

91 Prefixes

A With adjectives

Un-, in- and dis- are some of the prefixes used with adjectives, usually to give a negative meaning.

You will already know some of these adjectives when they are used without negative prefixes. The glossary explains the words you are less likely to know.

un-	He's unqualified to drive that car. They chose an unknown actor for the part. I'm unfamiliar with this keyboard. It was an uncharacteristic mistake. The workers have called an unofficial strike. The project is still unfinished.
in-	Ben is incapable of making a decision. I'm afraid this passport is invalid. The food was insufficient for our needs. They got divorced because they were incompatible. The treatment of some refugees is inhuman.
dis-	The Prime Minister will fire any disloyal ministers. One disobedient child was removed from the class.

GLOSSARY

unqualified	not having the right knowledge, experience or qualifications to do sth OPP qualified
uncharacteristic (of sb/sth)	not typical of sb; not the way they usually behave OPP characteristic
unofficial	does not have permission or approval from sb in authority OPP official
invalid	not legally or officially acceptable OPP valid
insufficient	not enough for a particular purpose OPP sufficient
incompatible	Two people who are incompatible are very different from each other and not able to work or live happily together. OPP compatible
inhuman	lacking the qualities of kindness and pity
disloyal (of sb) (to sb/sth)	not loyal or faithful to your friends, country, etc. OPP loyal
disobedient	failing or refusing to obey OPP obedient

SPOTLIGHT *un- and under-*

There is a difference between **un-** and **under-**. An **unemployed** person doesn't have a job; an **underemployed** person doesn't have enough work to do, or not all of their skills are not made use of. Other examples are **uncooked** and **undercooked**, or **unpaid** and **underpaid**.

1 Un-, in-, or dis-? Cover the table and complete the words.

1known	4obedient	7finished	10familiar
2capable	5characteristic	8loyal	11compatible
3human	6valid	9employed	12sufficient

2 Match the adjectives on the left with the nouns on the right.

an unofficial	an incompatible	an invalid	insufficient	ticket	money	dog	couple
an unqualified	a disobedient	inhuman	an unfamiliar	conditions	name	strike	teacher

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3 Complete the dialogues using a word beginning with *un-, in-, dis-, or under-*.

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1 The family were cruel and treated him like a slave. | ~ I know, it was |
| 2 Did you know the performers? | ~ No, they were all |
| 3 Has she got a job? | ~ No, she's |
| 4 What were the vegetables like? | ~ OK, but a bit |
| 5 Have they completed the roadworks? | ~ No, they're still |
| 6 Does she know what she's going to do? | ~ No, she's of making a decision. |
| 7 Is it voluntary work? | ~ Yes, it's |
| 8 It's very unusual for Moira to make that mistake | ~ Yes, very |
| 9 Do you know the town? | ~ No, I'm with the area. |
| 10 It was awful of Teri just to walk out and leave us with no support. | ~ Yes, it was very |



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B With verbs

These prefixes can be used with some verbs, with particular meanings. You will already know some of these verbs when used without a prefix.

mis-	= badly; incorrectly	misunderstand miscalculate mislead	mistreat misjudge
re-	= again	rewrite reassess (e.g. the cost of sth, an exam candidate)	redo (e.g. a piece of work)
un-	= doing the opposite of sth	unwrap (e.g. a present). undo (e.g. your jacket) unwind (e.g. a bandage)	unpack (e.g. a suitcase) untie (e.g. your shoelaces)
over-	= too much	overcharge (e.g. in a shop) overestimate (e.g. the amount of food you need) oversleep (= sleep longer than you want) overdo it (= work too hard)	

GLOSSARY

mistreat	treat a person or animal in a cruel, unkind or unfair way
misjudge	form a wrong opinion about a person or situation, especially in a way that creates a problem
mislead	give sb the wrong impression and make them believe sth that is not true
unwind	open up/out sth that has been wrapped into a ball or around sth

4 Cross out the wrong answer.

- | | | | |
|---|--------------|---------------|---------------|
| 1 I think he was mis | a) treated | b) advised | c) led |
| 2 Could you un this for me? | a) charge | b) wrap | c) tie |
| 3 I think I over him. | a) estimated | b) charged | c) calculated |
| 4 I shall have to re what I have done. | a) write | b) judge | c) assess |
| 5 I over this morning. | a) bought | b) did it | c) slept |
| 6 She completely mis me. | a) judged | b) understood | c) believed |

5 Circle the correct form(s). Sometimes both words are possible.

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1 He <i>miscalculated</i> / <i>mistreated</i> the length of the room. | 4 I think she completely <i>misled</i> / <i>misunderstood</i> what I said. |
| 2 I'm going to <i>redo</i> / <i>rewrite</i> my essay. | 5 I'm trying to <i>untie</i> / <i>unwind</i> the string from around this post. |
| 3 When I get to the hotel, I will <i>unpack</i> / <i>unwrap</i> my suitcase. | 6 I <i>overcharged</i> / <i>overdid it</i> this morning, and now I'm worn out. |

6 Complete the sentences.

- I'm going back to that shop: I think they me for those earrings.
- They me when they said they would help; they've done nothing really.
- I love seeing the children their presents on their birthdays.
- The doctor asked me to my shirt and sit on the bed.
- I thought Ben couldn't do this job but I was wrong; I him.
- I can't stand seeing people animals.
- We the time it would take, and so we arrived an hour early.
- I need to the policy because it clearly isn't working.



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