

# Perplexing Prefixes

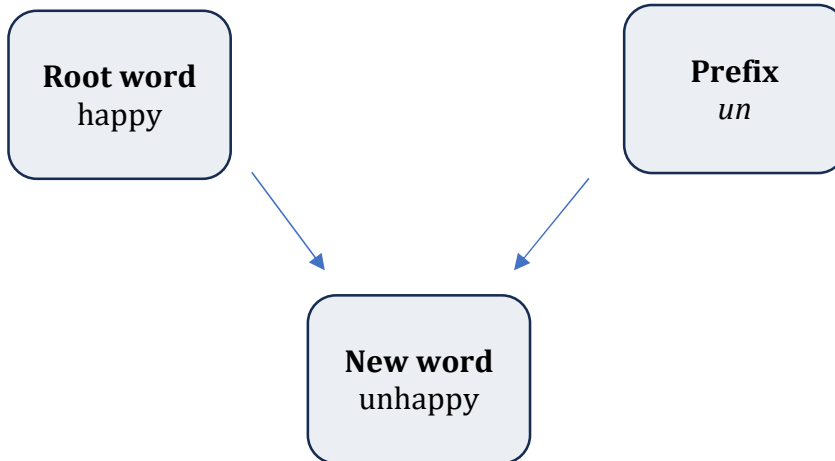
E2-L1 ESOL & Functional English

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**What are prefixes? The clue is in the word:**

*pre* means **before**

*fix* means **to attach**



Happy is a positive word. When the prefix 'un' is written before the word, the meaning changes to a negative. A prefix *changes the meaning* of a word.

<p>Jamil is happy</p> 	<p>Jamil is <del>not happy</del></p>  <p>Jamil is unhappy</p>
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Prefixes can help you:

- write ideas quickly using fewer words
- create new words
- show the opposite of something
- show repetition (to do again)
- show position or time.

However, some prefixes have similar meanings, which can be confusing.

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Prefix	Reason for use	Root word	Examples
<b>un</b>	<i>un</i> creates the opposite meaning of a word or undoes the meaning.	1. happy 2. do 3. fasten	1. unhappy 2. undo 3. unfasten
<b>re</b>	<i>re</i> means to do something again or go back.	1. write 2. view 3. visit	1. rewrite 2. review 3. revisit
<b>dis</b>	<i>dis</i> creates opposites and negatives.	1. appear 2. like 3. able 4. agree	1. disappear 2. dislike 3. disable 4. disagree
<b>pre</b>	<i>pre</i> tells you that one thing happens before another.	1. view 2. judge 3. heat	1. preview 2. prejudice 3. preheat
<b>mis</b>	<i>mis</i> means something is not correct or is wrong.	1. understand 2. place 3. lead	1. misunderstand 2. misplace 3. mislead
<b>non</b>	<i>non</i> means not. It tells you something is not allowed, does not do something or is missing.	1. smoking 2. stick 3. stop	1. nonsmoking 2. nonstick 3. nonstop

**Look** at the example words with the prefix added. What do these new words mean? How are their meanings different to those of the root words? Discuss.

## Spelling

It's easy to spell using prefixes. Just add the prefix to the start of the root word. Make **no changes** to the root word. Be careful to keep double letters in place when needed.

## Examples

mis + took = mistook      un + usual = unusual      dis + honest = dishonest  
mis + spell = misspell      un + natural = unnatural      dis + satisfy = dissatisfy

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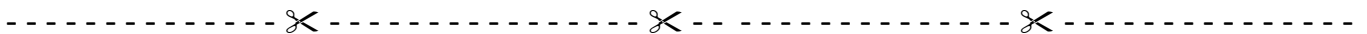
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Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Prefixes

Find the words with prefixes

t	l	n	o	n	s	t	o	p	z	r	e	u	s	e
w	j	w	f	f	u	w	o	l	l	a	s	i	d	t
g	c	g	u	n	k	e	s	u	e	r	u	c	g	a
u	g	l	b	r	e	a	p	p	l	y	i	x	l	e
r	r	h	t	c	e	r	r	o	c	n	i	y	h	h
m	i	s	u	n	d	e	r	s	t	a	n	d	b	e
u	e	a	n	k	e	e	r	g	a	s	i	d	n	r
m	i	s	p	l	a	c	e	g	d	u	j	e	r	p
p	r	e	v	i	e	w	x	t	r	e	t	u	r	n
y	p	p	a	h	n	u	s	e	l	c	y	c	e	r



**Word Bank – colour or circle the words when you find them.**

disagree

disallow

incorrect

misplace

misunderstand

nonstop

preheat

prejudge

preview

reapply

recycle

return

reuse (*twice!*)

unhappy

**How many did you find?**

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Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_



**Read this story. Underline all the words that have prefixes.**

Before the big event, Jenna made sure to prepare early. She wanted to make sure nothing had been missed. However, she was unhappy and disappointed when she saw that some of her plans were not properly followed by her team.

Her team had misunderstood a few important details and made some unwise decisions that made things harder. Even so, Jenna chose to stay positive and check everything again.

She was determined to resolve any problems and make sure everything was ready before the event started.

Sometimes a word can look as though it has a prefix, but the root word is not something you are used to seeing. Some roots are no longer in common use or their meaning may have changed over time.

**predict**

**prepare**

**disgust**

Use a dictionary or online source to find the meaning of *dict*, *pare* and *gust*.

## Writing task

Choose five words with prefixes that have not been used in this resource.

Write full sentences using each word.

1.

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2.

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3.

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4.

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5.

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Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_



## Prefix Games

Why not try some of these activities to make things more interesting? They can be created for the whole class or individuals, using whatever materials you have available.

### 1. Prefix Matching

Materials: Index cards or printed sheets.  
Write prefixes on some cards (e.g., un-, re-, dis-, non-) and root words on others (e.g., happy, write, agree, stop).  
Activity: Students match prefixes with root words to create new words and then discuss their meanings.

### 2. Prefix Sorting

Materials: List of common prefixes and separate list of root words (or prefix header cards, and root word cards).  
Activity: sort the root words by their possible prefixes (some roots will sort under more than one prefix). Discuss meanings of the newly formed words.

### 3. Prefix Bingo

Materials: Bingo cards with prefixes in different boxes, markers, list of words with prefixes.  
Activity: Call out words from list. Students mark the corresponding prefix on their Bingo cards. First to complete a row wins.

### 4. Prefix Scavenger Hunt

Materials: Prefix sentence cards (sentence to include a word with a prefix).  
Activity: Hide sentence cards around the classroom. Students find the cards and identify the prefix word. They write down the word and its meaning.

### 5. Prefix - Suffix Puzzles

Materials: Puzzle pieces where each piece has either a prefix, a root word, or a suffix.  
Activity: Students assemble the pieces to form complete words and then discuss their meanings.

### 6. Prefix Story Writing

Materials: Paper, pens.  
Activity: Students write short stories or sentences using a set list of words with prefixes. Encourage them to be creative and then share their stories with the class, highlighting the prefixes used.

### 7. Prefix and Suffix Sorting

Materials: Cards with prefixes, suffixes, and root words.  
Activity: Provide students with a selection of cards that include prefixes, suffixes, and root words. They sort the cards into three categories and then create new words by combining one or two affixes with a root.

### 8. Prefix Detective

Materials: Short reading passages or excerpts from newspapers, etc.  
Activity: Learners highlight or underline the words with prefixes and explain how the prefix changes the meaning of each word.