

Derivatives

The opposites of many English words are formed by adding a negative prefix to the words. The most common negative prefixes are **un-**, **in-**, **dis-** and **mis-**.

- Most words that derive from the same root take the **same** negative prefix as the root word:
approve → *disapprove* *approval* → *disapproval*
approving → *disapproving* *approvingly* → *disapprovingly*
- Sometimes verbs, nouns, adjectives or adverbs deriving from the same root form their opposites with the addition of **different** negative prefixes:
comfort → *discomfort* (noun) *comfortable* → *uncomfortable* (adjective)
fortune → *misfortune* (noun) *fortunate* → *unfortunate* (adjective)
equal → *unequal* (adjective) *equality* → *inequality* (noun)
- Some words of the same category (verbs, nouns or adjectives) deriving from **one** root form **two** opposites - using two different negative prefixes - but with a difference in meaning:
able (adj) → *unable* (=not able), *disabled* (=handicapped)
informed (adj) → *uninformed* (=not informed), *misinformed* (=wrongly informed)
used (adj) → *unused* (=not used), *misused* (=wrongly/badly used)

un + adjective/adverb → the opposite adjective/adverb

attractive → **unattractive**
 attractively → **unattractively**

un + noun (related to adjective) → lack of the quality described by the adjective

certain → **uncertain** certainty → **uncertainty**

BUT:

able → **unable**
ability → **inability, disability**

un + verb → doing the reverse of what the verb describes

lock → **unlock** dress → **undress**

in + adjective/adverb/noun (related to adjective) → the opposite of the original word

efficient → **inefficient** efficiently → **inefficiently** efficiency → **inefficiency**

- The prefix **in-** changes to:
il- before *l-*: *legal* → *illegal*
im- before *m-* and *p-*: *mature* → *immature*
patient → *impatient*
ir- before *r-*: *rational* → *irrational*
- The prefix **in-** is **not** used to form opposites of **verbs**.
- The prefix **in-** is not used to form opposites of words beginning with **in-**:
interesting → **uninteresting**
interpret → **misinterpret**
integrate → **disintegrate**

dis + verb → the opposite effect or reverse of the process described by the original verb

agree → **disagree** connect → **disconnect**

dis + noun/adjective/adverb → the opposite of the root word

agreement → **disagreement** agreeable → **disagreeable** agreeably → **disagreeably**
 honesty → **dishonesty** honest → **dishonest** honestly → **dishonestly**

mis + verb → doing what the root describes wrongly or badly

judge → **misjudge** judgement → **misjudgement**