

Common Prefixes, Suffixes and Roots

Compiled by Alice Thomas

The 20 Most Common Prefixes in Academic Texts

Prefix	Meaning	Examples
1. un-	not; opposite	uncover, unlock, unsafe
2. re-	again; back	rewrite, reread, return
3.in-, im-, ir-, i	not; into	incorrect, insert, inexpensive, illegal, irregular, inability
4. dis-	not, away, apart, negative	disagree, discord, discomfort, discontent, distrust
5. en-, em-	cause to	enjoy, endure, enlighten, entail
6. non-	not	nonsense, nonverbal, nonstick, nonspecific
7. in-, im-	in, into, not	invade, implant, imperfect, immoral, inedible, incapable
8. over-	too much	overload, overdo, overact, overboard, overdose
9. mis-	wrongly	misjudge, misinterpret, misguided, mismatch, misplace
10. sub-	under	submarine, subtext, substandard, substitute, subversive
11. pre-	before	preview, pretest, prevent, preplan
12. inter-	between, among	interstate, international, intermission, intermingle, interface
13 fore-	before	foreshadow, foresight, foreseeable, forecast, foreground
14. de-, dis-	opposite of, not	depose, detour, dehydrated, decaffeinated, discord, discomfort, disengage
15. trans-	across; move between	transatlantic, transcend, transfer, transact, transport
16. super-	above	supersonic, superstar, supernatural, superstore
17. semi-	half	semicircle, semiprecious, semicolon, semifinal
18. anti-	against	antifreeze, antithesis, antitrust, antidote, antisocial
19. mid-	middle	midterm, Midwest, midstream, midway, midnight
20. under-	too little; not enough	underfed, underdog, underestimate, underage

Ranked by Carroll et al (1971) and applied to third grade research by White, Sowell and Yanagihara (1989)

Other Common Prefixes

Prefix	Meaning	Examples
ante-	before	antebellum, antecedent, anterior
be-	to, completely	belittle, befriend, bejeweled
bene-	good, well	beneficial, benefit, benediction, benevolent
circum-	around, about	circumference, circumvent
co-, com-, con-, col-	together, with	cooperate, copilot, committee, commit, concur, concert, collide, collaborate, colleague
dia-	across, through	diagonal, diameter, diagnostic
ex-	out, from	expel, excavate, exhale
homo-	same, alike	homonym, homogenize, homophone
hyper-	over, above, excessive	hyperactive, hyperventilate, hypercritical, hyperthermia
mal-	bad, evil	malicious, maladjusted, malnutrition
micro-	small	microscopic, microcosm, microbiology, microwave
multi-	many, much	multiply, multigrain, multiple
para-	beside, alongside	paraprofessional, paralegal
poly-	many, much	polygon, polyester
post-	after, behind	postwar, posterior, postdate
pro-	forward, earlier, prior to	project, proceed, progress
retro-	back, backward	retroactive, retrogression
tele-	distant	telephone, telegraph, television
therm-	heat, warm	thermostat, thermal
trans-	across; move between	transatlantic, transcend, transfer, transact, transport
uni-	one, single	universe, unicycle, unicorn

Common Number Prefixes

Greek	Latin	Meaning	Examples
mono-	uni-	1	monotone, monopoly, monologue, monogamy, monochrome, monograph, monomial, monotheism, universe, uniform, unicorn
di-	bi-, du-, duo-	2	biology, bicycle, dichotomy, bilingual, binary, bimonthly, binoculars, duo, duet, duel
tri-	tri-	3	tricycle, triad, triathlon, triangle, tripod, triumvirate, triple
tetra-	quadri-, quart-	4	tetrameter, quadrilateral, quadriplegic, quadrangle, quadruple, quarter, quarterly, quartet, quartile
penta-	quin-	5	pentameter, pentagon, quintet, quintuplet, quintuplicate
hexa-	sext-	6	hexagon, hexameter, sextuplet, sextet, sextagenarian
hepta-	septem-, septi-	7	heptagon, heptameter, heptagon, septuagenarian
octo-	octa-, oct-	8	octagon, octogenarian, octopus, octahedron, octant
ennea-	novem-	9	novena
deca-,	deci-, decem-	10	decade, decagon, decahedron, decalogue, decimal, decibel
hemi-	semi-	half	hemisphere, semicircle, semicolon, semifinal, semiannual, semester, semisweet
poly-	multi-	many	polygon, polygamy, polyester, polymer, polynomial, multiply, multifaceted, multilingual, multitude, multivitamin, multiple
hecto-	cent-, cente-	100	cent, centennial, centurion, centipede, centenary, cent
kilo-	milli-, mille-	1000	kilogram, kilometer, kilobyte, milligram, millisecond, millennium

Common Suffixes

Suffix	Meaning	Examples
-s, -es <i>plural</i>	more than one	hotels, amendments, wishes, prefixes
-ed <i>past tense</i>	in the past	walked, jumped, helped
-ing <i>present tense</i>	in the present	walking, jumping, helping
-ate <i>verb</i>	become	complicate, hesitate, eradicate, placate, demonstrate, procrastinate, ruminate
-en <i>verb</i>	become, to make	enlighten, tighten, frighten, brighten, dampen, fasten, heighten, loosen, straighten
-ify, -fy <i>verb</i>	make or become	terrify, verify, clarify, dignify, rectify, magnify, classify
-ize, -ise <i>verb</i>	to make; to become	hypnotize, fertilize, civilize, rationalize, criticize, categorize, polarize, modernize, chastise, italicise, romanticize
-ly <i>adverb</i>	how something is	quickly, easily, happily, majestically, nonchalantly, literally, barely, carefully, abruptly
-acy <i>noun</i>	state or quality	privacy, occupancy, democracy, buoyancy, saliency, literacy, secretly, politely, rapidly
-ance, -ence <i>noun</i>	state or quality of	maintenance, eminence, prominence, dominance, coincidence, decadence, cadence
-dom <i>noun</i>	place or state of being	freedom, kingdom, wisdom, fiefdom, boredom, martyrdom
-er, -or, -ist, -ian, -eer <i>noun</i>	one who; what/that/which	trainer, teacher, toaster, mentor, survivor, orator, governor, pianist, specialist, dentist, librarian, magician, technician, engineer, pioneer
-ism <i>noun</i>	doctrine, belief	communism, socialism, pragmatism, realism, feudalism, racism, Catholicism, Buddhism, capitalism
-ist <i>noun</i>	one who	chemist, socialist, biologist, publicist, realist, romanticist, pragmatist
-ity, -ty <i>noun</i>	quality of	veracity, honesty, clarity, laxity, sanity, vanity, rigidity, velocity, curiosity, responsibility
-ment <i>noun</i>	condition of	argument, judgment, apartment, contentment, resentment, basement
-ness <i>noun</i>	state of being	heaviness, happiness, openness, harshness, cleanliness, carelessness
-ion, -sion, -tion <i>noun</i>	state of being; quality; act	concession, transition, action, erosion, vision, invitation, conclusion, condemnation

Common Suffixes (continued)

-ology <i>noun</i>	study of	biology, mineralogy, ecology
-age <i>noun</i>	result of an action	marriage, pilgrimage
-hood <i>noun</i>	condition of being	neighborhood, falsehood, childhood
-ary <i>noun</i>	place for, collection of; one who	glossary, library, secretary, dignitary
-ship <i>noun</i>	art or skill of, condition, rank, group of	leadership, citizenship, ownership, companionship, friendship
-able, -ible <i>adjective</i>	able to be, worthy of, capable of	comfortable, likable, enjoyable, honorable, predictable, terrible, sensible, incredible, edible, visible
-ful <i>adjective</i>	notable for, full of	fanciful, beautiful, wonderful, colorful, eventful, fearful, hateful, resentful
-ic, -al, -ial, -ical <i>adjective, noun</i>	pertaining to, relating to	energetic, historic, caustic, volcanic, refusal, regional, proposal, fatal, cordial, territorial, spatial, social, comical, historical, magical, logical, rehearsal
-ious, -ous <i>adjective</i>	characterized by, full of, having	nutritious, portentous, pretentious, curious, furious, prosperous
-ish <i>adjective</i>	having the quality of	fiendish, childish, selfish, boyish
-ive <i>adjective</i>	having the nature of, somewhat like	creative, festive, responsive, positive, negative, inventive
-less <i>adjective</i>	without	endless, fruitless, worthless, powerless, bottomless, relentless, selfless
-y, -ly <i>adjective</i>	characterized by; act in a way that	sleazy, pudgy, funny, foggy, risky, milky, sudsy, curly, crazy, shiny, manly, heavenly

Common Latin and Greek Roots

Root	Meaning	Origin	Examples
aqua	water	Greek	aquarium, aqueduct, aquaculture, aquamarine, aquaplane, aquatic
aud	hearing	Latin	audio, audition, audiovisual, auditorium, inaudible
auto	self	Greek	autograph, autobiography, automobile, autocrat, autonomy
astro	star	Greek	astronomy, astrophysics, astrology, astronaut, astronomer, asterisk
biblio	book	Greek	Bible, bibliography, bibliophobia, bibliophile, biblioklept
bio	life	Greek	biography, biology, autobiography, bionic, biotic, antibiotic, biometrics
chron	time	Greek	synchronize, chronology, chronic, chronicle, anachronism
cide	to kill, a killer	Latin	homicide, suicide, genocide
corp	body	Latin	corpse, corporation, corps, incorporate, corporeal, corpulence
cred	to believe	Latin	credit, credentials, credulous, incredible
demo, dem	the people	Greek	democracy, demography, demagogue, endemic, pandemic
dic, dict	speak, tell	Latin	dictate, dictation, diction, dictator, verdict, predict, contradict, benediction, edict
dorm	sleep	Latin	dormant, dormitory, dormer, dormouse
geo	earth	Greek	geology, geologist, geometry, geography, geographer, geopolitical
graph	to write, to draw	Greek	autograph, biography, photograph, telegraph, lithograph
homo	same, alike	Greek	homonym, homogenize, homophone
hydro	water	Greek	hydroplane, dehydrate, hydroelectric, hydrogen
ject	throw	Latin	reject, deject, project, inject, injection, projection

Common Latin and Greek Roots (continued)

junct	to join	Latin	junction, conjunction, adjunct, juncture
logos, logy	study	Greek	geology, astrology, biology, numerology, zoology, technology, psychology, anthropology, mythology
luna	moon	Latin	lunar, lunacy, lunatic, interlunar
meter	measure	Greek	meter, thermometer, diameter, geometry, optometry, barometer, centimeter, symmetry, voltammeter
micro	small	Greek	microscopic, microscope, microcosm
mega, macro	great, large	Greek	megaphone, megalith, megatons, megalopolis, macroclimate, macroevolution
min	small, little	Latin	minimal, minimize, minimum, mini, miniature, minuscule, minute, minority
mit, mis	send	Latin	mission, transmit, transmission, remit, missile, submission, permit, emit, emissary
path	feeling, suffering	Greek	pathetic, pathology, apathy, antipathy, sympathy, telepathy, empathy, sociopath
ped	foot	Latin	pedestrian, pedal, peddle, peddler, pedicure, pedometer
philia	love, friendship	Greek	philosopher, Philadelphia, philanthropist, philharmonic, Philip
phobia	fear, intense dislike	Greek	claustrophobia, xenophobic, arachnophobia
phono	sound	Greek	phonograph, microphone, symphony, telephone, phonogram, megaphone, phony, euphony, xylophone
photo	light	Greek	phonograph, photosynthesis, telephoto, photometer, photosensitive
port	carry	Latin	port, transport, transportation, portable, portage, report
psycho	mind, mental	Greek	psychology, psychic, psychotropic, psychologist
rupt	to break	Latin	disrupt, interrupt, rupture, corrupt
spect	see	Latin	respect, inspection, inspector, spectator, spectacles, prospect
scope	look at	Greek	microscope, telescope, periscope, kaleidoscope

Common Latin and Greek Roots (continued)

script	to write	Latin	scribble, manuscript, scripture, prescription
sol	sun	Latin	solar, solar system, solstice, solarium, parasol
struct	build, form	Latin	instruct, instruction, construction, reconstruction, destruct, destruction, infrastructure, construe, instrument, instrumental
therm	heat, warm	Greek	thermostat, thermal
tele	distant	Greek	telephone, television, telegraph, telephoto, telescope, telepathy, telethon
terra	land	Latin	terrarium, extraterrestrial, Mediterranean Sea, subterranean, terrain, <i>terra firma</i>
vert, vers	to turn	Latin	reverse, versatile, invert, convert, divert
zoo	animal	Greek	zoology, zoogeography, zootoxin