70 Prefixes: changing meaning

A With adjectives

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

happy	**un**happy
possible	**im**possible
regular	**ir**regular

honest [tells the truth]	**dishonest**
correct [right✓]	**incorrect**
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; *opp* **lock**] We had to **get undressed** in the cold. [take off our clothes; *opp* **get dressed**] I **unpacked** the bags. [took everything out of the bags; *opp* **pack**]
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 *Rita*, not *Brita*.
re- [again]	The teacher has asked me to **rewrite** my essay.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

Exercises

70.1 **Write the opposite.**

1 un happy
2 ..... able
3 ..... correct
4 ..... usual
5 ..... possible
6 ..... comfortable
7 ..... agree
8 ..... necessary
9 ..... regular
10 ..... honest
11 ..... fair
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.**

1 A: Adera is a strange name.
B: Yes, very unusual.
2 A: It's against the law, isn't it?
B: Oh yes, it's ..... .
3 A: You mean he took off all his clothes!
B: Yes, he got completely ..... .
4 A: He probably won't get back in time for the meeting.
B: I agree. It's very ..... .
5 A: A lot of the answers were wrong.
B: Yes, I'm afraid they were nearly all ..... .
6 A: He doesn't look in very good condition; he's a bit overweight.
B: I know. He looks terribly ..... .
7 A: Nobody thought this would happen.
B: Yes, it was completely ..... .
8 A: They never tell the truth.
B: I know. They're both ..... .
9 A: His business always seems to lose money, and it's not his fault.
B: I know. He's very ..... .
10 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	unpleasant	fashionable	.....
kind	.....	reliable	.....
patient (adj)	.....	friendly	.....
suitable	.....	tidy	.....
like (v)	.....	ability	.....
do up	.....	sociable	.....

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