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Prefixes & Suffixes

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Prefixes and Suffixes

What do you do when you find a new word in English? Before you reach for your dictionary, do you try to figure out what it means? Long words are often made from shorter words that you know, combined with a few letters at the beginning (a **prefix**), or a few letters at the end (a **suffix**).

Prefixes generally change the **meaning** of a word, and suffixes change its **part of speech** (whether it is a noun, a verb, an adjective, or an adverb). Below you can find a list of prefixes and suffixes with their meanings and use.

Prefixes

a- not; without: *atypical, amoral*

aero- connected with air or aircraft:
aerodynamic

agro-, agri- connected with farming: *agro-industry*

all- 1 completely: *an all-inclusive price*
2 in the highest degree: *all-important, all-powerful*

ambi- referring to both of two: *ambivalent*

ante- before; in front of: *antedate*

anthropo- connected with human beings:
anthropology

anti- against: *antiwar*

arch- main; most important or most extreme:
archbishop

astro- connected with the stars or outer space: *astrophysics*

audio- connected with hearing or sound:
audio-visual

auto- 1 about or by yourself: *autobiography*
(= the story of the writer's own life) 2
by itself, without a person to operate it:
automatic

be- 1 to make or treat someone or something as: *They befriended him.*
2 wearing or covered with: *bejeweled*

bi- two; twice; double: *bilingual, bicentennial*

biblio- connected with books: *bibliography*

bio- connected with living things or human life: *biodegradable*

by- 1 less important: a byproduct 2 near: *a bystander*

cardio- connected with the heart: *cardiology*

centi- hundred; hundredth: *centipede, centimeter* (= one hundredth of a meter)

chrono- connected with time: *chronology*

circum- around: *circumnavigate* (= sail around)

co- together with: *copilot, coexist*

con- with; together: *concurrent*
(= happening together)

contra- against; opposite: *contradict*
(= say the opposite)

counter- against; opposite: *counterterrorism, counterproductive*
(= producing the opposite of the desired effect)

cross- involving movement or action from one thing to another or between two things: *cross-fertilize*

crypto- hidden; secret: *a cryptogram* (= a text written in code)

cyber- connected with electronic communication, especially the Internet: *cybercafé*

de- 1 the opposite of: *decompress*
2 taking something away: *decaffeinated coffee*

deca- ten; having ten: *decathlon*

deci- one tenth: *deciliter*

demi- half; partly: *demigod*

demo- connected with people or population: *democracy*

di- used in chemistry to refer to substances that contain two atoms of the type mentioned: *dioxide*

dis- not; the opposite of: *discontinue, disarmament*

e- connected with the use of electronic communication, especially the Internet, for sending information, doing business, etc.: *e-commerce*

eco- connected with the environment: *eco-friendly*

electro- connected with electricity: *electromagnetism*

en-, em- 1 to put into the thing or condition mentioned: *endanger, empower* 2 to cause to be: *enlarge, embolden*

equi- equal; equally: *equidistant*

Euro- connected with Europe or the European Union: *Euro-elections*

ever- always; continuously: *the ever-growing problem of pollution*

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ex- former: *ex-wife*

extra- 1 outside; beyond: *extraterrestrial*
(= from somewhere beyond the earth)

2 very; more than usual: *extra-thin*

fore- 1 before; in advance: *foreword* (= at the beginning of a book) 2 in front of:
foreground (= the front part of a picture)

geo- of the earth: *geoscience*

hemo- connected with blood: *hemophilia*

hepta- seven; having seven: *heptathlon*
(= an athletics competition that consists of seven different events)

hetero- other; different: *heterogeneous*

hexa- six; having six: *hexagonal*

homo- the same: *homogeneous*

hydr(o)- 1 connected with water:
hydroelectricity 2 connected with or mixed with hydrogen: *hydroxide*

hyper- more than normal; too much:
hypersensitive

hypo- under; below normal: *hypodermic* (= under the skin)

ill- badly or wrongly: *You would be ill-advised to drive until you have fully recovered.*

in-, il-, im-, ir- not; the opposite of: *incorrect, illegal, impatient, irregular*

info- connected with information: *an infomercial* (= a TV commercial that gives information about a subject)

infra- below a particular limit: *infrared*

inter- between; from one to another:
interaction

intra- inside; within: *intravenous*

iso- equal: *isotope*

kilo- thousand: *kilogram*

macro- large; on a large scale:
macroeconomics

mal- bad or badly; not correct or correctly:
malnutrition

many- having a lot of the thing mentioned: *a many-sided shape*

mega- 1 very large or great: *a megastore* 2 one million: *a megawatt*

meta- 1 connected with a change of position or state: *metamorphosis*

2 higher; beyond: *metaphysics*

micro- small; on a small scale: *microchip*

mid- in the middle of: *midafternoon*

milli- thousandth: *millisecond*

mini- very small: *miniskirt*

mis- bad or wrong; badly or wrongly:
misbehavior, misunderstand

mono- one; single: *monolingual* (= using one language), *monorail*

multi- many; more than one: *multicolored, a multimillionaire*

nano- (especially in units of measurement) one billionth (= one of one thousand million equal parts of something): *a nanosecond*

near- almost: *a near-perfect performance*

neo- new; in a later form: *neoclassical*

neuro- connected with the nerves:
neuroscience

non- not: *nonbiodegradable, nontoxic*

nona- nine; having nine: *nonagenarian*
(= a person who is between 90 and 99 years old)

octa-, octo- eight; having eight: *octagon*
(= a shape with eight sides), *octogenarian*

off- not on; away from: *offstage*

omni- of all things; in all ways or places:
omnivore

ortho- correct; standard: *orthography*

osteo- connected with bones: *osteopath*

out- 1 greater, better, further, longer, etc.:
outdo, outrun 2 outside; away from:
outpatient

over- 1 more than normal; too much: *overeat*
2 completely: *overjoyed*
3 upper; outer; extra: *overcoat, overtime* 4 over; above: *overhang*

paleo- connected with ancient times:
paleontology

pan- including all of something; connected with the whole of something: *pan-African*

para- 1 beyond: *paranormal* 2 similar to but not official or not fully qualified: *a paramedic*

patho- connected with disease: *pathology*

ped- connected with children: *pediatrics*

penta- five; having five: *pentagon, pentathlon*
(= a competition involving five different sports)

petro- 1 connected with rocks: *petrology*
2 connected with petroleum: *petrochemical*

philo-, phil- liking: *philanthropist*

phono- connected with sound or sounds:
phonetic, phonology

photo- 1 connected with light: *photosynthesis* 2 connected with photography:
photocopier

physio- 1 connected with nature
2 connected with physiology (= the way in which living things function, and the scientific study of this)

poly- many: *polygamy* (= having more than one wife or husband at the same time)

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post- after: *postwar*
pre- before: *prepay, preview*
pro- in favor of; supporting: *pro-democracy*
proto- original; from which others develop: *prototype*
pseudo- not genuine; false or pretended: *pseudonym*
psycho- connected with the mind: *psychology*
quad-, quadri- four; having four: *quadruple* (= multiply by four), *quadrilateral*
quasi- 1 that appears to be something but is not really so: *a quasi-scientific explanation* 2 partly; almost: *a quasi-official body*
radio- 1 connected with radio waves or the activity of sending out radio or television programs (= broadcasting): *a radio-controlled car* 2 connected with radioactivity (= powerful and very dangerous rays that are produced when atoms are broken up): *radiographer*
re- again: *rewrite, reappearance*
retro- back or backwards: *retrospective*
self- of, to, or by yourself or itself: *self-control*
semi- half: *semicircle, semifinal*
septa- seven; having seven
socio- connected with society or the study of society: *socio-economic*
step- related as a result of one parent marrying again: *stepmother*
sub- 1 below; less than: *subzero* 2 under: *subway* 3 making a smaller part of something: *subdivide*
super- 1 extremely; more or better than normal: *superhuman* 2 above; over: *superstructure, superimpose*
techno- connected with technology: *technophobe* (= a person who is afraid of technology)
tele- 1 over a long distance; far: *telepathy, telescopic* 2 connected with television: *telecast* 3 done using a telephone: *telemarketing*
theo- connected with God or a god: *theology*
thermo- connected with heat: *thermonuclear*
trans- 1 across; beyond: *transatlantic* 2 into another place or state: *transplant*
tri- three; having three: *triangle*
ultra- extremely; beyond a certain limit: *ultra-modern*
un- not; the opposite of: *unable, unlock*

under- 1 below: *underground* 2 lower in age, level, or position: *underage* 3 not enough: *undercooked food*
uni- one; having one: *uniform, unilaterally*
up- higher; upwards; towards the top of something: *upturned*

Suffixes

-able, -ible, -ble (to make adjectives) possible to: *acceptable, noticeable, divisible* (= possible to divide), *irresistible* (= that you cannot resist)
-age (to make nouns) a process or state: *storage, shortage*
-al (to make adjectives) connected with: *experimental, environmental*
-ance, -ence, -ancy, -ency (to make nouns) an action, process, or state: *appearance, existence, pregnancy, efficiency*
-ant, -ent (to make nouns) a person who does something: *assistant, student*
-ation (to make nouns) a state or an action: *examination, organization*
-ble → -ABLE
-centric (to make adjectives) concerned with or interested in the thing mentioned: *egocentric*
-cracy (to make nouns) the government or rule of: *democracy*
-ectomy (to make nouns) a medical operation in which part of the body is removed: *appendectomy* (= removal of the appendix)
-ed (to make adjectives) having a particular state or quality: *bored, patterned*
-ee (to make nouns) a person to whom something is done: *employee* (= sb who is employed), *trainee* (= sb who is being trained)
-en (to make verbs) to give something a particular quality: *shorten, blacken, loosen, lengthen*
-ence, -ency → -ANCE
-ent → -ANT
-er (to make nouns) a person who does something: *rider, painter, banker, driver, teacher*
-ese (to make adjectives) from a place: *Japanese, Chinese, Viennese*
-ess (to make nouns) a woman who does something as a job: *waitress, actress*
-fold (to make adjectives and adverbs) multiplied by; having the number of parts mentioned: *to increase tenfold*

Prefixes and Suffixes

- free** (to make adjectives) without the thing mentioned: *fat-free, tax-free*
- ful** (to make adjectives) having a particular quality: *helpful, useful, beautiful*
- graphy** (to make nouns) 1 a type of art or science: *geography* 2 a method of producing images: *radiography* 3 a form of writing or drawing: *biography*
- hood** (to make nouns) 1 a state, often during a particular period of time: *childhood, motherhood* 2 a group with something in common: *sisterhood, neighborhood*
- ial** (to make adjectives) typical of: *dictatorial*
- ian** (to make nouns) a person who does something as a job or hobby: *historian, comedian*
- ible** → -ABLE
- ic** 1 (to make adjectives and nouns) connected with: *economic, Arabic* 2 (to make adjectives) that performs the action mentioned: *horrific*
- ics** (to make nouns) the science, art, or activity of: *physics, athletics*
- ical** (to make adjectives from nouns ending in -y or -ics) connected with: *economical, mathematical, physical*
- ide** (to make nouns) (in chemistry) a compound of: *chloride*
- ify** (to make verbs) to produce a state or quality: *beautify, simplify, purify*
- ing** (to make adjectives) producing a particular state or effect: *interesting*
- ion** (to make nouns) a state or process: *action, connection, exhibition*
- ish** (to make adjectives) 1 describing nationality or language: *English, Polish* 2 like something: *babyish* 3 fairly, kind of: *longish, brownish*
- ist** (to make nouns) 1 a person who has studied something or does something as a job: *artist, scientist* 2 a person who believes in something or belongs to a particular group: *capitalist, pacifist*
- ite** (to make nouns and adjectives) a person who follows or supports; following: *Trotskyite*
- ity** (to make nouns) the quality or state of: *purity*
- ive** (to make adjectives) having a particular quality: *attractive, effective*
- ize** (to make verbs) producing a particular state: *magnetize, standardize*
- legged** (to make adjectives) having the number or type of legs mentioned: *three-legged, long-legged*
- less** (to make adjectives) not having something: *hopeless*
- like** (to make adjectives) similar to: *childlike*
- looking** (to make adjectives) having the appearance mentioned: *odd-looking, good-looking*
- ly** (to make adverbs) in a particular way: *badly, beautifully*
- ment** (to make nouns) a state, action, or quality: *development, arrangement, excitement*
- most** (to make adjectives) the furthest: *southernmost, topmost* (= the farthest up/ the nearest to the top)
- ness** (to make nouns) a state or quality: *kindness, happiness*
- oid** (to make adjectives and nouns) similar to: *humanoid*
- ology** (to make nouns) the study of a subject: *biology, zoology*
- or** (to make nouns) a person who does something, often as a job: *actor, conductor*
- ory** 1 (to make adjectives) that does: *explanatory* 2 (to make nouns) a place for: *observatory*
- ous** (to make adjectives) having a particular quality: *dangerous, religious*
- phile** 1 (to make adjectives) liking a particular thing: *Francophile* 2 (to make nouns) a person who likes a particular thing: *bibliophile*
- philia** (to make nouns) love of something
- phobe** (to make nouns) a person who dislikes a particular thing or particular people: *technophobe*
- phobia** (to make nouns) a fear of the thing mentioned: *claustrophobia*
- proof** (to make adjectives) able to protect against the thing mentioned: *soundproof*
- ship** (to make nouns) showing status: *friendship, membership, citizenship*
- ward, -wards** (to make adverbs) in a particular direction: *backward, upwards*
- ways** (to make adjectives and adverbs) in the direction of: *lengthways*
- wise** (to make adjectives and adverbs) 1 in the manner or direction of: *clockwise* 2 concerning: *Things aren't too good businesswise.*
- y** (to make adjectives) having the quality of the thing mentioned: *rainy, fatty, thirsty*