A [prefix](http://engtuto.com/prefix/) is an affix which is placed at the beginning of a word to modify or change its meaning. For example, when the prefix *un-* is added to the word **real,** it creates the word **unreal**. A prefix is also called a **preformative**, because it alters the form of the words to which it is affixed.

Following is a fairly comprehensive [list of prefixes together with their basic meaning](http://engtuto.com/prefix/) and some examples.  The origins of these prefixes are extremely complicated. You should therefore use this list as a guide only, to understand possible meanings, and also to know that some words sound like prefixes but they are not prefixes at all. This list does not include ‘combining forms’ words like “auto-” or ” bio-” because these are  not prefixes.

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| **Prefix-A** | **Meaning** | **Example** |
| **a-** | **“not”** | **asymmetric, “not symmetric”**  **atheist “not theist”** |
| **acro-** | **“high”** | **acrophobia, “fear of heights”** |
| **allo-** | **“other”** | **allotransplantation, “transplant of tissue**  **from another person”** |
| **alter-** | **“at least secondary”** | **alter ego, “an at least secondary personality”** |
| **an-** | **“not/without”** | **anaerobic, “not requiring air to live”** |
| **ante-** | **“before”** | **antebellum, “before a war”** |
| **anti-** | **“against”** | **anti-inflammatory, “against inflammation”** |
| **auto-** | **“self”** | **automobile, “moves itself”** |
| **Prefix-B,C,D** | **Meaning** | **Example** |
| **bi-** | **“two”** | **bicentennial, “consisting of or occurring**  **every two centuries”** |
| **co-** | **“together”** | **cooperation, “working together”** |
| **contra-** | **“against”** | **contraindication, “against indication”** |
| **counter-** | **“against”** | **countermeasure, “action against”** |
| **de-** | **“negative, remove”** | **deactivate, “stop from working”** |
| **di-** | **“two”** | **diatomic, “two atoms”** |
| **dis-** | **“negative, remove”** | **disappear, “vanish”** |
| **down-** | **“down”; “reduce”** | **downshift, “shift to a lower gear” downregulation, “regulation toward**  **lessened expression”** |
| **dys-** | **“negative, badly, wrongly”** | **dysfunction, “bad function”** |
| **Prefix-E,H** | **Meaning** | **Example** |
| **epi-** | **“on, above”** | **epidural, “outside the dura mater”** |
| **extra-** | **“outside”** | **extracellular, “outside a cell”** |
| **hemi-** | **“half”** | **hemisphere, “half of a sphere”** |
| **hexa-** | **“six”** | **hexagon, “six-sided polygon”** |
| **hyper-** | **“a lot”; “too much”** | **hypercalcemia, “too much calcium in the**  **blood”** |
| **hypo-** | **“a little”; “not enough”** | **hypokalemia, “not enough potassium in**  **the blood”** |
| **Prefix-I** | **Meaning** | **Example** |
| **ig-** | **“not”** | **ignoble, “not noble” ignorant, (from roots meaning)**  **“not knowing”** |
| **il-** | **“not”** | **illegal, “not legal”** |
| **im-** | **“not”** | **imbalance, “lack of balance”** |
| **in-** | **“not”** | **inactive, “not active”** |
| **infra-** | **“below”** | **infrared, “below red on the spectrum”** |
| **inter-** | **“between”** | **interobserver, “between observers”** |
| **intra-** | **“within”** | **intracellular, “inside a cell”** |
| **ir-** | **“not”** | **irregular, “not regular”** |
| **Prefix-M,N,O** | **Meaning** | **Example** |
| **macro-** | **“large-scale”** | **macroeconomics, “workings of entire economies”** |
| **mal-** | **“bad”, “wrong”** | **malocclusion, “bad occlusion”** |
| **maxi-** | **“big”, “as big as possible”** | **maxi-single, “single with extras”** |
| **meso-** | **“middle”** | **mesoamerican, “middle of the Americas”** |
| **micro-** | **“small-scale”** | **micrometer, “small-measurement instrument”** |
| **mid-** | **“middle”** | **midportion, “middle part”** |
| **mini-** | **“small”** | **miniature, “small”; “smaller version”** |
| **mis-** | **“bad”, “wrong”** | **misspelling, “incorrect spelling”** |
| **mono-** | **“one”** | **monotheism, “belief in one god”** |
| **multi-** | **“many”, “more than one”** | **multiplex, “many signals in one circuit”** |
| **non-** | **“no”, “not”** | **nonstop, “without stopping”** |
| **octo-** | **“eight”** | **octopus, “eight-footed”** |
| **over-** | **“excess”, “too much”; “on top”** | **overexpression, “too much expression” overcoat, “outer coat”** |
| **Prefix-P** | **Meaning** | **Example** |
| **pan-** | **“all”** | **pancytopenia, “low counts across all cell types” pan-American, “involving all of the Americas”** |
| **para-** | **“beside”; “beyond”; “related to”; “altered”** | **paranormal, “beyond the normal” paresthesia, “altered sensation” paramilitary, “military-like”** |
| **penta-** | **“five”** | **pentateuch, “the five books of Moses”** |
| **per-** | **“through”; “throughout”** | **percutaneous, “through the skin”** |
| **peri-** | **“around”** | **pericardial, “around the heart”** |
| **poly-** | **“many”** | **polyglot, “many languages”** |
| **post-** | **“after”** | **postoperative, “after surgery”** |
| **pre-** | **“before”; “already”** | **preassembled, “already built”** |
| **pro-** | **“in favor of”** | **pro-science, “in favor of science”** |
| **proto-** | **“first”; “primitive”; “precursor”** | **Proto-Indo-European, “precursor of Indo-European”** |
| **pseudo-** | **“false”, “specious”** | **pseudonym, “fake name”** |
| **Prefix-Q,R,S** | **Meaning** | **Example** |
| **quadri-** | **“four”** | **quadrilateral, “four-sided”** |
| **quasi-** | **“somewhat”, “resembling”** | **quasiparticulate, “resembling particles”** |
| **re-** | **“again”** | **reestablish, “establish again”** |
| **self-** | **“[acting on or by] oneself”** | **self-cleaning, “cleans itself”** |
| **semi-** | **“partial”; “somewhat”; “half”** | **semiarid, “somewhat arid”** |
| **sub-** | **“below”** | **subzero, “below zero”** |
| **super-** | **“above”; “more than”; “great”** | **supermarket, “big market”** |
| **supra-** | **“above”** | **supraorbital, “above the eye sockets”** |
| **Prefix-T,U,X** | **Meaning** | **Example** |
| **tetra-** | **“four”** | **tetravalent, “four valence electrons”** |
| **trans-** | **“across”; “connecting”** | **transatlantic, “across the Atlantic Ocean”** |
| **tri-** | **“three”** | **tripartite, “three parts”** |
| **ultra-** | **“beyond”; “extremely”** | **ultraviolet, “beyond violet on the spectrum”** |
| **un-** | **“not”; “remove”; “opposite”** | **unopened, “not opened”** |
| **under-** | **“beneath”; “not enough”** | **underexposure, “not enough exposure”** |
| **up-** | **“up”; “increase”** | **upshift, “shift to a higher gear” upregulation, “regulation toward increased expression”** |
| **xeno-** | **“foreign”** | **xenophobia, “fear of strangers or foreigners” xenotransplantation, “transplant from another species”** |