

Word formation: prefixes and suffixes

PREFIXES CHANGE MEANING

A prefix at the beginning of a word has a meaning of its own that changes the meaning of the word it is joined to. Knowing what the prefix means can help us to understand the word. For example, if you read *unpremeditated* and know that *meditate* means 'think about something' - you can work out the meaning of *unpremeditated*: *un-* is a prefix meaning 'not'; *pre-* denotes 'before'; *meditated* means 'thought about'. You can now work out that *unpremeditated* means something like 'not thought about in advance'.

We can use prefixes in front of:

Nouns	<i>underclothes</i>	<i>underpayment</i>	<i>undersigned</i>	<i>understudy</i>	<i>undertaking</i>
Adjectives	<i>underdeveloped</i>	<i>underground</i>	<i>undernourished</i>	<i>underprivileged</i>	<i>underweight</i>
Verbs	<i>undercut</i>	<i>underestimate</i>	<i>undergo</i>	<i>understate</i>	<i>undervalue</i>

1 Choose the words that do not contain the idea of 'beneath' or 'less'.

a *undercut* b *undergo* c *understaffed*
d *underfoot* e *undertaking* f *underwrite*

SAME PREFIX - DIFFERENT MEANINGS

Many prefixes can have more than one meaning. Before adjectives, *un-* means 'not':

unaware *uncommon* *unconscious* *undecided* *unimportant*

Before nouns, *un-* can indicate 'without':

untidiness *unkindness* *unemployment*

Before verbs, *un-* means 'to do the opposite':

uncurl *undo* *unplug* *unlock* *unwrap*

In- and *im-* can sometimes indicate 'not':

indecisive *infinite* *infallible* *impenetrable* *impolite*

They can also mean 'in / inside':

intake *indoors* *implant* *imprison*

2 Choose the words that mean 'not ...'.

a *unfaithful* b *unpack* c *inhospitable*
d *impractical* e *impound* f *inside*

PREFIXES IN FRONT OF 'NON-EXISTENT' WORDS

We use prefixes in front of many words where the base form doesn't exist by itself. For example, *incessant* means 'without stopping' but there is no such word as 'cessant' (although there is the verb *cease*). Here are more examples:

inflect intact immune disparage repeat
impeccable impede unkempt unscathed

3 Choose the words that have no base form that exists by itself.

indirect inept untie infinity unprompted
impromptu undying undue unduly insipid

SUFFIXES THAT SHOW THE PART OF SPEECH

A suffix changes the meaning of the word it is joined to only by changing its part of speech; e.g., we can add -ity to the adjective *national* to make the noun *nationality*. We often need to change the spelling, for example, *urgent* becomes *urgency*. Here are some examples of suffixes:

- -ation/-ition -ame -cy -er -ment -ness -ity -ist form nouns:
inform (verb) becomes: *information* *dance* (verb) becomes: *dancer*
sweet (adj) becomes: *sweetness* *tour* (verb) becomes: *tourist*
- -ow -able -fil -ing -ical -less -y form adjectives:
danger (noun) becomes: *dangerous* *forget* (verb) becomes: *forgetful*
- -ise -ify -en form verbs:
intense (adj) becomes: *intensify* *flat* (adj) becomes: *flatten*

Write numbers next to these suffixes according to which part of speech they usually indicate. A few belong in more than one category.

1 adjective 2 noun 3 verb
-ist -hood -or -ese -ee -en -ision -some
-ship ise -ical -ify -ible -y -ant -ive -ness

SUFFIXES THAT HAVE MEANING

A few suffixes, particularly at the end of adjectives, have meaning; e.g. -less always indicates 'without':
meaningless *useless* *homeless* *hopelessly* *remorselessly*

Here are more examples:

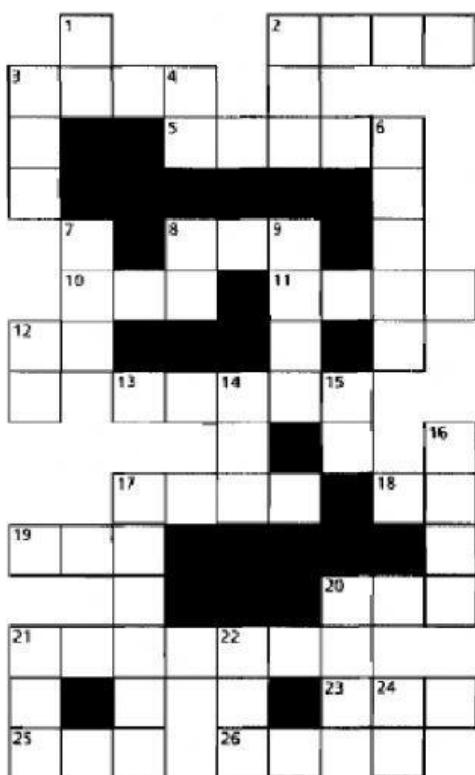
-like -proof -tight -fil -worthy -able as in:
childlike *childproof* *watertight*
respectful *trustworthy* *understandable*

Match a prefix with a word to make a new word. Then choose the appropriate meaning for the prefix from the list.

Example: *O* anti-theft/ against

0. (anti-)	power	(against)
1. <i>Inter</i> -	author	not
2. <i>Super</i> -	hi-fi	main
3. <i>Ex</i> -	normal	too much
4. <i>Mini</i> -	city	very big
5. <i>Ab</i> -	continental	before
6. <i>Over</i> -	view	previous
7. <i>Co</i> -	enemy	between
8. <i>Arch</i> -	wife	small
9. <i>Trans</i> -	spend	together
10. <i>Pre</i> -	(theft)	across

The solutions to all the crossword clues are prefixes. Write them into the grid below.



Across

- 2 not a bilingual dictionary
- 3 just half a circle
- 5 talented in lots of ways
- 8 not as white as white could be
- 10 she isn't a believer
- 11 perhaps we rate her too highly
- 12 this centenary - a 200th anniversary
- 13 not paid enough
- 17 courses for graduates
- 18 not a very sensitive thing to say
- 19 he spelt 'accommodation' with one 'm'
- 20 before the war
- 21 it won't be productive; quite the reverse
- 23 they played so much better than us
- 25 a new kind of Romantic
- 26 this is not relevant

Down

- 1 get rid of the frost in the fridge
- 2 it's not functioning right
- 3 temperatures below zero
- 4 not practical or possible
- 6 bigger than the national championships
- 7 clothes not discriminating between the sexes
- 8 the process is still going
- 9 a taste in advance
- 12 make a friend of
- 14 he appeared and then he was gone
- 15 heat it up again
- 16 if penultimate is second from the end, what's third?
- 17 not as intellectual as he appears
- 20 in favor of
- 21 two roads or rivers coming together
- 22 a bicycle with an extra wheel
- 24 hours to wrap the presents, ten seconds for this

Complete the blanks with the corrected form of the base word given (1-6). The first (O) is given as an example.

(O) Understand (1) Impress (2) Relevant (3) Consult (4) Consider (5) Value (6) Worth

The Crusades

The medieval crusades, when Western European knights and adventurers attempted to seize Jerusalem from the hands of the Seljuk Turks, are widely understood (O) by most people in the West, who think of them as glamorous and heroic. True, the level of heroism was occasionally (1), but in fact the crusaders were ignorant and misguided. For example, they viewed the Byzantine Emperor, through whose lands they had to travel, as an annoying (2), denying him even so much as a (3) role in the proceedings. In reality, his long experience of the Saracens had given him a not (4) knowledge of their fighting methods and politics. His advice, had the crusaders chosen to follow it, would have been absolutely (5). Instead, they repeatedly dismissed it as (6) with the result that, despite initial success, the crusades eventually dwindled to ignominious failure.

Rewrite each of the following sentences using the two prompt words given.

Example: The program would only work if it was self-financing, wouldn't it? **viable / itself**

The program would only be viable if it could finance itself, wouldn't it?

a Unfortunately the optimism we all felt didn't last very long, did it? **optimistic / short-lived**

b Her outstanding performance put everyone else bar none in the shade. **outshone / exception**

c I don't think you can have grasped what I was getting at. **misunderstood / trying**

d This has absolutely nothing to do with what we are discussing. **irrelevant / under**
