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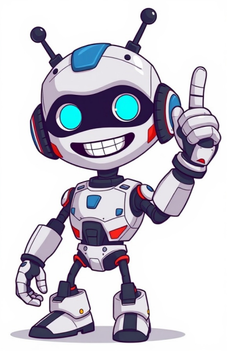

Prefixes are letters at the start of words that change their meanings.Knowing prefixes can help us understand new words and sometimes shows the opposite meaning.Different prefixes can add 'not', 'in', or 'into', making it important to recognize them. A prefix is a letter or a group of letters attached to the beginning of a word (or word root) that partly indicates its meaning. For example, the word prefix itself begins with the prefix pre-, which generally means "before" or "in front of" (by contrast, a letter or group of letters attaching to the end of a word is called a suffix). Many of today's English words contain prefixes from Greek or Latin. Understanding the meanings of the most common prefixes can help us deduce the definition of new words we run across in our reading, especially knowing a prefix can make a word mean its opposite, such as the difference between "possible" and "impossible". Still, we do need to be careful. The same prefix may be spelled in more than one way (pre- and pro-, for instance), and some prefixes (such as in-) have more than one meaning ("not" or "without" versus "in" or "into," as an example). Even so, being able to recognize prefixes can help us build our vocabularies and parse out words we may not know. Rules vary as to when a word should have a hyphen separating it from its prefix. Go by the dictionary if you are unsure. If you are writing a paper for a class and a particular style guide is used, such as MLA, the Chicago Manual of Style, or APA, the stylebook may have a hyphenation guide or a preferred dictionary to follow for which words to hyphenate and which to close up. If a prefix is attached to a proper noun, you generally hyphenate, such as pre-World War II or anti-American. The following table defines and illustrates 36 common prefixes. Prefix Meaning Examples a-, an- without, lack of, not amoral, acellular, abyss, achromatic, anhydrous ante- before, earlier, in front of antecedent, antedate, antemeridian, anterior anti- against, opposite of anticlimax. antiaircraft, antiseptic, antibody auto- self, same autopilot, autobiography, automobile, autofocus circum- around, about circumvent, circumnavigate, circumscribe co- with, together co-pilot, co-worker, co-exist, co-author com-, con- together, with companion, commingle, contact, concentrate contra-, contro- against, opposite contradict, contrast, contrary, controversy de- down, off, away from devalue, deactivate, debug, degrade, deduce dis- not, apart, away disappear, disagreeable, disbar, dissect en- put into, cover with enclose, entangle, enslave, encase ex- out of, from, former extract, exhale, excavate, ex-president extra- beyond, outside, more than extracurricular, extramarital, extravagant hetero- different, other heterosexual, heterodox, heterogeneous homo-, homeo- same, alike homonym, homophone, homeostasis hyper- over, more, beyond hyperactive, hypersensitive, hypercritical il-, im-, in-, ir- not, without illegal, immoral, inconsiderate, irresponsible in- in, into insert, inspection, infiltrate inter- between, among intersect, interstellar, intervene, interpenetrate intra-, intro- within, inside intravenous, intragalactic, introvert macro- large, prominent macroeconomics, macrostructure, macrocosm micro- very small microscope, microcosm, microbe mono- one, single, alone monocle, monologue, monogamy, monotony non- not, without nonentity, nonaggressive, nonessential, nonfiction omni- all, every omniscient, omnivorous, omniscient, omnidirectional post- after, behind postmortem, posterior, postscript, postoperative pre-, pro- before, forward precede, predict, project, prologue re- again reelect, readmit, resubmit sub- under, lower submarine, subsidiary, substandard sym-, syn- same time, together symmetry, symposium, synchronize, synapse tele- from or over a distance telecommunications, telemedicine, television, telephone trans- across, beyond, through transmit, transaction, translation, transfer tri- three, every third tricycle, trimester, triangle, triathlon un- not, lacking, opposite of unfinished, unskilled, ungraceful, unfriendly uni- one, single unicorn, unicellular, unicycle, unilateral up- to the top or north, higher/better upbeat, updo, upgrade, upload, uphill, upstage, upscale, up-tempo Lastly, the general rule is to use the whole prefix in a word—as in, refrain from adding or removing letters. Created by YourDictionary via Getty Images Owned by YourDictionary, copyright YourDictionary How do you turn disappear into reappear? It’s not a magic trick — it’s just a matter of changing the prefix. Prefixes may only be a few letters long, but they have the power to completely shift the meaning of a word, and even create a new word altogether. In this article A prefix is a word, syllable, or letter added to the beginning of a root word to alter its meaning. For example, in the word disappear, dis- means “do the opposite,” and the root word -appear means “to be visible.” Disappear means “opposite of being visible” — to no longer be seen. When you change the prefix of a word, you can change the word’s meaning — or even the meaning of the whole sentence. The magician made the rabbit disappear. (The rabbit vanished.) The magician made the rabbit reappear. (The rabbit became visible again.) I feel transformed after my trip to the spa. (The spa changed me.) I feel informed after my trip to the spa. (I learned something after going to the spa.) Paul reported the criminals to the police. (Paul told the police about the criminals.) Paul teleported the criminals to the police. (Paul used technology to instantly send the criminals to the police) Both prefixes and suffixes are types of affixes — words that you add to a root word to change its meaning. While prefixes come at the beginning of a word (like disappear), suffixes come at the end of a word (as in disappearance). Both types of affixes are important in creating the meaning of a word. Most prefixes come from Latin or Greek roots, and they appear in more words (and numbers) than you think. Prefix Prefix Meaning Word Examples ante- before, prior to, front antebellum, antechamber, anterior auto- self, one's self, yourself autobiography, autograph, autonomy circum - around, go around circumnavigate, circumscribe, circumvent co- jointly, with, together coexist, copilot, coworker com- together, with commiserate, compartment, community con- with, together confound, confluence, conversation en- put into, surround encase, endow, envelope exo- out, outer exhale, extend, exoskeleton extra- beyond, more extracurricular, extraterrestrial, extravert hetero- different, not the same heterogeneous, heterosexual, heterocyst homo- same, not different homogenized, homophone, homosexual hyper- extreme, beyond hyperactive, hyperspace, hypertension inter- between, in the midst of, among intermittent, intersect, interstate mega - large, massive megaphone, megadose, megabyte micro- small, tiny microcosm, microphone, microscope mid- middle, midpoint midnight, midseason, midterm mis- incorrect, bad, wrongful misappropriate, misunderstand, misuse mono- one, singular monogamous, monotone, monochrome over- too much, excessive overcook, overdone, overwrought post- after postdate, postscript, post-war pre- before, prior to prefix, preliminary, preschool re- again, do over reconsider, re-evaluate, rewrite semi- partial, somewhat, less than fully semiconductor, semester, semi-retired sub- below, beneath subjugate, submarine, sub-par trans- across, change transfer, transgender, translate Several prefixes make the new word mean the opposite of the original meaning of the base word. Prefix Prefix Meaning Word Examples a- lacking, without, not amoral, atheist, abiotic ab- away, removed, not abnormal, abstract, absent an- without, not, lacking anaerobic, anacoustic, anhydrous anti- against, opposing, contrary to antibiotic, antifreeze, antisocial contra- contrary to, against, opposing contraindicated, contralateral, contraflow counter- opposing, contrary to, against counterproposal, counteroffer, counter-attack de- reverse, undo, remove deactivate, de-ice, deplane dis- remove, separate, apart from disagree, disapprove, disconnect ex- away from, former, lacking ex-husband, ex-wife, ex-boss il- not, lacking, without illegal, illegible, illogical im- without, not, lacking impossible, improper, impermeable in- no, without, lacking injustice, incomplete, invisible ir- not, non, opposite irreversible, irreplaceable, irregular non- not, lacking, without nonexistent, nonfiction, nonnegotiable un- opposite, not, lacking unkind, unresponsive, unruly For the most part, you don’t need to hyphenate a prefix to its root word. However, there are a few times to use a hyphen when adding a prefix to a word. Always hyphenate the prefix self (as in self-esteem or self-confident). Hyphenate the prefix ex- when it means “former” (as in ex-wife or ex-boss). Hyphenate prefixes when the prefix ends with the same letter that the root word begins with (such as non-negotiable or re-establish). Hyphenate prefixes if they could be confused with compound words (such as re-cover to mean “cover again”). Sometimes, when students see words like unbelievable or kindness, the main meaning feels hidden because a small beginning or ending has been added. Prefixes and Suffixes are letter groups that attach to a base word to shape how the meaning develops. A prefix comes before the base, as in rewrite meaning to do again, while a suffix comes after the base, as in writer meaning a person who writes. When we learn to notice these parts, longer words become easier to understand and work with calmly. In this post, I teach Prefixes and Suffixes through steady examples that you can apply in your own vocabulary use. We will move step by step, noticing how each added part influences meaning and expression. Take your time, look closely at each example, and let your familiarity grow through patient practice. Prefixes and suffixes are small word parts added to other words to change their meaning. A prefix is a group of letters added to the beginning of a word. It changes the meaning of the word.Example:re + write = rewrite (means to write again)un + kind = unkind (means not kind) A suffix is a group of letters added to the end of a word. It changes the word’s form or meaning.Example:help + ful = helpful (means full of help)act + or = actor (means a person who acts) Suffixes help us know what type of word it is—like a person, action, or description. Prefixes and Suffixes Words List Prefixes are small word parts placed before a root word. They change the word’s meaning. Below is a list of widely used prefixes, their meanings, and example words. PrefixMeaningExample Wordun–notunfairre-againrereaddis-not / opposite ofdisconnectin-notinactiveim-notimpoliteir-notirregularil-notillegalnon-notnonsensepre–beforeprepaypost-afterpostwarinter-between / amonginternationalsub-under / belowsubmarinesuper-above / beyondsupermanunder-too little / belowunderpaidover-too much / aboveoverworkmis-wrongly / badlymisunderstandanti-againstanti-virusauto-selfautopilotbi-twobicycletri-threetrianglemono-one / singlemonologuemulti-manymulticulturaltrans-across / throughtransportco-together / withcooperateex-former / out ofex-presidentpro-for / forwardpromoteen-cause to / put intoenablesemi-half / partlysemicirclede-reverse / remove / downdefrost Suffixes are letter groups added to the end of a word to change its meaning or word type (like noun, verb, adjective). Learning suffixes helps you understand how words work in sentences. Below is a list of common English suffixes, with their meanings and examples in simple English: SuffixMeaningExample-erperson who doesteacher-orperson who doesactor-istpractices somethingartist-ianrelated to somethingmusician-nessstate or qualitykindness-mentaction or resultmovement-tionaction or processeducation-sionaction or conditiondecision-ancestate or qualityimportance-encestate or qualitydifference-shipstate or conditionfriendship-ityquality or conditionreality-alrelating tonatural-ousfull offamous-fulfull ofhelpful-lesswithoutcareless-ablecan be donereadable-iblecan be donevisible-ingaction or processwriting-edpast tenseplayed-lyin a certain wayquickly-yfull of / havingsunny-enmade of / becomegolden-ivenature ofcreative-warddirection offorward Here is a complete 100 Prefix and Suffix Words List in English, thoughtfully divided into 50 prefix-based words and 50 suffix-based words. Each entry includes the base word, the prefix or suffix applied, and the new word formed—clearly showing how word parts can transform meaning or function. 50 suffixes words list with meaning Prefix WordPrefixMeaningunhappyun-not happyrewritere-write againdisappeardis-not appearprepaidpre-paid beforedisagreedis-not agreeincompletein-not completeimpoliteim-not politeillegalil-not legalirregularir-not regularnonstopnon-not stoppingpostwarpost-after warinteractinter-act betweensubmarinesub-under the seaovercookover-cook too muchunderpaidunder-paid too littlemisleadmis-lead wronglyantivirusanti-against virusautopilotauto-controls itselfbicyclebi-two wheelstriangletri-three anglesmonologuemono-speech by one personmulticulturalmulti-many culturestransportthrans-move acrosscoopereateco-work togetherex-presidentex-former presidentpromotepro-move forwardenableen-make ablesemicirclesemi-half circledefrostde-remove frostoutgrowout-grow beyondforesightfore-seeing aheadundoun-reverse actionredore-do againdisconnectdis-break connectionpreviewpre-view beforemisplacemis-put wronglyincomein-come insubzerosub-below zerooversleepover-sleep too longunderweightunder-too little weightautobiographyauto-life story by oneselfintersectinter-cut betweenbimonthlybi-every two monthstrilogytri-set of three storiesexhaleex-breathe outforecastfore-guess beforeoutpatientout-not admitteddecodede-unlock meaningproeducationpro-support educationcoworkerco-workmate 50 Suffix Words List with Meanings and sentences Suffix WordSuffixMeaningteacher-erone who teachesactor-orone who actsartist-istperson of artmusician-ianperson of musickindness-nessquality of being kindmovement-mentthe act of movingeducation-tionprocess of educatingdecision-sionresult of decidingimportance-ancestate of being importantdifference-encequality of being differentfriendship-shipstate of being friendsreality-itycondition of being realnatural-alrelated to naturefamous-ousfull of famehelpful-fulfull of helpcareless-lesswithout carereadable-ablecan be readvisible-iblecan be seenwriting-ingthe act of writingplayed-edpast actionquickly-lyin a quick waysunny-yfull of sungolden-enmade of goldcreative-ivehaving creativityforward-wardin the front directionexcitement-mentresult of excitementbeautiful-fulfull of beautypriceless-lesswithout pricesinger-erone who singsdirector-orone who directsscientist-istexpert in sciencelibrarian-ianperson in libraryhappiness-nessstate of being happycreation-tionact of creatingconfusion-sionstate of being confusedbrilliance-ancequality of being brilliantsilence-encestate of being silentleadership-shipquality of leadingpossibility-itycondition of being possiblecultural-alrelated to culturegenerous-ousfull of generositydoubtful-fulfull of doubthopeless-lesswithout hopelovable-ablecan be lovedincredible-iblehard to believedancing-ingthe act of dancingcleaned-edpast of cleanslowly-lyin a slow mannertasty-yfull of tastewooden-enmade of woodtalkative-ivelikes to talk a lot To identify them: Look at the beginning of the word.If you see a part like un-, re-, pre-, dis-, it is a prefix. Example: unhappy → “un-” is the prefix. Look at the end of the word.If it ends with -ful, -ness, -ly, -ing, it is a suffix. Example: happiness → “-ness” is the suffix. Find the base/root word.Remove the prefix or suffix and check if the word still makes sense. Kindness → Remove “-ness” → kind (real word) Ask yourself: Does this part change the meaning? (Prefix) Does this part change the type of word? (Suffix) Tip: Most long or new words have either a prefix, a suffix, or both! Learning prefixes and suffixes helps you understand how English words are built, changed, and used. Instead of memorizing thousands of words, you can break them into parts to find their meaning. Prefixes often change the meaning of a word (like “un-” means not), while suffixes change the form or role of a word (like “-er” turns a verb into a person). Q1: What is a prefix in English? A prefix is a group of letters added at the beginning of a word to change its meaning. Example: “re-” in rewrite. Q2: What is a suffix in English? A suffix is a group of letters added at the end of a word to change its form or function. Example: “-ful” in helpful. Q3: Can a word have both a prefix and a suffix? Yes, some words have both. Example: unhappiness — “un-” is a prefix, “-ness” is a suffix. Q4: How do prefixes and suffixes help in learning English? They help learners understand meanings, build vocabulary, and recognize word families quickly. Q5: What’s the easiest way to learn prefixes and suffixes? Start with common ones (like un-, re-, -ing, -ed) and practice using them in simple words and sentences. You May Also Like Home - Knowledge Base - Grammar - Prefix and Suffix What is a prefix? Prefixes found in the English language modify words. They have transformative qualities that can shape a word in many different ways. Some prefixes even have the power to completely subvert the meaning of the root word. Prefix What is a Prefix? A prefix consists of one or more letters placed at the beginning of a stem word. Prefixes provide an easy way to create new words. Adding prefixes to words recognized by the literate public makes the spelling and meanings of new words easier to understand. Once you understand common prefixes you can logically and consistently use them to create a variety of new words. Prefix definition: In English, a prefix is a letter/a group of letters attached to the beginning of a word to form a new word. In simple words, a prefix is a few letters put at the beginning of a word to change its meaning. For instance, you can apply the prefix de- to negate the original word. The prefix de- means to undo something. When applied to the root word the new word’s meaning becomes opposite. For example, adding de- before value creates the word devalue. Value and devalue are terms with opposite meanings. A prefix is a type of affix which is attached to the start of the root word. There are many different prefixes that are extremely common within the English language. Prefix Examples Negative Prefixes Many different prefixes exist to negate completely or in part the base word. These prefixes along with some example words appear below. anti (anti-establishment, antidote, anticlimatic) contra (contraindicated, contradict) a or an (amoral, atheist, anemic) non (noncorporeal, nondescript, nonfiction) ir/il/in (irregular, illegal, infertile) un (unkept, unkempt, unamerican) Common Prefixes Several prefixes can be found through the English Language. Each prefix has its own meaning. Below are commonly used prefixes and example words. ex (ex, extend, exhale) extra (extracurricular, extra-fine,extramarital) homo (Homosapien, homogenous, homosexual) hetero (heterogenous, heterosexual, heterodoxy) mis (misdirect, misassociate, misunderstood) mid (midsummer, midnight, midway) micro (microcosm, microphone, microaggression) pre (preamble, prerequisite, prescreen) uni (unicycle, universal, unilateral) tri (triangle, tripod, tricycle) super (superfood, superstar, supernatural, superimpose) Prefix Meanings: ex; out, extra; beyond, homo; same, hetero; different, mis; incorrect, mid; middle, mico; small, and pre; before. Prefix examples Pin List of common suffixes in English with examples. Prefixes Why Learn Prefixes Learning prefixes and their meanings help students break down vocabulary words into smaller parts. By doing this, words become easier to digest and their meanings become clearer. Also, learning prefixes helps make learning new words easier. List of Prefixes Learn prefix list with meanings and examples in English. Prefix ante- Meaning: Before Examples: Antenatal, anteroom, antedate Prefix anti- Meaning: Against, opposing Prefix examples: Antibiotic, antidepressant, antidote, antisocial Prefix circum- Meaning: Around Examples: Circumstance, circumvent, circumnavigate Prefix co- Meaning: With Examples: Co-worker, co-pilot, co-operation Prefix de- Meaning: Off, down, away from Examples: Devalue, defrost, derail, demotivate Learn more: Prefix de- Prefix dis- Meaning: Opposite of, not Prefix examples: Disagree, disappear, disintegrate, disapprove Explore more: Prefix dis- Prefix em-, en- Meaning: Cause to, put into Examples: Embrace, encode, embed, enclose, engulf Prefix list and prefix examples Pin Prefix epi- Meaning: Upon, close to, after Examples: Epicentre, episcope, epidermis Prefix ex- Meaning: Former, out of Examples: Ex-president, ex-boyfriend, exterminate Prefix extra- Meaning: Beyond, more than Prefix examples: Extracurricular, extraordinary, extra-terrestrial Prefix fore- Meaning: Before Examples: Forecast, forehead, foresee, foreword, foremost Prefix homo- Meaning: Same Examples: Homosexual, homonuclear, homoplastic Prefix hyper- Meaning: Over, above Examples: Hyperactive, hyperventilate Prefix il-, im-, in-, ir- Meaning: Not Prefix examples: Impossible, illegal, irresponsible, indefinite Prefix examples Pin Prefix im-, in- Meaning: Into Examples: Insert, import, inside Prefix infra- Meaning: Beneath, below Prefix examples: Infrastructure, infrared, infrasonic, infraspecific Prefix inter-, intra- Meaning: Between Examples: Interact, intermediate, intergalactic, intranet, interstellar Prefix macro- Meaning: Large Examples: Macroeconomics, macromolecule Prefix micro- Meaning: Small Prefix examples: Microscope, microbiology, microfilm, microwave Prefix mid- Meaning: Middle Examples: Midfielder, midway, midsummer Prefix mis- Meaning: Wrongly Examples: Misinterpret, misfire, mistake, misunderstand Prefix mono- Meaning: One, singular Examples: Monotone, monobrow, monolithic Prefix non- Meaning: Not, without Examples: Nonsense, nonentity, nondescript Prefix omni- Meaning: All, every Examples: Omnibus, omnivore, omnipotent Prefix para- Meaning: Beside Prefix examples: Parachute, paramedic, paradox Prefix post- Meaning: After Examples: Post-mortem, postpone, post-natal Prefix pre- Meaning: Before Examples: Prefix, predetermine, pre-intermediate Prefix pro- Meaning: Foward Examples: Proceed, prowar, promote, propose, progress List of prefixes Pin Prefix re- Meaning: Again Examples: Return, rediscover, reiterate, reunite Prefix semi- Meaning: Half Prefix examples: Semicircle, semi-final, semiconscious Prefix sub- Meaning: Under Examples: Submerge, submarine, sub-category, subtitle Prefix super- Meaning: Above, over Examples: Superfood, superstar, supernatural, superimpose Prefix therm- Meaning: Heat Examples: Thermometer, thermostat, thermodynamic Prefix trans- Meaning: Across, beyond Examples: Transport, transnational, transatlantic Prefix tri- Meaning: Three Examples: Triangle, tripod, tricycle Prefix un- Meaning: Not Examples: Unfinished, unfriendly, undone, unknown Prefix uni- Meaning: One Examples: Unicycle, universal, unilateral Prefixes (with Meanings and Examples) | Infographics Useful List of Prefixes in English | Image 1 Pin Useful Prefix List in English | Image 2 Pin Prefix Video What are prefixes, suffixes, and combining forms? Prefixes and suffixes are both kinds of affixes. That is, they are word parts that attach to the beginning or end of a word or word base (a word stripped down to its simplest form) to produce a related word or an inflectional form of a word. Examples are in- in informal and both re- and -ing in reporting. A third kind of affix is called an infix. Infixes are inserted into a word or word base. English uses very few infixes, but a couple examples are the plural-making s in words like cupsful and passersby, and various swear words, like damn in informal constructions like guaran-damn-tee. A combining form is a form of a word that only appears as part of another word. There are a number of kinds of combining forms, each classified by what kind of word results when the form is used. For example, -wise in clockwise is an adverb combining form; -like in birdlike is an adjective combining form; -graph in photograph is a noun combining form; and -lyze in electrolyze is a verb combining form. Combining forms are similar to affixes but can have a bit more lexical substance to them. Unlike affixes, combining forms are substantial enough to form a word simply by connecting to an affix, such as when the combining form cephal- joins with the suffix -ic to form cephalic. A combining form can also differ from an affix in its being derived from an independent word. For example, para- is a combining form in the word paratrooper because in that word it represents the word parachute. Para- is a prefix, however, in the words paranormal and paramedic. A combining form can also be distinguished historically from an affix by the fact that it is borrowed from another language in which it is descriptively a word or a combining form, such as the French mal giving English the mal- in malfunction. noun (2)verb (used with object) (4)Grammar., an affix placed before a word, base, or another prefix to modify a term's meaning, as by making the term negative, as un- in unkind, by signaling repetition, as re- in reinvent, or by indicating support, as pro- in proabolition. Compatible prefixes can work together, as un- and re- in unrefundable.something prefixed, as a title before a person's name.She uses the prefix “Ms.” rather than "Mrs."to fix or put before or in front.to prefix an impressive title to one's name.Grammar., to add as a prefix.to fix, settle, or determine beforehand.If you call a taxi, the rate to the airport will be prefixed.Biology., to apply the first of two fixatives to./ pri:ˈfɪks-, pri:ˈfɪkʃən, ˈpri:fɪksəl /grammar an affix that precedes the stem to which it is attached, as for example un- in unhappy Compare suffixsomething coming or placed before“Collins English Dictionary — Complete & Unabridged” 2012 Digital Edition © William Collins Sons & Co. Ltd. 1979, 1986 © HarperCollins Publishers 1998, 2000, 2003, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2009, 2012to put or place beforegrammar to add (a morpheme) as a prefix to the beginning of a word“Collins English Dictionary — Complete & Unabridged” 2012 Digital Edition © William Collins Sons & Co. Ltd. 1979, 1986 © HarperCollins Publishers 1998, 2000, 2003, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2009, 2012Letters placed in front of a word to form a new word: “tri monthly,” “semi monthly,” “bi lingual,” “multi lingual,” “ad dress,” “re dress,” “pre date,” “post date.” (Compare suffix.)A prefix is one kind of affix. An affix is an element that, although not a word itself, can be bound to a word, or to the base or stem of a word, to form a derivative with a related meaning. Entire families of related words can be derived from an existing word in this way. Although linguists sometimes divide the subject more finely, there are essentially three kinds of affix —the prefix, attached to the beginning (as un- in unconscious), the infix, inserted in the middle, and the suffix, tacked on at the end (as -ness, in consciousness). Note the lack of an example for infix. Standard English—unlike some other languages—does not use infixes, unless we count isolated instances of tmesis, where instead of an affix, an entire word is inserted, as in the playful “abso-bloomin'-lutely” in the lyrics of “Wouldn't It Be Loverly?”—a song from the musical My Fair Lady. (“Bloomin'” is probably a euphemism; other tmetic insertions are more often than not obscene.) But one-shot nonce words such as “abso-bloomin'-lutely” are neither added to the language nor found in standard dictionaries of English. On the other hand, both prefixes and suffixes are highly productive derivational forms, constantly in use to form new English words. A few of the most productive English prefixes are anti-, non-, pre-, re-, sub-, and un-. They are so common that some print dictionaries show simple lists, without definitions, of words that have been formed with them—taking it for granted that their meanings are obvious. Here at Dictionary.com, however, such terms, when not given entries and definitions of their own, are shown with other related forms at the bottom of the entry for the word on which the derivative is based. Thus a query for unacetic will take you automatically to acetic, helping you to understand your queried word without having to look up its bits and pieces separately. The grammatical term prefix itself has the prefix pre-; in this case, pre- means “before; preceding” and one meaning of fix is “to attach or place.” A word can have more than one prefix, like un- and re- in unremarkable. And a prefix can be used in combination with one or more suffixes. A simple example is reactivate, which has the prefix re- “again” added to the verb activate. Activate, in turn, is composed of the adjective active “engaged in action” and the suffix -ate, used to form verbs. Activate means “to make something active; cause it to function.” To reactivate is to do this again. But we must exercise some care in our analysis of words that are new to us; a casual glance at word formations may be deceptive. For example, to capitulate is “to surrender.” But recapitulate does not mean “to surrender again.” It means “to summarize.” In addition, some prefixes have more than one meaning. For example, if you look up un- in Dictionary.com, you'll find two entries. The first, un- 1, means “not” (as in unafraid and unsettled), the second, un- 2, reverses the meaning of the verb it is attached to, as in unzip or in the social media term unfriend. But the most common problem with words formed with prefixes is determining whether or not to hyphenate between the prefix and the base word. Luckily, there are some guidelines. In general, there is no hyphen (nonstarter, postcranial, unemployment, antievolution). However, hyphenating is mandatory when the prefix is followed by a capital letter (anti-Nazi, pre-Columbian). We also hyphenate when a prefix that ends in a or i precedes a word starting with the same letter (ultra-abysmal, anti-inflation). However, words formed with prefixes ending in e or o followed by the same letter are in a state of flux (cooperate and co-operate are variants, as are preeminent and pre-eminent), but the solid form is increasingly more frequent. At the same time, certain words must be hyphenated to avoid ambiguity or misreading. re-sign (to sign again) is different from resign (to give up an office or position), and re-ink (to apply ink again) would look like some strange one-syllable word if spelled reink. But the easiest rule to remember may be this: when you are not sure whether to hyphenate a particular word, it is best to look it up.prefixable adjectiveprefixal adjectiveprefixally adverbprefixion noununprefixal adjectiveunprefixally adverbunprefixed adjectiveOrigin of prefix1First recorded in 1375–1425 for verb; 1640–50 for noun; late Middle English verb prefixen, prefyxe, from Middle French prefixer, from Latin praefixus, past participle of praefigere “to set up in front”; English noun praefix, prefix, from New Latin praefixum, neuter of praefixus; pre-, fixExamples are provided to illustrate real-world usage of words in context. Any opinions expressed do not reflect the views of Dictionary.com.Sharks had been swimming in the culture before that, to be sure, often with the prefix “man-eating” appended, though men eat sharks too, and way more often — so who’s the real apex predator?Read more on Los Angeles TimesWhen the first system of motor vehicle registration was introduced in the 1900s, a one or two letter prefix was followed by a number with up to four digits.Mohamed added the Arabic "Al" prefix to his surname some time in the 1970s.Mr Bijoor suggests a better strategy would have been to operate Air India separately for five years, focusing on improving service standards, while maintaining Vistara as a distinct brand with Air India prefixed to it.She closely reads passages from their textbooks, breaks apart prefixes and suffixes and identifies root words.Read more on Los Angeles TimesWhat is a prefix?A prefix is a type of affix that appears at the beginning of a word and modifies its meaning, such as the re- in redo.An affix is a word element that is added to the base of a word to create a new word. A prefix comes at the beginning of the word.Some of the most common prefixes are ones that change a word with a positive meaning into one with a negative meaning, such as un-, in-, and dis-. For example, when we add un- to acceptable, we get the word unacceptable, which means not acceptable.When attaching a prefix to a word, the spelling of the original word doesn’t change, even if it creates a double letter, as in irreplaceable and preexist. However, words that would have a double a or i are often hyphenated, as in ultra-aware and anti-inflammatory.When we add a prefix to a capitalized word, we also use a hyphen, as in pre-Rome and non-French. The prefixes self- and ex- (meaning former) also use hyphens, as in self-interest and ex-wife.Finally, hyphens are used to prevent confusion if a prefix would cause a word to resemble another word with a different meaning. For example, re-tread means to tread again, while retread means to put a new tread on a tire.prefinishedpreflightBrowse#aabbccddeeffgghhiijjkkllmmnnooppqqrrsstuuvvwwxxyyzzAboutCareersContact usCookies, terms, & privacyHelpFollow usGet the Word of the Day every day!© 2025 Dictionary.com, LLC Prefixes are fascinating tools in our language that allow us to alter the meaning of words with just a few letters. When we add these meaningful bits to the beginning of a word, we can transform the entire context, giving us the power to craft a vast array of nuanced expressions. Understanding prefixes is essential for our mastery of the English language, since they are foundational components that help us decipher meaning, even in words we may have never encountered before. A prefix is a group of letters added to the beginning of a word to change its meaning.For example: happy → unhappy (not happy) possible → impossible (not possible) Prefixes do not change the word’s part of speech but alter its meaning. Why Learn Prefixes? Expand Vocabulary: Learn one prefix, and you can understand many words. Improve Reading Skills: Recognizing prefixes makes it easier to guess meanings of unfamiliar words. Boost Spelling: Knowing prefixes can help you spell longer words correctly. Common Types of Prefixes 1. Negative Prefixes These prefixes make a word mean its opposite.Examples: un-: unhappy (not happy) in-: inactive (not active) im-: impossible (not possible) dis-: disagree (not agree) non-: nonfiction (not fiction) 2. Number Prefixes These prefixes indicate numbers.Examples: uni-: uniform (one form) bi-: bicycle (two wheels) tri-: triangle (three sides) quadri-: quadrilateral (four sides) multi-: multilingual (many languages) 3. Time and Order Prefixes These prefixes show when something happens or the order.Examples: pre-: preview (see before) post-: postgraduate (after graduation) fore-: forecast (predict beforehand) re-: redo (do again) ex-: ex-president (former president) 4. Degree or Size Prefixes These prefixes indicate the size, extent, or intensity.Examples: super-: superstar (very famous person) over-: overwork (work too much) under-: underpaid (paid too little) mini-: miniskirt (small skirt) mega-: megabyte (large unit of digital data) 5. Location or Position Prefixes These prefixes describe location or position.Examples: sub-: subway (underground railway) inter-: international (between nations) trans-: transport (move across) mid-: midnight (middle of the night) circum-: circumnavigate (sail around) Table of Common Prefixes Prefix Meaning Example Meaning of Example un- not unfair not fair pre- before preheat heat before re- again rewrite write again mis- wrongly misplace place wrongly anti- against antifreeze against freezing Tri– Meaning: Three E.g. triangle, tripod, etc. The sum of all the angles of a triangle is 180 degrees. In– Meaning: Not E.g. inconvenience, infield, innocent, etc. I don’t want to put you to any inconvenience. Mis– Meaning: Wrong, wrongly E.g. misunderstand, misfire, misfortune, misbehavior, etc. This misbehavior will certainly go against his chances of promotion. Ex– Meaning: Former, older, out of, away from, lacking E.g. exhale, ex-wife, excentral, exclude We can exclude the possibility of total loss from our calculations. Dis– Meaning: Not, opposite of, reverse E.g. disagree, disappear, disregard, disqualified, disqualify, etc. Lack of education will disqualify you for most good jobs. Re– Meaning: Again E.g. return, remainder, re-useable, refold, regain, etc. She will now begin occupational therapy to regain the use of her hands. Anti– Meaning: Against E.g. antifreeze, antipathy, antibiotic, antisocial, anti-war, etc. Lack of antifreeze is a major cause of highway breakdowns. Pre– Meaning: Before E.g. prefix, preschool, pre-intermediate, pre-tax But he is heading off to preschool, and we wanted to get him some educational programs. Post– Meaning: Later E.g. post-office, postgraduate, postscript There was the usual romantic postscript at the end of his letter. Auto– Meaning: Self, E.g. automatic, automobile The movements of machines are completely automatic, you only need to start and stop the machines. Un– Meaning: Not E.g. unhappy, unfriendly, unpleasant, unwell, etc. This unpleasant incident detracted from our enjoyment of the evening. Ir– Meaning: Not E.g. irrelevant, irregular, irresponsible, etc. Thick patchy fog and irresponsible driving were to blame. Im– Meaning: Not E.g. impolite, impossible, immortal, impatient, etc. Don’t be so impatient! The bus will be here soon. Over– Meaning: Too, in excess of E.g. overlook, overdose, overdue, overall, overconfident, etc. He proved overconfident on the witness stand. Semi– Meaning: Half E.g. semifinal, semicircle, semi-final, semiformal, semiannual, etc. I had never been to a semiformal dance before, and now was my chance.