

## 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**