

Prefixes and suffixes

1. Prefixes

A prefix is a group of letters at the beginning of a word which changes the word's meaning. Here is a list of the most common prefixes and examples of how those prefixes are used.

Anglo- relating to the UK or England *an Angloophile*
(= someone who loves England)

ante- before or in front of *antedate* • *antenatal*

anti- 1 opposed to or against *anti-racist laws*

2 preventing or destroying *an anti-aircraft missile*

auto- 1 operating without being controlled by humans
autopilot (= a computer that directs an aircraft)

2 self *an autobiography* (= a book that someone writes about their own life)

bi- two *bilingual* (= speaking two languages)

• *bimonthly* (= happening twice in a month or once every two months)

centi-, cent- hundred *a centimetre* • *a century*

co- with or together *a co-author* • *to coexist*

contra- against or opposite to *contradict* (= say the opposite) • *contraception* (= something that is used to prevent pregnancy)

counter- opposing or as a reaction to *a counter-attack*
(= an attack on someone who has attacked you)

cross- 1 across *cross-border* 2 including different groups or subjects *a cross-party committee* (= one formed from many political parties) • *cross-cultural*

cyber- involving, using or relating to computers, especially the Internet *cybercrime* • *cyberculture*

de- to take something away *deforestation* (= when the trees in an area are cut down)

dis- not or the opposite of *dishonest* • *to disagree*

e- electronic, usually relating to the Internet *email*

• *e-commerce*. Note: 'e-' is usually joined onto a word with a hyphen (as in *e-commerce*) but *email* is usually written without a hyphen

eco- relating to the environment *eco-friendly tourism*
(= tourism that does not damage the environment)

en- 1 used to form verbs that mean to put into or onto something *encase* • *encircle* 2 used to form verbs that mean to cause to be something *enable* • *endear*

Euro- relating to Europe *Euro-pop* (= modern, young people's music from Europe)

ex- from before an *ex-boyfriend* • *an ex-boss*

extra- outside of or in addition to *extracurricular activities* (= activities that are in addition to the usual school work)

geo- of or relating to the Earth *geophysics* • *geology*

hyper- having a lot of or too much of a quality
hyperactive • *hypersensitive* (= more than normally sensitive)

ill- in a way that is bad or not suitable *ill-prepared*
• *an ill-judged remark*

in-, il-, im-, ir- not *incorrect* • *illegal* • *impossible*
• *irregular*

inter- between or among *international*

• *an interdepartmental meeting*

intra- within *an intranet*

kilo- a thousand *a kilometre* • *a kilogram*

mega- 1 informal extremely *megarich*

(= extremely rich) 2 one million *40 megabytes*

micro- very small *a microchip* • *microscopic*
(= extremely small)

mid- in the middle of *mid-July*. • *a man in his mid-forties* • *mid-afternoon/-morning*

milli- a thousandth *a millisecond*

mini- small *a miniskirt* (= very short skirt) • *a minibus*

mis- not or badly *mistrust* • *to misbehave*

mono- one or single *monolingual* • *a monologue*

multi- many *a multi-millionaire* • *a multi-storey car park*

neo- new *neo-fascists*

non- not, or the opposite of *non-alcoholic drinks*

• *non-smokers*

omni- everywhere or everything *omnipresent*

• *omniscient*

out- more than or better than *to outgrow* • *to outnumber*

• *to outdo someone* (= to show that you are better than someone)

over- too much *to overeat* • *overpopulated*

photo- connected with or produced by light

photosensitive • *photosynthesis*

poly- many *polygamy* (= having more than one husband or wife at the same time) • *a polygon* (= shape with a lot of sides)

post- after or later than *postwar* • *a postgraduate*

pre- before or earlier than *pre-tax profits* • *pre-school*

pro- supporting *pro-democracy demonstrations*

pseudo- false *a pseudonym* (= false name used

especially by a writer) • *pseudo-academic*

psycho- of the mind or mental processes *psychology*

quasi- partly *quasi-religious ideas*

re- again *to remarry* • *a reusable container*

retro- looking at or copying the past *retrograde*

• *retrospective*

self- of or by yourself or itself *self-doubt* • *self-critical*

semi- half or partly *a semicircle* • *semi-frozen*

socio- relating to society *socio-economic*

sub- 1 under or below *subzero temperatures*

2 less important or a smaller part of a larger whole
a subsection

super- extremely or more than usual *a supermodel*

• *super-rich*

tele- over a long distance, done by phone, or on or for

television *the telecommunications industry*

thermo- relating to heat or temperature *a thermostat*
(= piece of equipment that controls temperature)

• *a thermometer*

trans- 1 across *transatlantic flights* 2 showing
a change *to transform* • *to translate*

tri- three *a triangle* • *a tripod*

ultra- extremely *ultra-modern architecture*

• *ultra-careful*

un- not or the opposite of *unhappy* • *unfair*

under- 1 not enough *undercooked potatoes*

• *underprivileged children* 2 below *underpass*

2. Suffixes

A suffix is a group of letters at the end of a word which changes the word's meaning and often its part of speech. Here is a list of the most common suffixes and examples of how those suffixes are used.

-able/-ible changes a verb into an adjective meaning 'able to be' *avoid* → *avoidable* • *admire* → *admirable*

-age changes a verb into a noun meaning 'the action described by the verb or the result of that action' *marry* → *marriage* • *break* → *breakage* • *spill* → *spillage*

-aholic, -oholic makes a noun meaning 'a person who is unable to stop doing or taking something' *a workaholic* • *an alcoholic*

-al **1** changes a noun into an adjective meaning 'relating to' *culture* → *cultural* • *nation* → *national* • *nature* → *natural* **2** changes a verb into a noun meaning 'the action described by the verb' *approve* → *approval* • *remove* → *removal*

-an, -ian **1** makes a noun meaning 'a person who does something' *historian* • *politician* **2** makes an adjective meaning 'belonging somewhere' *American*

-ance, -ence, -ancy, -ency makes a noun meaning 'an action, state, or quality' *performance* • *independence*

-ation, -ion changes a verb into a noun meaning 'the process of the action described by the verb, or the result of that action' *educate* → *education* • *explain* → *explanation* • *connect* → *connection*

-centric makes an adjective meaning 'having the stated thing as your main interest' *Eurocentric*

-ed makes an adjective meaning, 'having this thing or quality' *bearded* • *coloured* • *surprised*

-ee changes a verb into a noun meaning 'someone that something is done to' *employ* → *employee* • *interview* → *interviewee* • *train* → *trainee*

-en changes an adjective into a verb meaning 'to become or make something become' *thick* → *thicken* • *fat* → *fatten*

-ence, -ency See **-ance**

-er, -or changes a verb into a noun meaning 'the person or thing that does the activity' *dance* → *dancer* • *employ* → *employer* • *act* → *actor* • *cook* → *cooker* (= a machine for cooking) • *time* → *timer*

-esque makes an adjective meaning 'like or in the style of someone or their work' *Dali-esque painting*

-ful changes a noun into an adjective meaning, 'having a particular quality' *beauty* → *beautiful* • *power* → *powerful* • *use* → *useful*

-hood makes a noun meaning 'the state of being something and the time when someone is something' *childhood* • *motherhood*

-ian See **-an**

-ible See **-able**

-ical changes a noun ending in -y or -ics into an adjective meaning 'relating to' *history* → *historical* • *politics* → *political*

-ing makes an adjective meaning 'making someone feel something' *interest* → *interesting* • *surprise* → *surprising* • *shock* → *shocking*

-ion See **-ation**

-ise See **-ize**

-ish makes an adjective meaning **1** slightly *a greyish colour* • *a smallish* (= quite small) *house* **2** typical of or similar to *a childish remark* **3** approximately *fiftyish* (= about fifty)

-ist **1** makes a noun meaning 'a person who does a particular activity' *artist* • *novelist* • *scientist* **2** makes a noun and an adjective meaning 'someone with a particular set of beliefs' *communist* • *feminist*

-ive changes a verb into an adjective meaning 'having a particular quality or effect' *attract* → *attractive* • *create* → *creative* • *explode* → *explosive*

-ize, -ise changes an adjective into a verb meaning 'to make something become' *modern* 'modernize' • *commercial* → *commercialize*

-less changes a noun into an adjective meaning 'without' *homeless people* • *a meaningless statement* • *a hopeless situation*

-like changes a noun into an adjective meaning 'typical of or similar to' *childlike trust* • *a cabbage-like vegetable*

-ly **1** changes an adjective into an adverb describing the way that something is done *She spoke slowly*

• *Drive safely.* **2** makes an adjective and an adverb meaning 'happening every day, night, week etc' *a daily newspaper* • *We hold the meeting weekly.* **3** changes a noun into an adjective meaning 'like that person or thing' *mother* → *motherly* • *coward* → *cowardly*

-ment changes a verb into a noun meaning 'the action or process described by a verb, or its result' *develop* → *development* • *disappoint* → *disappointment*

-monger makes a noun meaning 'a person who encourages a particular activity, especially one that causes trouble' *a war-monger*

-ness changes an adjective into a noun meaning 'the quality or condition described by the adjective' *sweet* → *sweetness* • *happy* → *happiness* • *dark* → *darkness* • *ill* → *illness*

-ology makes a noun meaning 'the study of something' *psychology* (= the study of the mind) • *sociology* (= the study of society)

-or See **-er**

-ous changes a noun into an adjective meaning 'having that quality' *danger* → *dangerous* • *ambition* → *ambitious*

-phile makes a noun meaning 'enjoying or liking something' *a Francophile* (= someone who loves France) • *a bibliophile* (= someone who loves books)

-proof makes an adjective meaning 'protecting against, or not damaged by, a particular thing' *a bullet-proof vest* • *a waterproof jacket*

-ridden makes an adjective meaning 'full of something unpleasant or bad' *a guilt-ridden mother*

-ship makes a noun showing involvement between people *friendship* • *a relationship* • *partnership*

-speak used to form nouns to mean the special language used in a particular subject area or business *computerspeak* • *marketingspeak*

-ward, -wards makes an adverb meaning 'towards a direction or place' *inward* • *forward* • *homeward*

-wise changes a noun into an adverb meaning 'relating to this subject' *Weather-wise, the holiday was great.*

-y changes a noun into an adjective meaning 'having a lot of something, often something bad' *noise* → *noisy* • *dirt* → *dirty* • *smell* → *smelly*