

Greek and Latin Root Words

Root	Meaning	English Words
arch	chief, primary or first	archetype
archaeo	ancient/primitive	archaeology
aster/astra	star	astronomy
audi	hear	audible
bene	good/well	benefit
bio	life	biology
brev	short	abbreviation
chloro	green	chlorophyll
chrono	time	chronology
derm	skin	dermatologist
dic/dict	speak	dictionary
fer	carry	transfer
fix	fasten	affix
gen	birth	generate
geo	earth	geography
graph	write	graphic
hemo	blood	hemoglobin
herb	plants	herbaceous
hydro	water	hydrate
jur/just	law	jury
log/logue	word/thought	dialogue
luc	light	lucid
manu	hand	manual
meter/metr	measure	thermometer
neg	no	negate
ocu	eye	ocular
olig	few	oligarchy
op/oper	work	operation
osteo	bone	osteoporosis
path	feeling	sympathy
ped	child	pediatrics
phil	love	philosophy
phys	body/nature	physical
pod	foot	podiatrist
proto	first	prototype

Building Vocabulary: Prefixes, Roots, and Suffixes

Many studies show the importance of building children's vocabulary. One study has shown that a set of 20 prefixes and 14 roots, and knowing how to use them, will unlock the meaning of over 100,000 words. A similar study showed that a set of 29 prefixes and 25 roots will give the meaning to over 125,000 words. Imagine adding suffixes! Below are lists of prefixes, suffixes, and roots – with their meanings and example words.* Reviewing these also can help many ELL students to see relationships between and among languages. Many prefixes have a basis in Latin – also the basis for Spanish, French, and Italian – or Greek.

Table 1: 32 Prefixes

Prefix	Meaning	Example words and meanings	
a, ab, abs	away from	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> absent abscond 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> not to be present, away abscond – to run away
ad, a, ac, af, ag, an, ar, at, as	to, toward	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> adapt adhere annex attract 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to fit into to stick to to add or join to draw near
anti	against	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> antifreeze antisocial 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a substance to prevent freezing refers to someone who's not social
bi, bis	two	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> bicycle biannual biennial 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> two wheeled cycle twice each year every two years
circum, cir	around	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> circumscribe circle 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to draw around a figure that goes all around
com, con, co, col	with, together	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> combine contact collect co-worker 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to bring together to touch together to bring together co-worker
de	away from, down, the opposite of	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> depart decline 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to go away from to turn down
dis, dif, di	apart	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> dislike dishonest distant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> not to like not honest away
epi	upon, on top of	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> epitaph epilogue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> writing upon a tombstone speech at the end, on top of the rest
equ, equi	equal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> equalize equitable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to make equal fair, equal
ex, e, ef	out, from	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> exit eject exhale 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to go out to throw out to breathe out
in, il, ir, im, en	in, into	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> inject impose 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to put into to force into
in, il, ig, ir, im	not	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> inactive ignoble irreversible irritate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> not active not noble not reversible to put into discomfort

* This document revised from Gary Gruber's work on increasing children's test scores: *Dr. Gary Gruber's Essential Guide to Test Taking for Kids, Grades 3, 4, & 5.* (1986); *Dr. Gary Gruber's Essential Guide to Test Taking for Kids, Grades 6, 7, 8, & 9.* (1986); and *Gruber's Complete Preparation for the SAT* (9th Edition, 2001) -- all published by Collins, New York City.

Prefix	Meaning	Example words and meanings	
inter	between, among	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> international interpose 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> among nations to put between
mal, male	bad, ill, wrong	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> malpractice malfunction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> bad practice fail to function, bad function
mis	wrong, badly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> mistreat mistake misplace 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to treat badly to get wrong to put in wrong place
mono	one, alone, single	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> monopoly monotone monologue monosyllable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> one ownership one note speech by one person one syllable
non	not, the reverse of	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> nonsense nonprofit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> not making sense not making a profit
ob	in front, against, in front of, in the way of	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> obstacle obvious obviate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> something that stands in the way of right in front of, apparent to do away with, make unnecessary
omni	everywhere, all	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> omnipresent omnipotent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> always present, everywhere all powerful
per	through	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> pervade perceive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to pass through, to spread through to become aware through sight
poly	many	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> polysyllable polygon 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> many syllables figure with many sides
post	after	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> postpone postmortem 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to do after after death
pre	before, earlier than	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> preview prehistoric preface 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a viewing earlier than another before written history a statement before an article or book
pro	forward, going ahead of, supporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> proceed prowar promote 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to go forward supporting the war to raise or move forward
re	again, back	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> retell recall recede 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to tell again to call back to go back
se	apart	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> secede seclude 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to withdraw, become apart to stay apart from others
sub	under, less than	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> submarine subway subliminal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> under water a path or way to move under ground below the level of consciousness
super	over, above, greater	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> superstar superimpose 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a star greater than other stars to put over something else
trans	across	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> transcontinental transverse 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> across the continent to lie or go across
un, uni	one	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> unidirectional unanimous unilateral 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> having one direction sharing one view having one side
un	not	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uninterested unhelpful unethical 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> not interested not helpful not ethical

Table 2: 27 Roots

Root	Meaning	Example words & meanings	
act, ag	to do, to act	▪ Agent ▪ Activity	▪ One who acts as a representative ▪ Action
apert	open	▪ Aperture	▪ An opening
bas	low	▪ Basement ▪ Basement	▪ Something that is low, at the bottom ▪ A room that is low
cap, capt, cip, cept, ceive	to take, to hold, to seize	▪ Captive ▪ Receive ▪ Capable ▪ Recipient	▪ One who is held ▪ To take ▪ Able to take hold of things ▪ One who takes hold or receives
ced, cede, ceed, cess	to go, to give in	▪ Precede ▪ Access ▪ Proceed	▪ To go before ▪ Means of going to ▪ To go forward
cred, credit	to believe	▪ Credible ▪ Incredible ▪ Credit	▪ Believable ▪ Not believable ▪ Belief, trust
curr, curs, cours	to run	▪ Current ▪ Precursory ▪ Recourse	▪ Now in progress, running ▪ Running (going) before ▪ To run for aid
dic, dict	to say	▪ Dictionary ▪ Indict ▪ Indicate	▪ A book explaining words (sayings) ▪ To say or make an accusation ▪ To point out or say by demonstrating
duc, duct	to lead	▪ Induce ▪ Conduct ▪ Aqueduct	▪ To lead to action ▪ To lead or guide ▪ Pipe that leads water somewhere
equ	equal, even	▪ Equality ▪ Equanimity	▪ Equal in social, political rights ▪ Evenness of mind, tranquility
fac, fact, fic, fect, fy	to make, to do	▪ Facile ▪ Fiction ▪ Factory ▪ Affect	▪ Easy to do ▪ Something that is made up ▪ Place that makes things ▪ To make a change in
fer, ferr	to carry, bring	▪ Defer ▪ Referral	▪ To carry away ▪ Bring a source for help/information
graph	write	▪ Monograph ▪ Graphite	▪ A writing on a particular subject ▪ A form of carbon used for writing
mit, mis	to send	▪ Admit ▪ Missile	▪ To send in ▪ Something sent through the air
par	equal	▪ Parity ▪ Disparate	▪ Equality ▪ No equal, not alike
plic	to fold, to bend, to turn	▪ Complicate ▪ Implicate	▪ To fold (mix) together ▪ To fold in, to involve
pon, pos, posit, pose	to place	▪ Component ▪ Transpose ▪ Compose ▪ Deposit	▪ A part placed together with others ▪ A place across ▪ To put many parts into place ▪ To place for safekeeping
scrib, script	to write	▪ Describe ▪ Transcript ▪ Subscription	▪ To write about or tell about ▪ A written copy ▪ A written signature or document
sequ, secu	to follow	▪ Sequence ▪ Sequel ▪ Consecutive	▪ In following order ▪ A second, following, book ▪ One that follows another
spec, spect, spic	to appear, to look, to see	▪ Specimen ▪ Aspect	▪ An example to look at ▪ One way to see something
sta, stat, sist,	to stand, or make stand	▪ Constant	▪ Standing with

Root	Meaning	Example words & meanings	
stit, sisto		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Status Stable Desist 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social standing Steady (standing) To stand away from
tact	to touch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contact Tactile 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To touch together To be able to be touched
ten, tent, tain	to hold	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tenable Retentive Maintain 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Able to be held, holding Holding To keep or hold up
tend, tens, tent	to stretch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extend Tension 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To stretch or draw out Stretched
tract	to draw	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attract Contract 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To draw together An agreement drawn up
ven, vent	to come	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Convene Advent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To come together A coming
ver, vert, vers	to turn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Avert Revert Reverse 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To turn away To turn back To turn around

Table 3: 23 Suffixes

Suffix	Meaning	Example words & meanings	
able, ible, ble	able to	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Edible Salable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Able to be eaten Able to be sold
acious, cous, al	like, having the quality of	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nocturnal Vivacious 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Of the night Having the quality of being lively
ance, ancy	the act of, a state of being	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Performance Truancy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The act of performing The act of being truant
ant, ent, er, or	one who	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Occupant Respondent Teacher Creator 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One who occupies One who responds or answers One who teaches One who creates
ar, ary	connected with, related to	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ocular Beneficiary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Related to the eye Connected with one who receives benefits
ence	quality of, act of	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The act of existing or being
ful	full of	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fearful 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Full of fear
ic, ac, il, ile	of, like, pertaining to	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cardiac Civil Infantile Acidic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pertaining to the heart Pertaining to citizens Pertaining to infants Like acid
ion	the act or condition of	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Correction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The act of correcting
ism	the practice of, support of	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Patriotism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support of one's country
ist	one who makes, does	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Artist 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One who creates art
ity, ty, y	the state of, character of	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unity Shifty Showy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The state of being one State of shifting around State of always showing oneself
ive	having the nature of	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Active 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Having the nature of acting or moving
less	lacking, without	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Heartless 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Without a heart
logy	the study of	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Biology 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The study of life processes
ment	the act of, the state of	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retirement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> State of being retired
ness	the quality of	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eagerness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The quality of being eager
ory	having the nature of, a place or thing for	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Laboratory 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A place where work is done

Suffix	Meaning	Example words & meanings	
ous, ose	full of, having	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Dangerous ▪ Verbose 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Full of danger ▪ Full of words, or wordy
ship	the art or skill of, the ability to	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Leadership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The ability to lead
some	full of, like	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Troublesome 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Full of trouble
tude	the state of quality of, the ability to	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Aptitude 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The ability to do
y	Full of, somewhat, somewhat like	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Musty ▪ Chilly ▪ Willowy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Having a stale oror ▪ Somewhat cold ▪ Like a willow

Table 4: Taking words apart

Word	Prefix	Root	Suffix	Meaning
Concurrence	con: with	curr: run	ence: act of	Act of running with, happening at same time
Exaggerate	ex: out	ag: to do, act	---	To act out
Irreversible	ir: not re: again	vers: turning	ible: able to	Not able to turn back
Malediction	male: bad	dict: to say	---	To say bad things, a negative statement
Precursor	pre: before	curs: to run	or: one who	Something that comes before
Unity	uni: one	---	ty: state of	State of being one, a single thing or being
Untenable	un: not	ten: holding	able: able to	Not able to hold on

Common Latin Word Roots

ac, acr: sharp, bitter

acid (something that is sharp, sour, or ill natured), *acute* (extremely sharp or severe; keenly perceptive)

am: love

amorous (inclined to love; romantic, affectionate), *enamored* (inflamed or inspired by love; captivated)

bel: war

antebellum (before the war, especially the American Civil War), *rebel* (to resist or defy authority)

cast, chast: cut

caste (a social class separated from others by hereditary rank, profession, etc.), *chastise* (to punish severely, as with a beating; to rebuke)

ced, ceed, cess: to go, yield, stop

antecedent (that which precedes), *exceed* (to extend beyond or outside of; surpass)

culp: blame

culprit (person accused or guilty of a crime), *mea culpa* (Latin, “my fault”)

dic, dict, dit: to say, tell, use words

dictate (to say or read aloud; to issue orders or commands), *predict* (to foretell, make known in advance)

equ: equal, even

equate (to make or consider two things as equal), *equidistant* (equally distant)

err: to wander

err (to make a mistake), *error* (a mistake; an incorrect or wrong action)

ferv: to boil, bubble, burn

fervid (very hot, burning; ardent, vehement), *effervescent* (bubbling up, as a carbonated liquid; high spirited, animated)

loc, log, loqu: word, speech

dialogue (a conversation between two or more people), *neologism* (a new word or phrase)

luc, lum, lus: light

illuminate (to brighten with light; enlighten), *translucent* (almost transparent; allowing light to pass through diffusely)

lug, lut, luv: to wash

dilute (to make thinner or weaker by adding a liquid such as water; to lessen the force or purity of), *pollute* (to make impure or unclean; to make unfit or harmful to living things)

mag, maj, max: big

magnify (to increase in size, volume or significance; to amplify), *maximum* (the greatest possible quantity or degree)

man: hand

manual (operated by hand), *manufacture* (to make by hand or machinery)

min: to project, hang over

prominent (standing out, conspicuous; projecting or jutting beyond the line or surface), *eminent* (towering above or more prominent than others; lofty,

distinguished)

nas, nat, nai: to be born

native (a person born in a particular country), *innate* (possessed at birth;

inborn, inherent)

nec, nic, noc, nox: harm, death

innocent (uncorrupted by evil; free from guilt; not dangerous or harmful),

obnoxious (offensive, hateful)

omni: all

omnipresent (everywhere at once), *omnipotent* (all powerful)

plac: to please

placid (calm and peaceful), *placate* (to appease or pacify)

pon, pos, pound: to put, place

deposit (to put or set down; place), *transpose* (to reverse or transfer the order or place of; interchange)

pug: to fight

pug (a boxer), *repugnant* (highly offensive or distasteful; hostile, disposed to fight)

qui: quiet

quiet (making little or no noise; calm, still), *tranquil* (free from disturbance, anxiety, or tension)

rog: to ask

interrogate (to examine by asking a series of questions), *prerogative* (an exclusive privilege or right belonging to a person or group)

sci: to know

conscious (knowing and perceiving, aware), *science* (knowledge, especially that gained through systematic study)

tac, tic: to be silent

tacit (not spoken; implied), *taciturn* (habitually untalkative, reserved)

ver: truth

verdict (the findings of a jury in a trial; decision or judgment), *verify* (to confirm the truth of)

vi: life

vivid (evoking lifelike images in the mind; true to life; bright, brilliant, distinct),

vigorous (energetic, forceful, active, strong)

voc, vok: to call

vocal (of or pertaining to the voice; tending to express oneself often and freely, outspoken), *revoke* (to cancel, call back, reverse, withdraw)