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A **prefix** is a letter or a group of letters that appears at the **beginning** of a word and changes the word's original meaning. It is important to know what different prefixes mean as they can help you to understand the additional meanings of words or unknown English words you come across.

Prefix  Word

via <https://www.myenglishteacher.eu/blog/prefixes-suffixes-list/>

Nouns, like adjectives or verbs, can be formed using prefixes. For example, the prefix *non-* can mean 'not' or 'opposite.' Adding *non-* to the word 'sense' gives you the word 'nonsense', which means words that have no meaning.

- She lives in a subdivision outside of a large city.
- That is a bunch of nonsense. I can't believe you think that.
- He has to talk to his ex-wife frequently because of the children.
- The level of malnutrition in the children of this town is astonishing.
- There was a lot of unrest among the people after the president was arrested.
- For children with parents from different countries, biculturalism and bilingualism are often parts of their lives.
- Her learning disability has made it difficult for her to keep up with classmates.

Prefix meanings

Prefixes are added to the root (base word) and may have various meanings.

To counter the meaning of a word

Prefixes like *anti-*, *de-*, *dis-*, *un-* or *non-* are used to mean opposite of a word:

- *body* – *antibody*
- *sense* – *nonsense*

To increase/decrease strength of a word

Prefixes *over-*, *under-*, *up-*, *down-*, and *hyper-* denote the degree, quality, quantity, or a trend:

- *activity* – *hyperactivity*
- *fall* – *downfall*

To quantify something

Prefixes like *mono-*, *bi-*, *uni-*, *di-*, and *omni-* indicate the quantity of something in a word:

- *sulfide* – *disulfide*
- *bus* – *omnibus*

To denote the degree of something

Prefixes *mega-*, *mini-*, *macro*, and *micro-* express the degree of something in a word:

- *skirt* – *miniskirt*
- *economics* – *macroeconomics*

Tips to learn noun prefixes

Here are a few things to remember when learning prefixes:

1. Different prefixes in English can have similar meanings, such as *un-*, *in-* and *non-* all of which mean 'not' or 'opposite of.' Also, the prefixes *mis-* and *ir-* mean 'wrong.'

‘wrongly,’ or ‘incorrectly.’

2. Notice that double letters are possible. For example, when you add the prefix *im-* to words that begin with the letter ‘m,’ you get two ‘m’s as in ‘immeasurability.’ The same is true for many other prefixes.
3. When adding a prefix to a word, the spelling of the base word never changes. For example, the prefix *un-* did not change the spelling of the word ‘happiness.’
4. Watch out for ‘lookalikes’ – words that look like they contain prefixes but, in fact, do not. For example, the *un-* in the word “uncle” is not a prefix, nor is the *re-* in ‘real.’

List of common noun prefixes

Here’s a list of common prefixes common noun prefixes and their meaning:

Prefix	Meaning	Examples
<i>anti-</i>	<i>against</i>	<i>antibody, antifreeze</i>
<i>bi-</i>	<i>referring to two</i>	<i>bicycle, bilingualism, biculturalism</i>
<i>co-</i>	<i>together, with</i>	<i>coordination, cooperation</i>
<i>semi-</i>	<i>half of, not complete</i>	<i>semicircle, semidesert, semidarkness</i>
<i>mal-</i>	<i>bad, not enough</i>	<i>malfunction, malnutrition, maltreatment</i>
<i>ex-</i>	<i>former</i>	<i>exwife, ex-president, ex-smoker</i>
<i>sub-</i>	<i>under, below</i>	<i>subdivision, submarine, subset</i>
<i>dis-</i>	<i>bad, opposite of</i>	<i>disability, disbelief, discomfort</i>
<i>non-</i>	<i>opposite of</i>	<i>nonsense, nonfiction</i>
<i>un-</i>	<i>lack of</i>	<i>unfairness, unrest, unemployment</i>
<i>over-</i>	<i>excessive, above</i>	<i>overwork, overheating</i>

Note: You may see some nouns with prefixes written with a hyphen (-). This happens when a verb is not commonly used with a prefix, such as: *ex-president*. This will also depend on the type of English (American or British).

Here’s a useful video from EngVid demonstrating different prefixes in use:

Read more on this topic:

[Noun Formation: Common Suffixes](#)

[Verb Formation: Common Prefixes and Suffixes](#)

[How to Form Adjectives](#)

[How to Form Adverbs](#)