

COMMON WORD ROOTS, PREFIXES AND SUFFIXES

In English grammar, many words can be broken into commonly shared components. Learning these basic components will help you decipher unfamiliar vocabulary—learning only thirty key word components can help you decode over 10,000 words!

Roots carry the basic meaning, *prefixes* come before roots and alter their meaning, and *suffixes* come after roots and alter either their meaning or their part of speech (noun, verb, adjective, adverb). Because English is related to French, German, Latin, and Greek, many of these components will look familiar to students of those languages.

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|------------------------|--------------------|---|
| <i>ag, act</i> | do | activity, interaction, agent |
| <i>ambul</i> | walk, move | ambulance, ambulatory, amble |
| <i>ami, amo</i> | love | amiable, amorous, amity |
| <i>anim</i> | mind, soul, spirit | animate, unanimous, magnanimity |
| <i>anthro</i> | human | anthropology, misanthrope, philanthropy |
| <i>apt</i> | skill | aptitude, adapt |
| <i>arch</i> | chief, first | archetype, archbishop, archeology, monarch |
| <i>aud, audit</i> | hear | audible, auditorium, audience |
| <i>auto</i> | self | autocrat, autography, autobiography |
| <i>belli</i> | war | belligerent, rebellious, bellicose |
| <i>ben</i> | good | benefactor, beneficial, benevolence |
| <i>biblio</i> | book | bibliography, bibliophile, Bible |
| <i>bio</i> | life | biography, biology, biosphere |
| <i>carn</i> | flesh, meat | carnivore, carnal, incarnate |
| <i>ced, ceed, cess</i> | yield, go | recede, process, exceed, accessible |
| <i>chron</i> | time | chronic, chronology, synchronize, anachronism |

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|--------------------|-----------------|--|
| <i>cid, cis</i> | cut, kill | incision, homicide, insecticide |
| <i>civi</i> | citizen | civilization, civilian, civil |
| <i>cogn</i> | know | cognizant, recognize, incognito |
| <i>corp</i> | body | corporation, corporeal, corpse |
| <i>cred</i> | believe | credence, credulous, incredible |
| <i>dem</i> | people | democracy, demographic, demagogue |
| <i>dic, dict</i> | speak | dictate, contradict, prediction, verdict |
| <i>domin</i> | master | dominant, domain, domineering |
| <i>esth/aesth</i> | feeling, beauty | esthetician, kinesthesia, aesthetic |
| <i>err</i> | wander | error, erratic, errand |
| <i>eu</i> | good, beautiful | eulogize, euphoria, euphemism |
| <i>fact/fict</i> | make, do | artifact, factory, fiction |
| <i>fall, fals</i> | deceive | fallacious, infallible, falsify |
| <i>fid</i> | faith | fidelity, confide, confidence |
| <i>grad, gress</i> | go, step | digress, progress, gradual |
| <i>graph, gram</i> | writing | grammar, telegram, graphite |
| <i>gyn</i> | woman | misogyny, gynecology |
| <i>juven</i> | young | rejuvenate, juvenile |
| <i>kine/cine</i> | motion | kinetics, telekinesis, cinema |
| <i>log</i> | word, study | logic, biology, monologue |
| <i>loqu, locut</i> | talk | soliloquy, loquacious, elocution |
| <i>luc</i> | light | elucidate, lucid, translucent |
| <i>magn</i> | great | magnify, magnate, magnanimous |

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|-------------------------|------------------|---|
| <i>mal</i> | bad | malevolent, malediction, malicious |
| <i>miss, mit</i> | send | emit, transmit, dismiss, missile |
| <i>mori, mort</i> | die | mortuary, moribund, immortal |
| <i>morph</i> | shape, form | amorphous, metamorphosis, anthropomorphic |
| <i>nat</i> | born | innate, natal, nativity |
| <i>nom</i> | name | misnomer, nominal, cognomen |
| <i>nov</i> | new | novice, innovate, renovate, novelty |
| <i>omni</i> | all | omniscient, omnipotent, omnivorous |
| <i>pac, pas, pax</i> | peace | pacify, pacific, pacifist |
| <i>path, pass</i> | disease, feeling | pathology, sympathetic, apathy, antipathy |
| <i>phil</i> | love | philanthropist, philosophy, philanderer |
| <i>port</i> | carry | portable, porter, transport, export |
| <i>poten</i> | able, powerful | potential, omnipotent, potentate, impotent |
| <i>psych</i> | mind | psyche, psychology, psychosis, psychopath |
| <i>reg, rect</i> | rule | regicide, regime, regent, insurrection |
| <i>sacr, secr</i> | holy | sacred, sacrilegious, sacrament, consecrate |
| <i>sci</i> | know | science, omniscient, conscious |
| <i>scribe, script</i> | write | describe, script, circumscribe |
| <i>somn</i> | sleep | insomnia, somnolent, somnambulist |
| <i>spec, spic</i> | see, look | spectators, spectacles, retrospect |
| <i>tang, tact, ting</i> | touch | tactile, tangent, contact, contingent |
| <i>terr</i> | land | terrain, terrestrial, subterranean |
| <i>urb</i> | city | urban, urbane, suburban |

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|-----------------|---------|--|
| <i>vac</i> | empty | vacation, vacuous, evacuate, vacant |
| <i>ver</i> | truth | veracity, verify, veracious |
| <i>verb</i> | word | verbose, verbatim, proverb |
| <i>viv, vit</i> | alive | revival, vivacious, vitality |
| <i>voc, vok</i> | to call | vocation, advocate, invoke, equivocate |

Common Prefixes

| | | |
|----------------------------|-----------------|--|
| <i>ab, abs</i> | from, away | absent, aversion, abduct, abjure |
| <i>ac, ad</i> | to, near | admit, accord, accessible |
| <i>ambi, amphi</i> | both | ambidextrous, ambiguous, ambivalent |
| <i>an, a</i> | without | anarchy, anemia, amoral |
| <i>ante</i> | before | antecedent, antechamber, antediluvian |
| <i>anti</i> | against | antibody, antipathy, antisocial |
| <i>circum</i> | around | circumnavigate, circumspect, circumscribe |
| <i>co, col, com, con</i> | with, together | coauthor, collaborate, composition, commerce |
| <i>contra, contro</i> | against | contradict, contravene, controversy |
| <i>de</i> | down, away | debase, decelerate, decadence, decant |
| <i>di, dif, dis</i> | not, apart | digress, discord, differ, disparity |
| <i>dia</i> | through, across | diagonal, diameter, dialogue |
| <i>dys</i> | abnormal, bad | dysfunction, dyslexia, dystopia |
| <i>e, ex, extra, extro</i> | out, beyond | expel, excavate, eject, extrovert |
| <i>em, en, endo</i> | inside, within | enclose, endothermic, envision |

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|---------------------------|----------------------|---|
| <i>in, il, im, ir</i> (1) | not | inefficient, inarticulate, illegible, irrepressible |
| <i>in, il, im, ir</i> (2) | in, upon | invite, incite, impression, illuminate |
| <i>inter</i> | between, among | intervene, international, interjection, intercept |
| <i>intra</i> | within | intramural, introvert, intravenous |
| <i>iso</i> | equal | isobar, isometric, isothermal |
| <i>mis</i> | bad, hatred | misdemeanor, mischance, misanthrope |
| <i>mono</i> | one | monarchy, monologue, monotheism |
| <i>non</i> | not, without | noncommittal, nonentity, nondescript |
| <i>ob, oc, of, op</i> | against | obtrude, obscure, offend, opponent |
| <i>pan</i> | all, every | panacea, panorama, pandemic |
| <i>peri</i> | around, near | perimeter, periphery, periphrastic |
| <i>poly</i> | many | polygamist, polyglot, polychrome, polyglot |
| <i>post</i> | after | postpone, posterity, postscript, posthumous |
| <i>pre</i> | before | preamble, prefix, premonition, prediction |
| <i>pro</i> | forward, for, before | propulsive, proponent, prologue, prophet |
| <i>re, retro</i> | again, back | reiterate, reimburse, react, retrogress |
| <i>se</i> | away, apart | seclude, secede, seduce |
| <i>sub, suc, sup, sus</i> | under, less | subway, subjugate, suppress |
| <i>super, sur</i> | over, above | superior, supernatural, supervise, surtax |
| <i>syn, sym, syl, sys</i> | with, together | symmetry, synchronize, synthesize, sympathize |
| <i>trans</i> | across | transfer, transport, transpose |
| <i>un</i> | not | unabridged, unkempt, unwitting |
| <i>vice</i> | in place of | vicarious, viceroy, vice-president |

Common Suffixes

| | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|--|
| <i>able, ible</i> | ADJ: capable of | edible, presentable, legible |
| <i>ac, ic, ical</i> | ADJ: like, related | cardiac, mythic, dramatic, musical |
| <i>acious, icious</i> | ADJ: full of | malicious, audacious, perspicacious |
| <i>al, il, ile</i> | ADJ/N: pertaining to | maniacal, logical, civil, puerile |
| <i>ant, ent</i> | ADJ/N: full of | eloquent, verdant |
| <i>ary</i> | ADJ/N: connected with | dictionary, honorary |
| <i>ate</i> | V: make, become | consecrate, enervate, eradicate |
| <i>cy, ty, ity</i> | N: state of being | democracy, accuracy, veracity |
| <i>escent</i> | ADJ: becoming | evanescent, pubescent, adolescent |
| <i>fy</i> | V: to make | magnify, petrify, beautify |
| <i>iferous</i> | ADJ: producing | pestiferous, vociferous |
| <i>ism</i> | N: doctrine, belief | monotheism, fanaticism, egotism |
| <i>ist</i> | N: dealer, doer | fascist, realist, artist |
| <i>ive</i> | ADJ: like | expensive, quantitative, effusive |
| <i>ize, ise</i> | V: make | victimize, rationalize, harmonize |
| <i>oid</i> | ADJ: resembling | ovoid, anthropoid, spheroid |
| <i>ose/ous</i> | ADJ: full of | verbose, lachrymose, nauseous, gaseous |
| <i>osis</i> | N: condition | psychosis, neurosis, hypnosis |
| <i>tion, sion</i> | N: state of being | exasperation, irritation, transition, concession |
| <i>tude</i> | N: state of | fortitude, beatitude, certitude |