

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.

► **un**likely 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

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	<u>W</u> – impolite	4	disagree	.....
1	disorganized	5	unlegal	.....
2	unhonest	6	reuse	.....
3	rewrite	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 <i>good</i> ?	~ 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.

► 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?	.....

ABOUT YOU

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.

