71 Word building: prefixes

A *un-*

In English, ***un-*** is the most common prefix and is added to some adjectives and verbs to give the opposite meaning.

*We were **unable** to go to the party because we were both ill.*

*It was **unnecessary** for them to come to the airport to meet us.*

*I think it was **unfair** giving the job to Ed: he wasn't the best person.*

*I've got an old car, and it's **unreliable** in very cold weather.*

*I was rude to Adam the other day, so he's very **unlikely** to invite me to his party.*

*I used to play rugby, but these days I'm very **unfit** and can't run far.*

*Certain films are completely **unsuitable** for young children to watch.*

*In some countries, Friday 13th is thought to be **unlucky**.*

*I **unlocked** the door and went in.*

*I usually **unplug** my washing machine if I go away on holiday.*

GLOSSARY

unfair	Sth or sb that is **unfair** does not treat people in the same way or the right way. OPP **fair**
unreliable	If sth or sb is **unreliable**, you cannot trust it or him/her. OPP **reliable**
unlikely	If sth is **unlikely** to happen, it's probably not going to happen. OPP **likely**
unfit	not in good physical condition OPP **fit**
unsuitable (for sb/sth)	not right for sb/sth OPP **suitable**
unlucky	having bad things happen to you which you cannot control OPP **lucky**
unlock	open sth, e.g. a door, using a key OPP **lock**
unplug	remove a piece of electrical equipment from the electricity supply OPP **plug sth in**

SPOTLIGHT *word stress*

When you add a prefix to an adjective, it doesn't usually change the stress, e.g. happy, unhappy. But the stress can change if you want to emphasize the negative.

- *Is he **likely to come?** ~ No, he's very **unlikely** to come.*

1 Most of these words have the stress on the second syllable, but one word has the stress on a different syllable. Which word? Use the APP to help you. Practise saying the words.

▶ unlikely unfit unsuitable unnecessary unplug unlucky unable unfair unreliable _____

2 Complete the sentences with a word from the box.

unfair unlocked unlucky unlikely ✓ unreliable unsuitable unnecessary

▶ He probably won't get the job. It's very unlikely.

1 You didn't need to do it. It was _____.

2 I turned the handle and the door opened. It was _____.

3 He never comes when he says he will. He's very _____.

4 Some people weren't able to vote, and they had the right to do so. It was _____.

5 The weather is usually good in July, but this year it was wet. We were _____.

6 Dad bought mum a saucepan for her birthday. What an _____ present!

3 Complete the sentences.

▶ I missed the plane by two minutes – it was so unlucky!

1 Jacob often promises to help but rarely does – he's very _____.

2 I was _____ to see my relatives on this trip because I was too busy with work.

3 Why do men get paid more than women for the same job? It's very _____.

4 My brother can't get up the stairs. He smokes, and he's very _____.

5 Fiona is _____ to be here on time – she's usually late.

6 We were out in a storm, and the clothes we had on were _____, so we got wet.

7 Don't take _____ risks when you're climbing. It's a dangerous mountain.

8 Remember to _____ the iron when you've finished.

9 I tried to get in the flat but I couldn't _____ the door.

4 Which of these words form opposites with the prefix *un-*? Use the Word List or APP to help you.

kind friendly polite expected patient practical usual popular

TEST YOURSELF

LIVEWORKSHEETS

B *dis-, im-, il-, re-*

Is it **illegal** to ride a motorbike without a crash helmet?
Is it **dishonest** to tell your boss you are ill when you aren't?
Does it matter if a lawyer is **disorganized**?
Can you **disagree** about politics and still be friends with someone?
If you fail your final university exams, can you **retake** them?
Is it ever OK to be **impolite**?
Does it matter if a doctor's handwriting is **illegible**?
Is it easy to learn **irregular** verbs in English?
Do you always try to **reuse** or **recycle** plastic water bottles?



GLOSSARY

illegal	not allowed by the law OPP **legal**
dishonest	not telling the truth OPP **honest**
disorganized	not able to plan well OPP **organized**
disagree (with sb)	not have the same opinion as sb OPP **agree (with sb)**
retake	If you **retake** an exam, you take it again.
impolite	rude; not behaving in a good way towards people OPP **polite**
illegible	If handwriting is **illegible**, it is difficult or impossible to read. OPP **legible**
irregular	not following the normal rules of grammar OPP **regular**
reuse	use sth again SYN **recycle**

SPOTLIGHT *re-* with verbs

The prefix *re-* means 'again'. Common examples are:

reuse recycle rewrite rebuild reappear rearrange reorganize

- *I must* ***rewrite*** *my essay.* (= write it again)
- *Helena* ***reappeared*** *later, with a bottle of water.* (= appeared again)

5 Right or wrong? Write *R* or *W*. Correct any wrong answers.

▶ unpolite W – impolite
1 disorganized _____
2 unhonest _____
3 rewrite _____
4 disagree _____
5 unlegal _____
6 reuse _____
7 dislegible _____

6 Complete the dialogues using words from the box with the correct prefix.

organized | agree | take | use ✓ | appear | legible | honest | regular | legal

▶ Why do you want that empty bottle? ~ Because I'm going to reuse it.
1 Do you have the same ideas about fashion as Clara? ~ No, we often _____.
2 Did he pass the exam? ~ No, he'll have to _____ it.
3 Will Oliver come back? ~ Yes, I think he will _____ later today.
4 Does he usually tell the truth? ~ No, he's quite _____.
5 Can you read this letter? ~ No, the handwriting is _____.
6 Do you ever go in that bookshop? ~ No, it's hard to find things: it's so _____.
7 Is *better* the comparative form of *good*? ~ Yes, it's an _____ form.
8 Does he park in front of the shop? ~ Yes, he does, and it's _____.

7 Complete the words in the sentences.

ABOUT YOU

▶ Is it common for people to be impolite to the police? _____
1 Are many verbs i_____ in your language? _____
2 Is it d_____ to say someone looks nice when you don't really believe it? _____
3 Do you often r_____ the furniture in your house to change how it looks? _____
4 Is it i_____ to ride a bike on the pavement? _____
5 Is it common for you to d_____ with friends about politics? _____
6 Is it common for students to r_____ exams in your country? _____

8 ABOUT YOU **Write your answers to Exercise 7, or talk to another student. Then write your answers, or talk to another student about the questions at the top of the page.**

TEST YOURSELF