

3.2. Describing characteristics (materials, substances, textures, colours, condition/status), components and parts

Resources to describe **materials, substances and textures**

X is made of copper, tin, stainless steel, iron, concrete, cement, stained glass, lead, hardwood, softwood, timber, lime, clay, ore, alloy, silver, gold, bronze, brass, zinc, china, porcelain, marble, aluminium, satin, polyurethane-foam, polystyrene, mercury, phosphorus, etc.

X is hard, soft, coarse, smooth, viscous, porous, slippery, sticky, spongy, scratched, cracked, chipped, opaque, transparent, highly-resistant, abrasive, tough, durable, thermo-resistant, lightweight, fragile, worn out, flexible, sharp, blunt, dented, curved, rusty, rotten, torn, creased, tangled, pointed, bumpy, plastic-like, cotton-like, etc.

Resources to describe **colours**

X is light/bright/dark/navy blue, yellowish, whitish, turquoise, beige, cream, crimson, tangerine, purple, indigo, lilac, striped, spotted, pale green, khaki;

To have/take on/give/display shades of blue, green and yellow

X has a reddish tint

To wear gaudy T-shirts

To dye, to fade, to bleach, to lose its colour, to run (because of too hot water)

To shoot in monochrome (only in black, white and grey)

Colour phrases

Phrase	Meaning
red-tape	bureaucracy
to be caught red-handed	to be caught in the middle of an illegal action
in the red	owing money, unprofitable
in the black	profitable
black market/economy	illegal trade, without paying taxes
blackout	power cut, to be unconscious
black gold	oil

white-collar job	office/desk job as opposed to working in a factory
to whitewash	To cover/hide inconvenient facts
blue-collar job	working in a factory
out of the blue	unexpectedly
blue-chip shares	safe, profitable shares
bluetooth technology	technology enabling communication using radio signals , a wireless alternative to cables
pink-collar job	badly-paid job, usually done by a woman
to give somebody/something the green light	to be allowed to start something
greenhouse effect	gradual air warming, ozone layer reduction because of pollution


Resources to describe **condition/status/origin**

Prefixes and suffixes of Greek and Latin origin are effective tools in assigning meanings related to condition, status or origin. The table below displays the most frequently-used prefixes and suffixes in the technical and scientific discourses, providing their related meanings and examples:

Prefix/ suffix	Related meanings
uni-/mono- unicycle, monochrome, monopoly	one
bi-/du(o) bicycle, duopoly	two
tri- triple, tricolour, tripod, triplet	three
quadru-/tetra- quadruple, quad bike, quadruplet, tetrahedron, tetrapod	four
poly-/multi- polychrome, multi-drilling machine	many
micro- microporous rubber	small
macro- macroporous soil	large
semi-/hemi- semi-detached, hemisphere	half of something
omni-/pan- omnidirectional antenna, pan-European summit	all
aqua-/hydro- aquaplane, hydropower	related to water
pneuma-/aero- pneumatic drill, aerodynamics	related to air

geo-/terra- geothermal power station, terrestrial magnetic field, extraterrestrial	related to earth, land
anthropo- anthropocentrism	related to man, human beings
homo- homograph, homogeneous	same, alike
hetero- heterogeneous, heterozygous	different
hyper-/super hyperglycaemia, hyperactive, superstructure, superabundant, supercomputer	above, higher
hypo-/sub- hypoglycaemia, subcategory, subway	below, under
bio- biodiversity, bioethics	related to life
phono-/sonic- phonometer, sonic branding	related to sound
in-/a-, an- incomplete, amoral, anaerobic	without, not
paleo-/arche- palaeography, archaeology	ancient, old
mal-/dys- malfunction, dysfunction	bad, wrong
-therm thermodynamics	related to heat
-graphy/-ology geography, biology	related to the study of/knowledge of
-meter photometer	measurement
-metry phonometry	process of measuring
-scope microscope, endoscope	Instrument/tool for viewing
-itis tonsillitis, meningitis	related to inflammation or infection
-tropic phototropic, thermotropic	change, transformation under certain circumstances
-oid trapezoid	shaped as, resembling something
-osis psychosis, osteoporosis	condition, especially disorder
-ism magnetism, gigantism, plagiarism	state, condition, practice

Resources to describe **components and parts**

 language patterns that perform the function of showing the **whole-part relationship**:

- X consists of
- X comprises
- X is composed of
- X is made up of
- X encompasses/embraces/includes/covers
- X can be further classified/divided into

✚ language patterns used to describe **similarities** or **differences**:

X is **similar to**

X is **comparable in**

X is **different from**

X is unlike

X **differs from**

X differs in terms of

X differs with respect to

There are significant/minor differences/similarities between,