

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.

<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

<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

<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

<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

<i>in, il, im, ir (1)</i>	not	inefficient, inarticulate, illegible, irrepressible
<i>in, il, im, ir (2)</i>	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