

Word building

These two pages deal with the way in which groups of letters are added to words to make different words.

Prefixes

Sometimes a group of letters is added to the *beginning* of a word. This group of letters is called a **prefix**. There are many prefixes. Some common prefixes that you might have noticed are 'dis', meaning *not*, for example in the word 'dishonest', and 'inter', meaning *between*, for example in the word 'international'.

Here is a list of common prefixes with an explanation of what each prefix means and examples of words that contain those prefixes.

Prefix	What the prefix means	Words containing the prefix
anti-	'against' or 'preventing'	antisocial, antifreeze
auto-	to do with yourself	autobiography
bi-	'two' or 'twice'	bicycle, bilingual
co-	'together with' or 'working with'	co-star, cooperate
de-	1. removing something 2. the opposite of	defrost decompose
dis-	not	dislike
eco-	to do with the environment	eco-friendly
inter-	between	international
mini-	'small' or 'short'	minibus, miniskirt
mis	'bad' or 'badly' or 'wrong' or 'wrongly'	misbehave, misunderstand
non-	not	a non-smoker
over-	'too' or 'too much'	overconfident, overcrowded
post-	after	postwar
pre-	before	prehistoric
re-	again	reappear
sub-	below	submarine
super-	'above' or 'extreme'	superhuman, superpower
under-	1. below 2. not enough	underground undernourished

Notice that some prefixes, for example 'de-' and 'under' have more than one meaning.

Exercise 1

The words in the box below all contain a prefix from the table above. Use the information in the table and your dictionary to match these words to the definitions 1-10. Make sure you understand the meaning of the prefix in each word.

under-age, ecotourism, bicentenary, antidote, postgraduate, non-fiction, autograph, coexist, mini-break, supermodel

1. a short holiday
2. not old enough to do something legally
3. the name of a famous person, written by them
4. to live or exist together at the same time or in the same place
5. holidays that are organized so that they help local people and do not damage the environment
6. a very successful model who earns a lot of money
7. a person who already has a university qualification and who is studying for an advanced qualification
8. something that stops the harmful effects of something else
9. the day or year that is 200 years after an important event
10. writing that is about real facts, not invented stories

Suffixes

Sometimes a group of letters is added to the *end* of a word. This group of letters is called a **suffix**. A suffix often changes a word into a different part of speech. For example the suffix '-ness' is added to the end of an adjective such as 'happy' to make the noun 'happiness'. Another example is the suffix '-ful' which changes a noun such as 'hope' into the adjective 'hopeful', meaning 'having a lot of hope'.

Here is a list of common suffixes with an explanation of what each suffix means and whether it changes the part of speech. There are also examples of words that contain those prefixes.

Suffix	What the suffix means	Words containing the suffix
-able	used to make adjectives meaning 'able to be'	preventable

-ful	used to make adjectives meaning 'full of'	hopeful
-ism	used to make nouns to do with beliefs or qualities	communism, heroism
-ist	1. used to make nouns to do with people who do a particular thing	artist
	2. used to make nouns to do with people who have particular beliefs	communist
-ize or ise	used to make verbs to do with making something become a particular way	computerize
-less	used to make adjectives meaning 'without'	hopeless, thoughtless
-ment	added to the end of verbs to make nouns relating to the results of the actions or processes of the verb	accomplishment
-ness	added to the end of adjectives to make nouns relating to the qualities or states of the adjectives	sadness
-proof	added to the end of words to mean 'protected against'	waterproof
-ship	used to make nouns relating to the relationships between people	friendship

Notice that some suffixes, for example '-ist', have more than one meaning.

Exercise 2

The words in the box below all contain a suffix from the table above. Use the information in the table and your dictionary to match these words to the definitions below. Make sure you understand the meaning or function of the suffix in each word.

believable, homeless, powerful, punishment, demoralize, loneliness, partnership, childproof

1. designed so that a child cannot open, use or damage something
2. a relationship between two or more people or groups working together
3. having a lot of physical force
4. when you are unhappy because you are alone
5. something that is done to punish someone
6. making you think that something is true or real
7. to make someone feel less confident about doing something
8. having nowhere to live