

WORD FORMATION (PREFIXES & SUFFIXES)

I. PREFIXES

Prefixes are useful linguistic clues that help you guess the meaning of words. They are added at the beginning of words. Some of these prefixes are used to give a negative or an opposite meaning.

Consider the following sentences and study the notes below:

1. He is rather **in**experienced.
2. it's **im**possible to drive in such a busy street.

The meaning conveyed by these prefixes is “not” or “opposite of”

The negative prefixes “**un**”, “**dis**”, “**in**”, “**im**”, “**ir**”, and “**il**” can be added to some adjectives to make opposites. The following general rules may help you decide which prefix to use. But remember that there are exceptions.

im- is used before a word beginning with ‘**m**’ or ‘**p**’ (e.g. immature – impolite)

ir- is used before a word beginning with ‘**r**’ (e.g. irresponsible – irregular)

il- is used before a word beginning with ‘**l**’ (e.g. illiterate – illegal)

However, there are no rules for “**un**”, “**in**” and “**dis**”.

The prefixes “**un**” and “**dis**” can also be used with verbs to form their opposites (e.g. untie – unfasten; disappear – disagree)

Here is a list of some other prefixes that can be used with verbs, adjectives, or nouns. Study them:

Prefix	Meaning	Example
re-	do again-back	reread - rewrite
en-	make - cause to be - put into	enlarge - enrich - encircle
de-	remove	demotivate - debone
pre-	before / earlier	pretest - preplan - prehistoric
post-	after	post-war ; post-graduate
pro-	for / in favour of	pro-abortion ; pro-American
anti-	against	anti-war ; anti-nuclear weapons
over-	too much / excessively	oversleep ; over-populated
under-	not enough / too little	underpaid - undercook - underworked
mis-	wrongly / badly	misunderstand - mishear

self-	by oneself	self-educated ; self-sufficient
non-	not connected with / not	non-governmental ; non-violence
ex-	former	ex-president ; ex-wife
sub-	under	submarine - subskill
co-	together / with	co-manage ; co-author
bi-	two / twice	bilingual - biannual
out-	more than / outdo another	outnumber - outweigh
hyper-	very / above / over	hyper-critical; hyper-sensitive
auto-	of or by oneself / self	autograph - autobiography
micro-	small	microwave- microscopic
multi-	many	multinational - multimedia
semi-	half	semicircular
pseudo-	false	pseudo-name ; pseudo-expert
counter-	opposite	counter-argument
neo-	new	neocolonialism

II. SUFFIXES

Suffixes are letters or syllables added to the end of a word to form a new word. Knowing the different suffixes can help you guess the meaning of new words and recognize whether a word is a verb, an adjective, a noun, etc.

Consider the following two examples:

1. I've cut my finger with a sharp knife.
2. This knife is dull. Will you sharpen it, please?

In example 1, the underlined word is an adjective. In example 2, a suffix 'en' is added to the same word to turn it into a verb.

Verb suffixes : '-en' / 'n', '-ize', '-ify', etc.

Adjectival suffixes : '-al', '-ful', '-less', '-ous', '-ed', '-ish', '-y', '-able', '-ible', '-ory', '-ive', '-ial', etc.

Noun suffixes : '-tion', '-ance', '-ence', '-ness', '-hood', '-ity', '-ment', '-dom', '-ship', '-ism', etc.

Here is a list of common suffixes. Study them:

Suffix	Meaning	Example
-able / -ible	can be done - able to - capable of	drinkable - flexible
-ful	full of	respectful - hopeful
-less	without - lacking in - having no	jobless - useless
-ous	full of	courageous - delicious
-ish	like	childish - foolish
-en / -n	make - become	lengthen - widen

-ment	action of - condition of	excitement - astonishment
-ness	condition of	happiness - sadness

Here is another list of suffixes that can help you recognize the word class. Study them:

Suffix	Meaning	Suffix	Meaning
-hood	childhood	-ship	friendship
-al	arrival	-ive	communicative
-ion	pollution	-ory	satisfactory
-ance	resistance	-ial	residential
-y	difficulty	-ic	historic
-dom	freedom	-ary	revolutionary
-ism	colonialism	-ify	simplify
-ity	availability	-ize	modernize

MOUJI Houda