

Prefixes and suffixes

Words with a different grammatical form or meaning can be derived from a base word using prefixes and suffixes. By understanding how these prefixes and suffixes work, it is often easier to deal with unknown vocabulary. You can sometimes see what part of speech a word is (verb, noun, adjective etc.), or additional information that a prefix may give.

1. Changes in grammatical form.

The noun 'power' can be used as an adjective by adding the suffix ~ful (powerful). The adverbial form is made by adding the suffix ~ly to the adjective (powerfully).

The verb 'to improve' becomes a noun by adding the suffix ~ment (improvement). The same root word can also become a verb (improvise)

The noun 'nation' changes into an adjective with the suffix ~al (national), and by adding another suffix

~ize the word changes from an adjective to a verb (nationalize)

The adjective 'special' can change to a verb (specialize) or a noun (speciality).

2. Changes in meaning.

Prefixes and suffixes can also change the meaning of a word.

The meaning of 'possible' is reversed with the addition of the prefix im~ (impossible).

To 'overeat' means to eat too much and if food is undercooked, it is not cooked enough.

Some suffixes commonly denote an occupation.

Eg. The verb 'to teach' is transformed into the occupation with the suffix ~er (teacher).

Both grammatical changes and changes in meaning can be applied to the same base word.

Eg. The noun 'interest' can be made an adjective and given opposite meaning by adding a prefix and a suffix ~un....~ing (uninteresting).

3. Changes in pronunciation.

When prefixes and suffixes are added to root words, the word stress sometimes changes.

Eg. Noun & verb: '**ph**otograph'. Adjective: 'photo**g**raphic'. Opposite: '**un**photo**g**raphic'.

Person: 'photo**g**rapher'.

In English the word stress is often on the third syllable from the end.

Overleaf is a list of the most common suffixes and prefixes and the grammatical and meaning changes that they apply to root words.

Prefixes

What Are Prefixes?

- Prefixes are first syllables like “non-” and “re-” that have their own meaning.
 - Prefixes combine with words to create new meanings.
- 1.Pre + View = Preview (first look)
 - 2.Super + Star = Superstar (top player)

Why Learn Prefixes?

- Prefixes add meaning to thousands of words.
- Learn a few prefixes, and you open up the meaning of thousands of words.
- The four most frequent prefixes are **97%** of prefixed words!

Most Common Prefixes

1. a = without : amoral, apolitical, atypical
2. ante = before : antecedent, antedate
3. anti = against, opposing : anti-war, anti-bacterial
4. arch = more extreme : arch-capitalist, arch-rebel
5. auto = self : auto-dial, auto-rotate
6. bi = two, twice : bilingual, bisect, bi-monthly
7. circum = round : circumnavigate, circumvent
8. co = with : co-author, co-edit
9. col, com, con = with : collaborate, combine, connect
10. contra, counter = against, opposing : contraception, counter-claim
11. de = opposite action : declassify, destroy
12. dia = across : diagonal, diameter
13. dis = not, opposite of : disagree, disprove, distrust, disbelief
14. dys = abnormal : dyslexia, dysfunctional
15. e = electronic : e-literate, e-book
16. eco = relating to the environment : eco-tourism, eco-disaster
17. en(m) = cause to : encode, embrace
18. equi = equal : equidistant, equilateral
19. ex = previously : ex-president, ex-student
20. extra = very : extra-bright, extra-strong
21. extra = outside : extra-curricular, extra-sensory
22. fore = before : forecast
23. hyper = having too much : hyperactive, hypersensitive
24. il, im, in, ir = not : illogical, impossible, indistinct, irrational
25. in(m) = in, movement to: input, inset, intake, implant, import
26. inter = between, connected : interrelated, interact
27. intra = within : intra-generational, intramuscular

28. kilo = thousand : kilogram, kilometer, kilowatt
29. macro = large in size or scope : macro-economics, macro-scale
30. mal = badly : malfunction, malpractice
31. micro = small in size or scope : micro-economics, micro-scale
32. mid = middle : midway
33. mis = wrongly : mistake, mistranslate, misunderstanding
34. mono = one : mono-centric, monoculture
35. multi = many : multicultural, multi-level
36. neo = based on something older but in new form : neo-classical
37. non = not : non-believer, non-competitive, nonsense
38. out = more, to a greater extent : outnumber, outlive
39. over = over/above/too much : overlook, overcook, overhead
40. post = after : post-examination, post-modern
41. pre = before : pre-industrial, preview, pre-war
42. pro = in favour of : pro-feminist, pro-liberal
43. pseudo = false : pseudo-intellectual, pseudo-science
44. quasi = almost, not quite : quasi-academic, quasi-legal
45. re = again : rediscover, redefine, rename, return
46. retro = backwards : retrogressive, retrospective
47. semi = half, partly : semicircle, semi-organic, semi-precious
48. sub = under, beneath, part of something: submarine, subsection
49. super = above, bigger : superpower, supersonic, superstar
50. trans = across : transcontinental, transcribe, transport
51. ultra = extreme : ultra-sensitive, ultrasound
52. un = not : uncertain, unusual, unscrew, unplug, unfriendly
53. under = insufficient, under, beneath : underemployed, undersea
54. well = useful, successful : well-designed, well-written

Now we will turn our attention to suffixes

Suffixes for

Nouns

~ment ~er
~ness ~age
~sion ~sis
~tion ~ism
~ty ~ity
~al ~ant
~ance ~ssion
~hood ~ship
~dom ~th
~ght ~cess
~ful

Suffixes for

Adjectives

~ful ~ive
~ic ~al
~able ~ed
~ible ~ing
~ous ~ish
~y ~ly
~like ~some
~worthy

Suffixes for

Verbs

~ize
~ise
~yse
~ate
~ent
~en
~ify
~fy
~ct
~fine
~ive

Suffixes for

Adverbs

~ly
~ily
~ely
~ingly

Suffixes for

Professions & people

~er
~ess (female)
~or
~ian
~ist
~ic
~ee
~eer
~man

Suffixes for

University subjects

~ics
~y
~ing
~ism

Suffixes for

'Without/small'

~less
~let

What Are Suffixes?

Suffixes are last syllables like “ed” and “ly” that have their own meaning.

Suffixes combine with words to create new meanings.

1. Turn + ed = Turned (in the past)
2. Quick + ly = Quickly (how it turned)

Why Learn Suffixes?

Suffixes add meaning to thousands of words.

Learn a few Suffixes, and you open up the meaning of thousands of words.

The four most frequent suffixes are 97% of suffixed words!

Most Common Suffixes

1. -able, ible = can be done : identifiable, predictable
2. -al, ial = has property of : personal
3. -ant = having an effect : coolant, accelerant
4. -based = forming a major part of : computer-based, oil-based
5. -cy = state or quality : accuracy, literacy, urgency
6. -ed* = past verb : turned
7. -ee = person affected by something : interviewee, trainee, addressee
8. -en = made of : golden
9. -er = comparative : higher
10. -er = one who : doer, actor
11. -est = superlative : best, biggest
12. -free = without : debt-free, pain-free
13. -ful = full of : careful, joyful
14. -hood = state, condition, period : adulthood, motherhood
15. -ic = having property of, connected with : linguistic, photographic, electric
16. -ics = study of : genetics, electronics
17. -ify = give something a quality : clarify, purify, solidify
18. -ing* = present participle : running
19. -ism = belief, behaviour : modernism, heroism
20. -ist = person with specific beliefs or behaviour : anarchist, optimist
21. -(t)ion = act, process : action
22. -(i)ty = state of : infinity, sanity
23. -(t)ive = adjective : motive, votive
24. -ize, -ise = bring about a state or condition : modernize/modernize, colonize/colonise
25. -less = without : fearless, careless, childless, meaningless
26. -like = resembling : bird-like, child-like, hook-like
27. -ly* = having : quickly, quietly
28. -ment = action, process : enjoyment
29. -ness = quality or state of : kindness, effectiveness, openness

- 30. –ocracy = type of ruling body : meritocracy, bureaucracy
- 31. –ocrat = person ruling : technocrat, aristocrat
- 32. –ology, -ological = study of : archaeology, biology, biological, geology, physiological
- 33. –ous = having : joyous, religious
- 34. –proof = protected against, safe from : waterproof, dustproof
- 35. –s* = more than one : books
- 36. –ship = state or experience of having a specific position : professorship, leadership
- 20. –y = having : happy, windy

Use these suffixes correctly, and you look and sound pretty smart.