

GRAMMAR EXPLANATION

What are prefixes?

Prefixes are groups of letters added before a word, which then creates new words. For example:

biannual - "bi" means twice, so the new meaning is "twice a year"

distrust - "dis" means not, so the new meaning is "not to trust"

submarine - "sub" means under, so the new meaning is "under water"

There are many prefixes in English, some of which are quite common and some of which are used less frequently. In some cases, the same prefix may have more than one meaning, too. If you learn prefixes, your ability to comprehend new words will greatly improve. Unfortunately, it comes down to memorization.

Here's a list of many prefixes. The ones marked with the following symbol (⊙) are more often used, and should perhaps be studied first.

PREFIXES

anti-	against; opposite from/to
anti-aging anti-bacterial anti-viral <i>Some anti-aging skin creams can get quite pricey.</i>	
bi-	twice; to
biannual biplane bipolar <i>The top sales reps have a biannual meeting in sunny Puerto Rico.</i>	
circum-	around; round about
circumlocution circumnavigate <i>It's always been a dream of mine to circumnavigate the globe in a sailboat.</i>	
de-	opposite; reverse
decompose defrag demystify <i>The news program really demystified the race for the US Presidency.</i>	

⊙ dis-	not; opposite from/of
disagree disappear disconnect <i>As the stock market tumbled, my savings disappeared!</i>	
⊙ en- or em-	into; make into; put into; within
entitled embed empower <i>Bob felt empowered the day of his promotion, and strutted around the office.</i>	
ex-	former
ex-boss ex-colleague ex-wife <i>My ex-boss couldn't didn't have a clue. He was incompetent!</i>	
fore-	before; front; in front of
forefront forerunner foretell <i>The old lady could foretell when and where a person would die.</i>	
⊙ il- or ir-	not; opposite from/of; without
illogical irresponsible irretrievable <i>Drinking and driving is pretty irresponsible, don't you think?</i>	
in- or im-	in; into
import impale imperil <i>I had to pay an import tax on some of my presents that I bought in Guam!</i>	
⊙ in- or im-	not; opposite from/of; without
immortal immovable intolerable <i>The current work environment has become completely intolerable.</i>	
inter-	among; between; in the midst of
interact international interstate <i>My younger brother has trouble interacting with people.</i>	

mid-	middle
midlife midseason midterm <i>I had my first midlife crisis when I was in my early forties.</i>	
⊙ mis-	bad; failure; wrong
misdirect misspell mistake <i>There are a few words I always seem to misspell.</i>	
mono-	alone; one; single
monochrome monologue monorail <i>Seattle's public transportation system includes a monorail.</i>	
⊙ non-	absence; lack of; not
nonexistent nonsense nonsmoker <i>The speech given by the professor seemed like a lot of nonsense to me.</i>	
⊙ over-	excessive; too much
overachiever overdo overreact <i>My boss completely overreacted when I said the report would be late.</i>	
post-	after; later
postgame postmortem posttest <i>There is a posttest at the end of every chapter in the textbook.</i>	
pre-	before; earlier; prior to
premade preorder preview <i>I love watching the previews at the theater before the movie begins.</i>	
⊙ re-	again
reassess reemploy reinvigorate <i>After the initial data was analyzed, we needed to reassess our initial project deadline.</i>	

semi-**half; partially**

semicircle semidarkness semipro

It was difficult to see in the semidarkness of dusk.◎ **sub-****below; under**

submarine subpar substandard

*My philosopher is you get what you pay for, as a cheap product is often substandard.***super-****above or beyond normal**

supernatural superpower super-size

*I've often dreamed that I was a comic book hero with superpowers.***tri-****three**

triangle tricolor tricycle

*I bought my daughter, who just turned two last week, a tricycle for her birthday.***trans-****across; on the other side**

transatlantic transcontinental transoceanic

It used to be quite difficult to make transatlantic phone calls.◎ **un-****not; opposite from/of**

unaware unsure unused

*Because I left China as a child, I'm pretty unused to speaking Chinese all day.***under-****beneath or below in position**

underachiever underpass underwear

My son seems to be an underachiever, as he is quite happy to get Cs and Ds in his classes.