Take the word *abject*, for example. If you know that *ab* means *away or down* and *ject* means *to throw*, you can easily figure out that *abject* doesn't mean something happy. Rather *abject's* root meaning of *thrown down* is quite close to the dictionary defintion of cast *down in spirit* or *sunk into depression*.

Note that some modern words are formed by using abbreviated forms of other words. Thus, we see the use of the letter *i* for *Internet* in iPhone, iPod, and iTunes, indicating that these items or services work with the Internet. Similarly, the use of *e* for *electronic* appears in words such as elearning (and various forms: eLearning, E-Learning, and so on), e-commerce, and e-business. The "e-terms" seem to have been coined before the "i-terms" became popular. And note that most of the "i-terms" are trademarks, while the others are general descriptors: "I'm going to download some iTunes from Apple's e-commerce site because I love e-music." At any rate, these abbreviated forms are not traditional prefixes, but because they are indeed attached to the front of what amounts to root words, they could be considered functional prefixes.

Enjoy this list, together with the discovery of new words and the secret code behind much of the English language.

When you are ready, try the [Word Roots Worksheet 1](http://virtualsalt.com/WordRootsEx1.html) to see how well you understand how roots and prefixes work.  
Then try [Word Roots Worksheet 2](http://virtualsalt.com/WordRootsEx2.html) for more fun.  
And for a number challenge, try the [Number Prefixes Worksheet.](http://virtualsalt.com/WordRootsEx3.html) You'll love it.

### General Roots and Prefixes

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| **Root or Prefix** | **Meaning** | **Examples** |
| a, an | not, without | atheist, anarchy, anonymous apathy, aphasia, anemia, atypical, anesthesia |
| ab | away, down, from, off | absent, abduction, aberrant, abstemious, abnormal, abstract, absorb |
| acro | high, tip, top | acrobat, acrophobia, acronym, acromegaly, acropolis |
| act | do, move | action, react, transaction, proactive, activity, activation, deactivate |
| ad | to, toward | admit, addition, advertisement, adherent, admonish, address, adhesive, adept, adjust |
| alt | high | altitude, altimeter, alto, contralto, altocumulus, exalt |
| ambul | to walk | ambulatory, amble, ambulance, somnambulist, perambulate, preamble |
| anima | soul, life | animation, inanimate, animal, anime, equanimity, animism, animus |
| ante | before | anteroom, antebellum, antedate antecedent, antediluvian |
| anti, ant | against, opposite | antisocial, antiseptic, antithesis, antibody, antichrist, antinomies, antifreeze, antipathy, antigen, antibiotic, antidote, antifungal, antidepressant |
| arm | weapon | army, armament, disarm, rearm, armistice, armor, armory, arms |
| audi | to hear | audience, auditory, audible, auditorium, audiovisual, audition, audiobook |
| auto | self | automobile, automatic, autograph, autonomous, autoimmune, autopilot, autobiography |
| be | thoroughly | bedecked, besmirch, besprinkled, begrudge, begrime, belie, bemoan |
| bell | war | belligerent, antebellum, bellicose, rebel |
| bene | good, well | benefactor, beneficial, benevolent, benediction, beneficiary, benefit |
| bi | two | bicycle, bifocals, biceps, billion, binary, bivalve, bimonthly, bigamy, bimetal, biathlete, bicarbonate |
| bio | life, living | biology, biography, biodiversity, bioavailability, bioflavonoid, biofuel, biohazard, biomass, biorhythm |
| cede, ceed, cess | to go, to yield | succeed, proceed, precede, recede, secession, exceed, succession, excess |
| chron | time | chronology, chronic, chronicle, chronometer, anachronism |
| cide, cis | to kill, to cut | fratricide, suicide, incision, excision, circumcision, precise, concise, precision, homicide, genocide, regicide |
| circum | around | circumnavigate, circumflex, circumstance, circumcision, circumference, circumorbital, circumlocution, circumvent, circumscribe, circulatory |
| clud, clus claus | to close | include, exclude, clause, claustrophobia, enclose, exclusive, reclusive, conclude, preclude |
| con, com | with, together | convene, compress, contemporary, converge, compact, confluence, concatenate, conjoin, combine, convert, compatible, consequence, contract |
| contra, counter | against, opposite | contradict, counteract, contravene, contrary, counterspy, contrapuntal, contraband, contraception, contrast, controversy, counterfeit, counterclaim, counterargument, counterclaim, counterpoint, counterrevolution |
| cred | to believe | credo, credible, credence, credit, credential, credulity, incredulous, creed, incredible |
| commun | to share | commune, community, communism, communicable, communication, commonality, incommunicado |
| cycl | circle, wheel | bicycle, cyclical, cycle, encliclical, motorcycle, tricycle, cyclone |
| de | from, down, away | detach, deploy, derange, deodorize, devoid, deflate, degenerate, deice, descend, derail, depress, depart, decompose, destruction |
| dei, div | God, god | divinity, divine, deity, divination, deify, deism |
| demo | people | democracy, demagogue, epidemic, demographic |
| dia | through, across, between | diameter, diagonal, dialogue, dialect, dialectic, diagnosis, diachronic, diagram, diaphragm, dialysis, diarrhea |
| dict | speak | predict, verdict, malediction, dictionary, dictate, dictum, diction, indict, contradict |
| dis, dys, dif | away, not, negative | dismiss, differ, disallow, disperse, dissuade, disconnect, dysfunction, disproportion, disrespect, distemper, distaste, disarray, dyslexia |
| duc, duct | to lead, pull | produce, abduct, product, transducer, viaduct, aqueduct, induct, deduct, reduce, induce |
| dyn, dyna | power | dynamic, dynamometer, heterodyne, dynamite, dynamo, dynasty |
| ecto | outside, external | ectomorph, ectoderm, ectoplasm, ectopic, ectothermal |
| endo | inside, within | endotoxin, endoscope, endogenous |
| equi | equal | equidistant, equilateral, equilibrium, equinox, equitable, equation, equator |
| e, ex | out, away, from | emit, expulsion, exhale, exit, express, exclusive, enervate, exceed, explosion |
| exter, extra | outside of | external, extrinsic, exterior, extraordinary, extrabiblical, extracurricular, extrapolate, extraneous, exterminator, extract, extradite, extraterrestrial, extrasensory, extravagant, extreme |
| flu, flux | flow | effluence, influence, effluvium, fluctuate, confluence, reflux, influx |
| flect, flex | to bend | flexible, reflection, deflect, circumflex, inflection, reflex |
| graph, gram | to write | polygraph, grammar, biography, graphite, telegram, autograph, lithograph, historiography, graphic, electrocardiogram, monogram |
| hetero | other | heterodox, heterogeneous, heterosexual, heterodyne |
| homo | same | homogenized, homosexual, homonym, homophone |
| hyper | over, above | hyperactive, hypertensive, hyperbolic, hypersensitive, hyperventilate, hyperkinetic, hyperlink, hypertext, hypersonic, hypertrophy |
| hypo | below, less than | hypotension, hypodermic, hypoglycemia, hypoallergenic, hypothermia, hypothesis |
| in, im | not | inviolate, innocuous, intractable, innocent, impregnable, impossible |
| infra | beneath | infrared, infrastructure, infrasonic |
| inter, intro | between | international, intercept, intermission, interoffice, internal, intermittent, introvert, introduce |
| intra | within, into | intranet, intracranial, intravenous, intramural, intramuscular, intraocular |
| jac, ject | to throw | reject, eject, project, trajectory, interject, dejected, inject, ejaculate |
| log, logo, loc. loq | word, speech, speak | monologue, dialogue, locution, colloquial, elocution, soliloquy, ventriloquist, apology, doxology, epilogue, logic, eulogy, loquacious |
| mal | bad, badly | malformation, maladjusted, dismal, malady, malcontent, malfeasance, maleficent, malevolent, malice, malaria, malfunction, malignant |
| mega | great, million | megaphone, megalomaniac, megabyte, megalopolis |
| meso | middle | mesomorph, mesoamerica, mesosphere |
| meta | beyond, change | metaphor, metamorphosis, metabolism, metahistorical, metainformation, metacognitive |
| meter | measure | perimeter, micrometer, ammeter, multimeter, altimeter, geometry, kilometer |
| micro | small | microscope, microprocessor, microfiche, micrometer, micrograph |
| mis | bad, badly | misinform, misinterpret, mispronounce, misnomer, mistake, misogynist, mistrial, misadventure, misanthrope, misread |
| mit, miss | to send | transmit, permit, missile, missionary, remit, admit, missive, mission |
| morph | shape | polymorphic, morpheme, amorphous, metamorphosis, morphology, morphing |
| multi | many | multitude, multipartite, multiply, multipurpose, multicolored, multimedia, multinational |
| neo | new | neologism, neonate, neoclassic, neophyte |
| non | not | nonferrous, nonabrasive, nondescript, nonfat, nonfiction, nonprofit, nonsense, nonentity |
| omni | all | omnipotent, omnivorous, omniscient, omnibus, omnirange, omnipresent |
| pan | all, whole, general, completely | pantheism, pandemic, panacea, panoply, pan-American, panchromatic, pandemonium, panorama |
| para | beside | paraprofessional, paramedic, paraphrase, parachute, paralegal, parallel, comparison |
| per | through, intensive | permit, perspire, perforate, persuade, perceive, perfect, permit, perform |
| peri | around | periscope, perimeter, perigee, periodontal |
| phon | sound | telephone, phonics, phonograph, phonetic, homophone, microphone |
| phot | light | photograph, photosynthesis, photon |
| poly | many | polytheist, polygon, polygamy, polymorphous |
| port | to carry | porter, portable, report, transportation, deport, import, export |
| re | back, again | report, realign, retract, revise, regain, reflect, rename, restate, recombine, recalculate, redo |
| retro | backwards | retrorocket, retrospect, retrogression, retroactive |
| sanct | holy | sanctify, sanctuary, sanction, sanctimonious, sacrosanct |
| scrib, script | to write | inscription, prescribe, proscribe, manuscript, conscript, scribble, scribe |
| sect, sec | cut | intersect, transect, dissect, secant, section |
| semi | half | semifinal, semiconscious, semiannual, semimonthly, semicircle |
| spect | to look | inspect, spectator, circumspect, retrospect, prospect, spectacle |
| sub | under, below | submerge, submarine, substandard, subnormal, subvert, subdivision, submersible, submit |
| super, supra | above | superior, suprarenal, superscript, supernatural, supercede, superficial, superhero, superimpose |
| syn | together | synthesis, synchronous, syndicate, synergy, snyopsis, syncretism |
| tele | distance, from afar | television, telephone, telegraph, telemetry, telepathy |
| theo, the | God | theology, theist, polytheist, pantheism, atheist, monotheist, theophany |
| therm, thermo | heat | thermal, thermometer, thermocouple, thermodynamic, thermoelectric |
| tract | to drag, draw | attract, tractor, traction, extract, retract, protract, detract, subtract, contract, intractable |
| trans | across | transoceanic, transmit, transport, transducer, transit, intransitive |
| un | not | uncooked, unharmed, unintended, unhappy, unenlightened, unremarkable |
| veh, vect, vey | to carry | vector, vehicle, convection, vehement, convey, conveyance, conveyor |
| vert, vers | to turn | convert, revert, advertise, versatile, vertigo, invert, reversion, extravert, introvert |
| ven, vent | to come | convention, prevent, intervention, convent, Advent, invent, inventory |
| verm | worm | vermin, vermicelli, vermiculite, vermicide, vermiform, vermilion |
| vita | life | vital, vitality, vitamins, revitalize |
| vol | to will | benevolent, volition, voluntary, malevolent |
| vita | life | vital, vitality, vitamins, revitalize |

<http://virtualsalt.com/roots.htm>