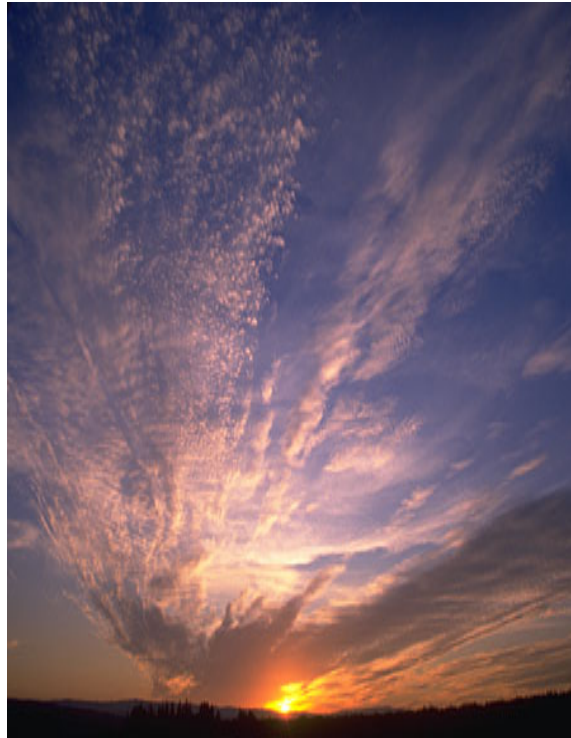


Word Decoding- Root words, Prefixes,
Suffixes, and Phonics:

Ways to understand and simplify language



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Introduction: Word Decoding and Its Use

Word Decoding is simply a way of breaking up a word into understandable parts. Phonics tells you how words are pronounced, but it is not much help in understanding a word through context or by remembering that parts of words contain smaller, sometimes more specific, sometimes more flexible meanings. Through learning root words, suffixes and prefixes, you can give yourself a “code book” that not only helps you navigate around English, but at times, also languages derived from Greek, Roman, and German. These include many of today’s European and South American languages.

Here’s a quick example of how word decoding might work:

Take the sentence- Bill predicted that the results of the latest democratic election would leave the losing candidate suffering with hypertension.

There are several words that we can derive “clues” through context. For example, we could guess that whatever the losing candidate is suffering from is not good. But the root word “hyper” means “high or excessive” and a moderately versed reader could see the word “tense” inserted in the middle. Or, they might look at the suffix- “-sion” and recognize that this suffix often accompanies a profession or a state of being. Likewise, the root word “demo” means people, as in “demo/cracy,” meaning rule by the people,” and “demo/graphics” would give you a picture of how people are physically spread out over a given location. In a final example, look at the word predicted; “pre” meaning before and “dict” meaning to speak as in the word diction. Thus, prediction is a word or words spoken about the future. In each of these cases, knowing just part of the word or knowing the root of a similar word might help you guess at the meaning of the whole word.

English is a language that is derived from mainly German, Latin and Greek, as well as, some other languages. Because of this, one of the greatest tools any reader, beginner or advanced, can have is to master and memorize a large amount of these root words.

General Roots and Prefixes

Root Words- Root Words are where many of our common English words originate from. Often a root word is a word in itself or is easily recognizable as the origin of other words.

Sometimes root words have several different meanings. Root Words may come at the beginning or end of longer words.

Prefixes- Prefixes help to form longer words, but are not words in themselves. Prefixes only come at the beginning of words and usually have one distinct meaning.

Root or Prefix	Meaning	Examples
a, an	not, without	atheist, anarchy, anonymous apathy, aphasia, anemia
ab	away from	absent, abduction, aberrant, abstemious
ambul	to walk	ambulatory, amble, ambulance, somnambulist
ante	before	anteroom, antebellum, antedate antecedent, antediluvian
anti, ant	against, opposite	antisocial, antiseptic, antithesis, antibody, antichrist, antinomies, antifreeze, antipathy, antigen, antibiotic
audi	to hear	audience, auditory, audible, auditorium, audiovisual, audition
be	thoroughly	bedecked, besmirch, besprinkled
auto	self	automobile, automatic, autograph, autonomous, autoimmune
bene	good, well	benefactor, beneficial, benevolent, benediction, beneficiary, benefit
cede, ceed, cess	to go, to yield	succeed, proceed, precede, recede, secession, exceed,

		succession
chron	time	chronology, chronic, chronicle chronometer, anachronism
cide, cis	to kill, to cut	fratricide, suicide, incision, excision, circumcision
circum	around	circumnavigate, circumflex, circumstance, circumcision, circumference, circumorbital, circumlocution, circumvent, circumscribe, circulatory
clud, clus claus	to close	include, exclude, clause, claustrophobia, enclose, exclusive, reclusive, conclude
con, com	with, together	convene, compress, contemporary, converge, compact, confluence, concatenate, conjoin, combine
contra, counter	against, opposite	contradict, counteract, contravene, contrary, counterspy, contrapuntal
cred	to believe	credo, credible, credence, credit, credential, credulity, incredulous
cycl	circle, wheel	bicycle, cyclical, cycle, encyclical
de	from, down, away	detach, deploy, derange, deodorize, devoid, deflate, degenerate, deice
dei, div	God, god	divinity, divine, deity, divination, deify

demo	people	democracy, demagogue, epidemic
dia	through, across, between	diameter, diagonal, dialogue dialect, dialectic, diagnosis, diachronic
dict	speak	predict, verdict, malediction, dictionary, dictate, dictum, diction, indict
dis, dys, dif	away, not, negative	dismiss, differ, disallow, disperse, dissuade, disconnect, dysfunction, disproportion, disrespect, distemper, distaste, disarray, dyslexia
duc, duct	to lead, pull	produce, abduct, product, transducer, viaduct, aqueduct, induct, deduct, reduce, induce
dyn, dyna	power	dynamic, dynamometer, heterodyne, dynamite, dynamo, dynasty
ecto	outside, external	ectomorph, ectoderm, ectoplasm, ectopic, ectothermal
endo	inside, withing	endotoxin, endoscope, endogenous
equi	equal	equidistant, equilateral, equilibrium, equinox, equitable, equation, equator
e, ex	out, away, from	emit, expulsion, exhale, exit, express, exclusive, enervate, exceed, explosion
exter, extra	outside of	external, extrinsic, exterior extraordinary, extrabiblical extracurricular, extrapolate, extraneous

flu, flux	flow	effluence, influence, effluvium, fluctuate, confluence, reflux, influx
flect, flex	to bend	flexible, reflection, deflect, circumflex
graph, gram	to write	polygraph, grammar, biography, graphite, telegram, autograph, lithograph, historiography, graphic
hetero	other	heterodox, heterogeneous, heterosexual, heterodyne
homo	same	homogenized, homosexual, homonym, homophone
hyper	over, above	hyperactive, hypertensive, hyperbolic, hypersensitive, hyperventilate, hyperkinetic
hypo	below, less than	hypotension, hypodermic, hypoglycemia, hypoallergenic
in, im	not	inviolable, innocuous, intractable, innocent, impregnable, impossible
infra	beneath	infrared, infrastructure
inter, intro	between	international, intercept, intermission, interoffice, internal, intermittent, introvert, introduce
intra	within, into	intranet, intracranial, intravenous
jac, ject	to throw	reject, eject, project, trajectory, interject, dejected, inject, ejaculate

mal	bad, badly	malformation, maladjusted, dismal, malady, malcontent, malfeasance, maleficent
mega	great, million	megaphone, megalomaniac, megabyte, megalopolis
meso	middle	mesomorph, mesoamerica, mesosphere
meta	beyond, change	metaphor, metamorphosis, metabolism, metahistorical, metainformation
meter	measure	perimeter, micrometer, ammeter, multimeter, altimeter
micro	small	microscope, microprocessor, microfiche, micrometer, micrograph
mis	bad, badly	misinform, misinterpret, mispronounce, misnomer, mistake, misogynist
mit, miss	to send	transmit, permit, missile, missionary, remit, admit, missive, mission
morph	shape	polymorphic, morpheme, amorphous
multi	many	multitude, multipartite, multiply, multipurpose
neo	new	neologism, neonate, neoclassic, neophyte

non	not	nonferrous, nonabrasive, nondescript
omni	all	omnipotent, omnivorous, omniscient
para	beside	paraprofessional, paramedic, paraphrase, parachute
per	through, intensive	permit, perspire, perforate, persuade
peri	around	periscope, perimeter, perigee, periodontal
phon	sound	telephone, phonics, phonograph, phonetic, homophone, microphone
phot	light	photograph, photosynthesis, photon
poly	many	polytheist, polygon, polygamy, polymorphous
port	to carry	porter, portable, report, transportation, deport, import, export
re	back, again	report, realign, retract, revise, regain
retro	backwards	retrorocket, retrospect, retrogression, retroactive
sanct	holy	sanctify, sanctuary, sanction, sanctimonious, sacrosanct
scrib, script	to write	inscription, prescribe, proscribe, manuscript, conscript, scribble, scribe
sect, sec	cut	intersect, transect, dissect, secant, section

semi	half	semifinal, semiconscious, semiannual, semimonthly, semicircle
spect	to look	inspect, spectator, circumspect, retrospect, prospect, spectacle
sub	under, below	submerge, submarine, substandard, subnormal, subvert
super, supra	above	superior, suprarenal, superscript, supernatural, supercede
syn	together	synthesis, synchronous, syndicate
tele	distance, from afar	television, telephone, telegraph, telemetry
theo, the	God	theology, theist, polytheist
therm, thermo	heat	thermal, thermometer, thermocouple, thermodynamic, thermoelectric
tract	to drag, draw	attract, tractor, traction, extract, retract, protract, detract, subtract, contract, intractable
trans	across	transoceanic, transmit, transport, transducer
un	not	uncooked, unharmed, unintended
veh, vect	to carry	vector, vehicle, convection, vehement
vert, vers	to turn	convert, revert, advertise, versatile, vertigo, invert,

		reversion, extravert, introvert
vita	life	vital, vitality, vitamins, revitalize

Explanation of Suffixes and Spelling Rules

What is a suffix?

A suffix is a word ending. It is a group of letters you can add to the end of a root word* e.g. walking, helpful *A root word stands on its own as a word, but you can make new words from it by adding beginnings (prefixes) and endings (suffixes). For example, 'comfort' is a root word. By adding the prefix 'dis' and the suffix 'able' you can make new words such as 'discomfort' and 'comfortable'.

1] For most short (one syllable) words that end in a single consonant (anything but 'a', 'e', 'i', 'o', 'u') you need to double the last letter when you add a suffix:
e.g. run + ing = running

Adding suffixes to words can change or add to their meaning, but most importantly they show how a word will be used in a sentence and what part of speech (e.g. noun, verb, adjective) the word belongs to.

e.g. If you want to use the root word 'talk' in the following sentence:

I was (talk) to Samina.

You need to add the suffix 'ing' so that the word 'talk' makes better sense grammatically:

"I was talking to Samina".

There are various suffixes we use. Probably the most common are 'ed' and 'ing'.

Here are some other suffixes and examples.

Suffix spelling rules - double letters

Usually when you add a suffix to a root word the spelling of both stays the same:

e.g. care + ful = careful

But there are several important groups of words where the spelling of the root word changes when you add a suffix.

Sometimes the spelling changes because of the 'Doubling' rules.

As always, there are exceptions to these 4 rules, but they are a good starting guide:

sun + y = sunny

If the word ends with more than one consonant, you don't double the last letter:

e.g. pump + ed = pumped

sing + ing = singing

2] For most longer (more than one syllable) words that end in 'l' you need to double the 'l' when you add the suffix:

e.g. travel + ing = travelling

cancel + ed = cancelled

3] For most longer (more than one syllable) words that have the stress on the last syllable when you say them AND end in a single consonant (anything but 'a', 'e', 'i', 'o', 'u') you need to double the last letter:

e.g. begin + er = beginner

prefer + ing = preferring

If the word has more than one syllable and ends in a single consonant, but the stress isn't on the last syllable, then you don't need to double the last letter before adding a suffix:

e.g. offer + ing = offering

benefit + ed = benefited

4] If you have a word ending in a consonant and a suffix starting in a consonant, you don't need to double the last letter of the word:

e.g. enrol + ment = enrolment

commit + ment = commitment

Suffix	Example		Suffix	Example
ed	walk + ed = walked		ness	happy + ness = happiness
ing	say + ing = saying		al	accident + al = accidental
er	tall + er = taller		ary	imagine + ary = imaginary
tion	educate + tion = education		able	accept + able = acceptable
sion	divide + sion = division		ly	love + ly = lovely
cian	music + cian = musician		ment	excite + ment = excitement
fully	hope + fully = hopefully		ful	help + ful + helpful
est	large + est = largest		y	ease + y = easy

More suffix spelling rules

'y' to 'i' rule

When you add a suffix to a word which ends in a consonant followed by a 'y', change the 'y' to 'i'.

e.g. The word 'happy' ends in 'py'.

When you add the suffix 'ness', change the 'y' to 'i' to make the word happiness:

happy + ness = happiness.

Exceptions to the rule.

If you are adding the suffix 'ing' to a word ending in 'y', keep the 'y'.

e.g. The word 'copy' ends in 'py'.

When you add 'ing' the 'y' doesn't change to an 'i' because you would have 2 'i's together: copy + ing = copying.

Silent 'e' rule

When you add a 'y' or a suffix which starts with a vowel (a,e,i,o,u) to a word which ends in a silent 'e', drop the silent 'e'.

Silent 'e' words are ones that end with a consonant and have an 'e' at the end, such as hope, like, love. If you say the word to yourself you don't really hear the 'e' at the end.

e.g. The word 'noise' ends in a silent 'e'.

When you add the suffix 'y', the 'e' is dropped to make the word, noisy:

noise + y = noisy.

The word 'like' ends in a silent 'e'.

Silent 'e' rule

When you add the suffix 'ing', the 'e' is dropped to make the word, liking:

like + ing = liking.

Exceptions to the rule. If a word ends in 'ce', or 'ge', keep the 'e' if you add a suffix beginning with either an 'a', or an 'o'. (This is done to keep the 'c' or 'g' sounding soft.)

e.g. The word 'peace' ends in 'ce'.

When you add on the suffix 'able' the silent 'e' is kept to make the word, peaceable: peace + able = peaceable

NB: All these rules also apply to words which have a prefix before the root word.

For example if you add the suffix 'ness' to the root word 'unhappy' you would still change the 'y' to 'i': un + happy + ness = unhappiness

Verbs, nouns and professions

Adding a suffix to a word can change the job that word does.

There are several forms of the 'shun' sound which are all suffixes that can change root words from nouns to verbs, or give you important clues about what the word is doing.

From verbs to nouns...

1] Adding '-tion'

Adding 'tion' to a root word can change the word from a verb (action word) to a noun (name of person, place or thing):

e.g. inject (verb) + tion = injection (noun)

instruct (verb) + tion = instruction (noun)

From verbs to nouns...

Sometimes the spelling changes slightly between the verb and the noun. The important thing is that you can see that the verb and noun are related in meaning.

e.g. relax (verb) + tion = relaxation (noun)

describe (verb) + tion = description (noun)

Use this when:

- there is a consonant before the 'tion' sound (normally the root word ends in 't')

N.B. if the root word ends in 't', you drop the final 't' before adding the suffix.

- the root word ends with a long vowel or a short 'l'

Phonics-Explained

Phonics is a method of teaching reading using the sounds of words. Phonics is usually helpful to beginners, who are just learning English and are unfamiliar with common spellings of sounds, but not as helpful to intermediate or advanced learners. This is because phonics does not help in decoding the meaning of a word. Just because you know how a written word sounds when spoken, does not mean that you understand the meaning of that word. However, phonics may be helpful to ESL (English as a Second Language) learners, who are working on their pronunciation of written English. Because phonics is often for more advanced learners, this packet will not go into depth, but those wishing to learn more can find information at:

- 1) www.sadlier-oxford.com/phonics/control_page/front2.html -
- 2) www.tampareads.com/phonics/phonicsindex.htm -
- 3) www.starfall.com/ -

Helpful Study Quiz

Root/Prefix/Suffix	Meaning	Longer Word Formed From Root/Prexix/Suffix
bene	good	
chrono		
bio		
cracy	government, rule	
gress		progress, regress
geo		
audi, audio		
dict, dic		diction, dictate
sign		
duct	to lead	
log or logos		
anim	life, mind, spirit	
ante		antecedent
anti	against, opposit	
cide		genocide, patricide