

A

With adjectives

Prefixes, e.g. **un-**, **dis-**, **im-**, can be added to some adjectives to give the opposite meaning.

happy	unhappy	honest [tells the truth]	dishonest
possible	impossible	correct [right✓]	incorrect
regular	irregular	legal [allowed by law]	illegal

Dan used all the milk but said he didn't; he's very **dishonest**.

I got eight answers right, but two were **incorrect**.

It's **illegal** in the UK to ride a motorbike without a helmet.

B

un-

Of the prefixes above, **un-** is the most common, and appears in a number of adjectives.

This chair is incredibly **uncomfortable**.

It was **unnecessary** for them to wait for us.

Xerxes – that's a very **unusual** name. [different, not common or ordinary]

I won the game; it was completely **unexpected**. [I didn't think I was going to win]

Marsha's hat is **unbelievable**. [surprising because it is either very good or very bad]

We tried to open the door, but we **were unable to** get in. [could not]

I need to do more exercise; I'm very **unfit**. [not healthy and not in good condition]

Declan played well, and I thought he was **unlucky** to lose.

They're **unlikely** to get here before midday. [They probably won't get here before midday.]

The test was **unfair** because some of the students had more time to do it than others. [If something is *unfair*, it does not treat people equally.]

Language help

Adding a negative prefix does not usually change the pronunciation; the stress stays the same.
She was un'lucky. It's unbe'lievable. (NOT She was 'unlucky. It was 'unbelievable.)

C

With verbs

With some verbs, these prefixes can have particular meanings.

dis- [the opposite of something]	I disagree with the others. [don't agree / have the same opinion] The plane appeared in the sky, then it disappeared behind a cloud.
un- [the opposite of an action]	I couldn't unlock the door this morning. [open the door using a key; <i>opp lock</i>] We had to get undressed in the cold. [take off our clothes; <i>opp get dressed</i>] I unpacked the bags. [took everything out of the bags; <i>opp pack</i>]
over- [too much]	The bank overcharged me. [asked me to pay too much money]
mis- [do something incorrectly]	I misunderstood what he said; I'm afraid my English isn't very good. I misheard her. I thought she said <i>Rita</i> , not <i>Brita</i> .
re- [again]	The teacher has asked me to rewrite my essay.

Exercises

70.1 Write the opposite.

- | | |
|--------------------|------------------|
| 1 <i>un</i> happy | 7 agree |
| 2 able | 8 necessary |
| 3 correct | 9 regular |
| 4 usual | 10 honest |
| 5 possible | 11 fair |
| 6 comfortable | 12 lucky |

70.2 Which sentence on the right logically follows each sentence on the left?

- | | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1 She arrived home. | ☒ b | a She unpacked her suitcase. |
| 2 Her essay was terrible. | ☐ | b She unlocked the front door. |
| 3 She decided to go to bed. | ☐ | c She has disappeared. |
| 4 He called her name. | ☐ | d She had overcharged me. |
| 5 She's not here now. | ☐ | e She had to rewrite it. |
| 6 He thought he was right. | ☐ | f She misheard it. |
| 7 She got to the hotel. | ☐ | g She disagreed. |
| 8 After I paid, I looked at the price. | ☐ | h She got undressed. |

70.3 Complete the dialogues so that B agrees with A using different words. You only need one word for each gap.

- A: Adera is a strange name.
B: Yes, very *unusual*.
- A: It's against the law, isn't it?
B: Oh yes, it's
- A: You mean he took off all his clothes!
B: Yes, he got completely
- A: He probably won't get back in time for the meeting.
B: I agree. It's very
- A: A lot of the answers were wrong.
B: Yes, I'm afraid they were nearly all
- A: He doesn't look in very good condition; he's a bit overweight.
B: I know. He looks terribly
- A: Nobody thought this would happen.
B: Yes, it was completely
- A: They never tell the truth.
B: I know. They're both
- A: His business always seems to lose money, and it's not his fault.
B: I know. He's very
- A: Ann always gives more attention to Sarah than she does to Lucas.
B: Yes, it's very on poor Lucas.

70.4 These words all appear in other units of the book. Do you know how to form the opposites?

- | | | | |
|---------------|-------------------|-------------|-------|
| pleasant | <i>unpleasant</i> | fashionable | ..... |
| kind | ..... | reliable | ..... |
| patient (adj) | ..... | friendly | ..... |
| suitable | ..... | tidy | ..... |
| like (v) | ..... | ability | ..... |
| do up | ..... | sociable | ..... |