

A dog howled, ~~braeking~~ the
comma → breaking

stillness. Someone was behind me...
period ← ellipsis

Prefixes



A lot of long words can be broken down into smaller parts.
For example:

disadvantageous

dis-

prefix
meaning 'not'

advantage

root: what is left of
the word when all the
prefixes and suffixes
are removed

-ous

suffix which
turns a noun
into an adjective

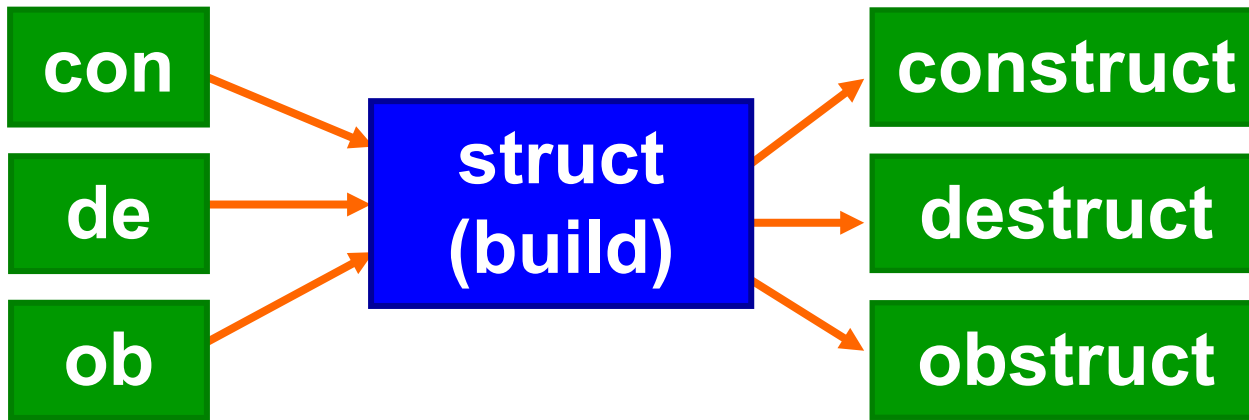
Knowing about the different parts of words can help us to understand their meanings.

What do you think 'disadvantageous' means?

What is a prefix?

A **prefix** is group of letters that goes **before** the root of a word. The prefix changes the meaning of the word.

For example:



Knowing what the prefixes mean can help you to understand and spell unfamiliar words. In this example, the prefixes are:

con = with/together; **de** = undo; **ob** = in the way.



Prefix meanings



Figure out the meaning of each of these common prefixes by looking at the examples given (and thinking of your own) and thinking about what they have in common. Then drag the meanings to the correct boxes.

Press **start** to begin.

start

half

again

many, much

after

before

from, out of

solve



Look at prefixes of these words.

inaccurate

impolite

illegal

unhelpful

irregular

What is the effect of the prefix on the meaning of each word?

The prefixes **in**, **im**, **il**, **un**, and **ir** all mean '**not**'. So by using these prefixes, the meanings of the words change – to the opposite meanings.

These are called **antonym prefixes**. 'Antonym' means 'opposite'.

Can you think of other prefixes which do the same?

Antonym prefixes



Match each antonym prefix on the left to its root word.

mis

un

anti

ir

im

in

non

sense

body

regular

mature

usual

behave

active

solve



What is the effect of the antonym prefix in each case?

What do you think the prefix **al-** means?

almighty **alright**
altogether **already**
always

The prefix **al-** means 'all'.

How many other words can you think of that begin 'al'?

What do you think the prefix **a-** means?

aboard = on board
afloat = in a state of floating
aglitter = in a state of glittering
awake = in a state of waking
aground = on ground

The **a-** prefix means 'on' or 'in a state of'.



What prefix do the words below all share?

What do you think the prefix means?

abandon

*They **ab**andoned the ship.*

abseil

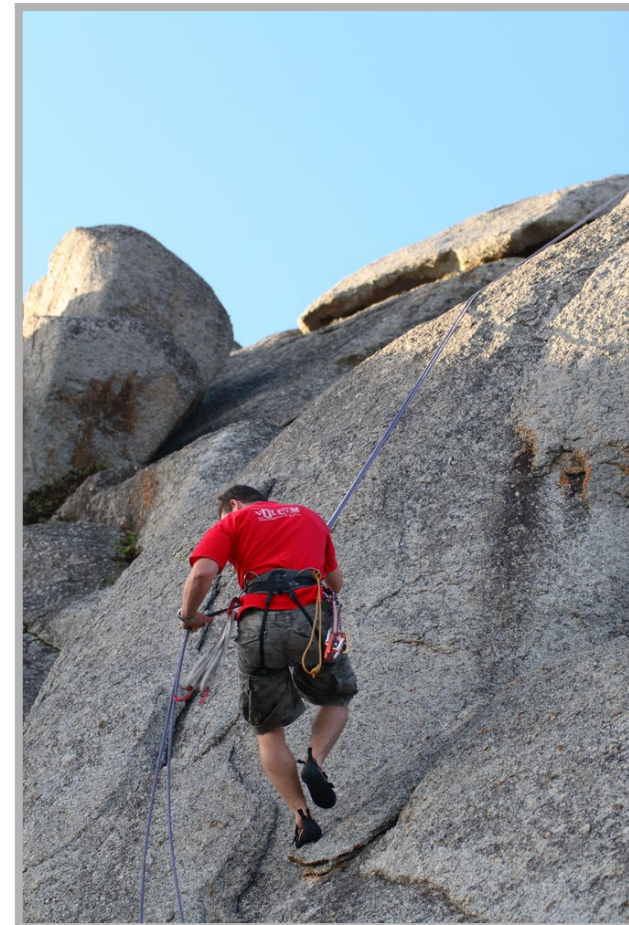
*He **ab**seiled down the cliff.*

abscond

*They **ab**sconded from jail.*

abdiccate

*She **ab**diccated her throne.*



The prefix **ab-** means '**away from**'.



Choosing prefixes

Below is a list of root words. Choose the correct prefixes to be added to the beginnings of these words and drag them to the correct positions. Be careful, though, because some words can take more than one prefix!

1. relevant

2. understood

3. patient

4. appear

5. legal

6. cover

7. frost

8. accurate

9. mature

10. sense

re il non in pre

de mis ir im un

solve



How many words can you think of that begin with the prefix **auto-**, e.g. '**autobiography**'?

You have 30 seconds from when the timer is started to think of as many as you can!



Did you think of these words?

autograph
automobile
automatic
automaton



Press play to start the timer.

What do you think **auto-** means?

The prefix **auto-** means '**self**'.



Can you think of any words that begin with the prefix **bi-**, e.g. 'bicycle'?

You have 30 seconds from when the timer is started to think of as many as you can!



Did you think of these words?

biceps
bilingual
biped
bifocals



Press play to start the timer.

What do you think the prefix **bi-** means?

The prefix **bi-** means 'two' or 'twice'.

Latin and Greek prefixes

Can you match the Latin and Greek prefixes on the top row with their meanings?

show all

solve



Mix and match prefixes



Summary quiz

