



Prefixes &

Suffixes

Prefixes

Prefixes are added to the beginning of an existing word in order to create a new word with a different meaning. A prefix is a letter or a group of letters that attaches to the beginning of a word and helps to indicate or modify its meaning. An easy example would be the word ‘prefix’ itself! It begins with the prefix *pre-*, which means ‘before’.

Examples of Prefixes

PREFIX	MEANING	EXAMPLES
anti-	against, opposing	antibiotic, antidepressant, antidote
circum-	around	circumstance, circumnavigate
co-	with	co-worker, co-pilot, co-operation

Examples of Prefixes

PREFIX	MEANING	EXAMPLES
dis-	opposite of, not	disagree, disappear, disintegrate, disapprove
em-, en-	cause to, put into	embrace, encode, embed, enclose, engulf
epi-	upon, close to, after	epicentre, episcope, epidermis
ex-	former, out of	ex-president, ex-boyfriend, exterminate

Combining Forms

Sometimes words have ‘combining forms’, which look very similar to prefixes but work differently! Combining forms are similar to prefixes, and are sometimes known as ‘chameleon prefixes’, because they act like them and appear at the beginning of words like them, BUT the combining form is intrinsic to the word, meaning it is a part of the word and cannot be removed.

Combining Forms

PREFIX	MEANING	EXAMPLE	COMBINING FORM	MEANING	EXAMPLE
de-	opposite	devalue	de-	down, away	descend
ex-	former	ex-husband	ex-	out	exhort
in-	not	inconvenient	in-	into	indulge

Suffixes

A suffix is a letter or a group of letters that is usually attached to the end of a word to form a new word.

Examples of Suffixes

SUFFIX	MEANING	EXAMPLE
-acy	state or quality	democracy, accuracy, lunacy
-al	the action or process of	remedial, denial, trial, criminal
-ance, -ence	state or quality of	nuisance, ambience, tolerance
-dom	place or state of being	freedom, stardom, boredom

Examples of Suffixes

SUFFIX	MEANING	EXAMPLE
-er, -or	person or object that does a specified action	reader, creator, interpreter, inventor, collaborator, teacher
-ism	doctrine, belief	Judaism, scepticism, escapism
-ist	person or object that does a specified action	Geologist, protagonist, sexist, scientist, theorist, communist
-ity, -ty	quality of	extremity, validity, enormity

Exercise: Put the word in brackets into the correct form. You will have to use prefixes and/or suffixes

- He was sitting _____ in his seat on the train. (comfort)
- There was a _____ light coming from the window. (green)
- He was acting in a very _____ way. (child)
- This word is very difficult to spell, and even worse, it's _____. (pronounce)
- He's lost his book again. I don't know where he has _____ it this time. (place)

Exercise: Put the word in brackets into the correct form. You will have to use prefixes and/or suffixes

- You shouldn't have done that! It was very _____ of you. (think)
- He didn't pass his exam. He was _____ for the second time. (succeed)
- Some of the shanty towns are dreadfully _____. (crowd)
- The team that he supported were able to win the_____. (champion)
- There is a very high _____ that they will be late. (likely)
- I couldn't find any _____ in his theory. (weak)

Exercise: Put the word in brackets into the correct form. You will have to use prefixes and/or suffixes

- He wants to be a _____ when he grows up. (mathematics)
- You need to be a highly trained _____ to understand this report. (economy)
- There were only a _____ of people at the match. (hand)
- The film was _____ good. (surprise)