



Using prefixes to change meaning

PREFIX	MEANING	EXAMPLES
<i>auto-</i>	<i>self</i>	<i>autobiography auto-immune autonomous</i>
<i>bi-</i>	<i>two</i>	<i>bilingual bi-annual bisect</i>
<i>co-</i>	<i>together/joint</i>	<i>co-signatories co-directors co-owners</i>
<i>ex-</i>	<i>former/previous</i>	<i>ex-husband ex-president ex-teacher</i>
<i>inter-</i>	<i>among/between</i>	<i>international inter-state intermarriage</i>
<i>in-/im-</i>	<i>into inside</i>	<i>insert income import</i>
<i>mega-</i>	<i>huge/a million</i>	<i>megastar mega-structure megabytes</i>
<i>mono-</i>	<i>one only</i>	<i>monolingual monopoly monophonic</i>
<i>over-</i>	<i>superior too much</i>	<i>overlord overdrive overstate</i>
<i>re-</i>	<i>again</i>	<i>repay reorganise restate</i>
<i>semi-</i>	<i>half</i>	<i>semi-literate semicircle semi-independent</i>
<i>sub-</i>	<i>below</i>	<i>substandard sub-zero sub-prime</i>
<i>under-</i>	<i>inferior too little</i>	<i>underclass underperform undervalue</i>

- ◆ **Prefixes** are syllables which we add before certain words to form new words. The meaning of the new word depends on the prefix that has been used.

anti-	= against	e.g. antisocial
bi-	= two	e.g. biannual
co-	= with	e.g. co-driver
ex-	= previous, former	e.g. ex-husband
inter-	= between	e.g. international
mis-	= done wrongly or badly	e.g. misbehave
mono-	= one	e.g. monorail
multi-	= many	e.g. multinational
non-	= not	e.g. non-fiction
out-	= more, better	e.g. outnumber
over-	= (done) to a great extent	e.g. overwork
post-	= after	e.g. postdate
pre-	= before	e.g. prehistoric
pro-	= in favour of	e.g. pro-government
re-	= again	e.g. redecorate
semi-	= half	e.g. semi-final
sub-	= under, less	e.g. submarine
super-	= big, more	e.g. superhuman
trans-	= (travel) from one side, group etc to another	e.g. transcontinental
under-	= not enough	e.g. undercooked

- ◆ The prefixes below are used to express opposite meanings.

de-	e.g. defrost, decompose
dis-	e.g. dishonest, dislike
in-	e.g. indirect, independent
BUT:	
il-	(before l) e.g. illogical
im-	(before m, p) e.g. immoral, impractical
ir-	(before r) e.g. irresponsible
but:	unreliable, unreasonable
non-	e.g. non-smoker, non-stop
un-	e.g. unacceptable, unemployed

Task 1

Match the prefixes with their meanings.

a. not	b. down, or reversal	c. against
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d. out, out of	e. across	f. far
g. again, back	h. together, with	i. self
j. bad	k. never	l. inside

1. ... de-
2. ... auto-
3. ... co-
4. ... tele-
5. ... mal-
6. ... anti-
7. ... ex-
8. ... trans-
9. ... dis-
10. ... re-

1.b. **down or reversal**; 2.i. **self**; 3.h. **together, with**; 4.f. **far**; 5.j. **bad**; 6.c. **against**; 7.d. **out, out of**; 8.e. **across**; 9.a. **not**; 10.g. **again, back**

Task 2

Complete the sentences with the necessary prefix.

self-, over-, ultra-

- 1.The trouble with Martin is that he is ... sensitive. He gets upset so easily.
- 2.I can't eat these carrots. They are all mushy. They have been ... cooked.
- 3.75% of adults between the ages of 22 and 49 are ... weight. Doctors blame the increase in junk food and the lack of exercise.
- 4.I would love to live in one of those ... modern flats they have built in the city centre.
- 5.There are staff just standing around not doing anything in that office. Are they just lazy or do you think the company is ... staffed?
- 6.It's easy. Just follow the diagram and the rest is ... explanatory.
- 7.I really admire his achievements. He didn't have any formal education and is completely ... taught.
- 8.Many people ... estimate the value of their houses and are very disappointed when they are told the real value.
- 9.Gosh. I'm full! I've definitely ... eaten and shouldn't have had that last piece of cake!

10. I wish he would consider other people sometimes. He's the most ... centred person I have ever met.

Task 3

Complete the sentences by putting in the correct word into the gaps.

disappeared, unwilling, discourage, dissatisfied, disrespectful, unhappy, unhelpful, dislikes, unhealthy, uncomfortable

1. I've got a terrible backache this morning. My new bed is very
2. Some people eat beef-burgers and chips every day. It's very
3. He hates all vegetables and he especially ... carrots.
4. Peter warned me not to go to that shop as the assistants were so
5. Why is David looking so ... ? Has something awful happened?
6. It really is quite ... to walk out of the lesson without any explanation.
7. We were all very ... both with the meal and the service in the new restaurant. I don't think we will go there again.
8. We tried to ... him from giving up his job before he had found a new one but he insisted.
9. To begin with she was ... to help but we managed to persuade her to give us a hand.
10. I waved goodbye until the train ... from view.

Task 4

Complete the following sentences, using the verb in its correct form.

sure, like, able, behave, do, large, wrap, agree, understand, obey

1. One of the soldiers was punished for (obey) orders.
2. I'm afraid that you (understand) me. I said £40 not 14.
3. We have many things in common, but we (agree) on music. He likes jazz but I prefer classical.
4. John was so excited about his birthday that he had (wrap) all his presents by 7 o'clock in the morning.
5. When we had the photos (large) we were able to make out the house in the distance.
6. It's hot in there, so why don't you (do) your coat?
7. Are those children (behave)? They seem to be making a lot of noise.
8. This software (able) you to calculate the percentages very quickly.
9. The only trouble about winter is the dark mornings. I really (like) getting up in the dark.
10. "It is our job to (sure) your safety at all times so please keep to the footpaths and don't wander off", said the guide.

Task 5

Choose the correct variant-prefix:

1. In many countries it is ___ legal to keep a gun in your house.
 - A. un
 - B. il
 - C. in

2. She's thinking of going back to university and taking a ___graduate course.
 - A. pre
 - B. under
 - C. post

3. Thousands of people have taken part in a _____-democracy demonstration.
 - A. pro
 - B. anti
 - C. for

4. You shouldn't eat chicken that is _____cooked.
 - A. anti
 - B. mis
 - C. under

5. There was some _____agreement over the bill.
 - A. dis
 - B. mis
 - C. un

6. She works for a _____national company. It has offices in over 30 countries.
 - A. inter
 - B. multi
 - C. bi

7. Everyone was watching me and I felt very _____ - conscious.
 - A. un
 - B. over
 - C. self

8. His _____-wife is suing him for \$5 million.
 - A. pre

B. ex

C. post

9. We were very _____satisfied with the service at the restaurant.

A. un

B. mis

C. dis

10. The quality of the work was very poor and much of it had to be _____done

A. pre

B. un

C. re