

Root Words, Roots and Affixes

Common Greek Roots – understanding Greek word patterns and their meanings can help you spell many new words.

Greek Root	Definition	Example
anthropo	man; human; humanity	anthropologist, philanthropy
aster, astr	star	astrology, astronomy
auto	self	autobiography, automobile
bi, bio	life	biology, biography
centr	center	central, center
chron	time	chronological, chronic
cycle	circle	cyclone, cycling
dyna	power	dynamic, dynamite
dys	bad; hard; unlucky	dysfunctional, dyslexic
geo	earth	geology, geography
gram	thing written	epigram, telegram
graph	writing	graphic, phonograph
hetero	different	heteronym, heterogeneous
homo	same	homonym, homogenous
hydr	water	hydration, dehydrate
hyper	over; above; beyond	hyperactive, hyperbole
hypo	below; beneath	hypothermia, hypothetical
logy	study of	biology, psychology
meter/metr	measure	thermometer, perimeter
micro	small	microbe, microscope
mis/miso	hate	misanthrope, misogyny
mono	one	monologue, monotonous
morph	form; shape	morphology, morphing
nym	name	antonym, synonym
phil	love	philanthropist, philosophy
phobia	fear	claustrophobia, phobic
phon, phone	sounds	phonics, phoneme
photo/phos	light	photograph, phosphorous
phys	nature	physiology
pseudo	false	pseudonym, pseudoscience
psycho	soul; spirit	psychology, psychic
scope	viewing instrument	microscope, telescope
techno	art; science; skill	technique, technological
tele	far off	television, telephone
therm	heat	thermal, thermometer

Many Greek roots spell the /f/ sound with the letters ph. When you hear the /f/ sound in an unfamiliar word with a Greek root, spell it with a ph.

Common Latin Roots – Latin roots are meaningful word parts that combine with words.

Latin Root	Definition	Example
ambi	both	ambiguous, ambidextrous
aqua	water	aquarium, aquamarine
aud	to hear	audience, audition
bene	good	benefactor, benevolent
cent	one hundred	century, percent
circum	around	circumference, circumstance
contra/counter	against	contradict, encounter
dic, dict	to say	dictation, dictator
duc/duct	to lead	conduct, induce
equa, equi	even	equal, equity
fac	to do; to make	factory, manufacture
form	shape	conform, reform
fort	strength	fortitude, fortress
fract	break	fracture, fraction
gram	to write	grammar
ject	throw	projection, rejection
jud	judge	judicial, prejudice
mal	bad	malevolent, malefactor
mater	mother	maternal, maternity
min	to make smaller	minimize, minimal
mit	to send	transmit, admit
mort	death	mortal, mortician
multi	many	multimedia, multiple
pater	father	paternal, paternity
port	to carry	portable, transportation
rupt	to break	bankrupt, disruption
scrib/script	to write	inscription, prescribe
sect/sec	to cut	bisect, section
sent, sens	to feel; to send	consent, resent
spect	to look	inspection, spectator
struct	to build	destruction, restructure
vid/vis	to see	televise, video
voc	voice; to call	vocalize, advocate

Affixes

One method of understanding the meanings of new words is to analyze the different parts of the word and the meanings of those parts. Many new words are formed by adding an *affix* to the beginning or end of a Latin or Greek root or root word. When affixes are added to the beginning of roots or root words, they are called *prefixes*. For example, the most common prefix is *un-*, which means *not* or *opposite of*. If you add *un-* to the word *happy*, the new word becomes *unhappy*, which means *not happy*. When affixes are added to the end of roots or root words, they are called *suffixes*. The most common suffixes are *-s* and *-es*, which mean more than one (or the plural) of the word. Adding *-es* to *wish*, changes the meaning of the word to *more than one wish*.

Common Prefixes

Prefix	Definition	Example
anti-	against	anticlimax, antifreeze
de-	opposite	devalue, defrost
dis- *	not; opposite of	discover, disagree
en-, em-	cause to	enact, empower
fore-	before; front of	foreshadow, forearm
in-, im-	in	income, impulse, infield
in-, im-, il-, ir- *	not	indirect, immoral, impossible illiterate, irreverent, injustice
inter-	between; among	interrupt, interact
mid-	middle	midfield, midway
mis-	wrongly	misspell, misfire
non-	not	nonviolent, nonsense
over-	over; too much	overeat, overlook
pre-	before	preview, prefix
re- *	again	rewrite, return
semi-	half; partly; not fully	semifinal, semicircle
sub-	Under	subway, submarine
super-	above; beyond	superhuman, superstar
trans-	across	transmit, transport
un- *	not; opposite of	unusual, unfriendly
under-	under; too little	underestimate, undersea

* Most frequent. The four most frequent prefixes account for 97 percent of prefixed words in printed school English.

Common Suffixes

Suffix	Definition	Example
-able, -ible	is; can be	affordable, sensible, comfortable
-al, -ial	having characteristics of	universal, facial, personal
-ed *	past tense verbs; adjectives	the dog walked, the walked dog
-en	made of	golden, wooden
-er, -or	one who; person connected with	teacher, professor, worker, actor
-er	more	taller, bigger
-est	the most	tallest, biggest
-ful	full of	helpful, careful
-ic	having characteristics of	poetic, linguistic
-ing *	verb forms; present participles	sleeping, running
-ion, -tion, -ation, -ition	act; process	submission, motion, relation, edition
-ity, -ty	state of	activity, society, infinity
-ive, -ative, -itive	adjective form of noun	active, comparative, sensitive
-less	without	hopeless, fearless
-ly *	how something is	lovely, quickly
-ment	state of being; act of	contentment, enjoyment
-ness	state of; condition of	openness, kindness
-ous, -eous, -ious	having qualities of	riotous, courageous, gracious, joyous
-s, -es *	more than one	trains, trenches, books, boxes
-y	characterized by	gloomy, happy

* Most frequent. The four most frequent suffixes account for 97 percent of suffixed words in printed school English.