

Prefixes, Roots, Suffixes

Although the following are used to form words used in general academic English, the examples and sample sentences mostly involve a medical context.

I. prefixes

prefix	meaning	example(s)	
ambi	both	<i>ambiguous</i> <i>ambidexterous</i>	double meaning (meaning not clear) having equal ease in using both hands
Since the results of the lab tests were ambiguous , the doctor ordered a CT scan.			
an/a	without	<i>asepsis</i> <i>anaerobic</i>	a condition in which no living disease-causing microorganisms are present not requiring oxygen
An anaerobe is a microorganism that does not require oxygen for metabolism.			
bi, di	two	<i>biannual</i> <i>dilemma</i>	every two years choice between two alternatives
Women should have a mammogram biannually after the age of 40 to check for breast cancer.			
circum	around	<i>circumspect</i> <i>circumvent</i>	cautious (looking around) to go around, e.g. avoid restrictions imposed by a rule or law
The circumference of a circle is the distance around its outer edge.			
com, co, col, con, cor	together	<i>cooperate</i> <i>conference</i> <i>connect</i>	work together meeting join together
A convent is a community of women who live a life devoted largely to religious worship.			
dis, dif	not, apart	<i>disconnect</i> <i>disabled</i>	break the connection handicapped (not able)
A doctor cannot be disinterested in his patients.			
dys	faulty, bad	<i>dysfunction</i>	not working properly
Dysgraphia is the impairment of writing arising from brain injury or disease.			
e, ex	out of, beyond	<i>extraordinary</i> <i>extrovert</i> <i>exceed</i>	wonderful; out of the ordinary person interested in external objects/actions to go beyond the limits of something in quantity, degree or scope.
Despite his poor prognosis, the patient recovered, far exceeding the doctor's expectations.			
il, in, im, ir	not	<i>inefficient</i> <i>illegible</i>	not efficient not readable
The handwriting of some doctors is so illegible that pharmacies sometimes have to call the doctor to check what medicine has been prescribed.			
inter	between, among	<i>intervene</i> <i>international</i>	come between between nations
Intercellular fluid, also known as interstitial fluid, is fluid that is found between cells.			
intra	within	<i>intradepartmental</i>	within a department
An intramuscular injection is administered within a muscle.			
macro	large, long	<i>macrobiotic</i>	tending to prolong life
Due to poor health, she decided to go on a macrobiotic diet.			

mal	bad; abnormal; inadequate	<i>malfunction</i> <i>malabsorption</i>	to fail to function normally Inadequate absorption of nutrients from digested food in the alimentary canal
The malignancy indicated a poor prognosis.			
micro	small	<i>microcosm</i>	miniature universe
A microscope is used to see a magnified image of an object.			
mega	great	<i>megavitamin</i>	dose of a vitamin much higher than normal dose
In megalocephaly , the head is excessively large.			
meta	involving change	<i>metabolism</i> <i>metamorphosis</i>	ongoing chemical interactions in living organisms that provide the energy and nutrients needed to sustain life a complete or extreme change in physical appearance
When a caterpillar becomes a butterfly, it is said to undergo a metamorphosis .			
mis	improper	<i>misbehavior</i> <i>miscalculate</i>	to behave in an unacceptable way to calculate something incorrectly
Ever since her miscarriage , she was unable to recover from the loss of her baby.			
mono	one	<i>monochromatism</i>	a defect of vision in which the retina cannot distinguish any colors and gray is the only color that can be seen.
A monosome is a chromosome that exists on its own, rather than in a pair.			
multi	many	<i>multiparous</i>	a multiparous woman has had children from two or more pregnancies, each lasting at least twenty weeks.
He was diagnosed as having multiple personality disorder, one in which two or more distinct, independent personalities coexist within one person.			
neo	new	<i>neophyte</i> <i>neonate</i>	a beginner at some task or endeavor. a newborn child
Premature neonates must be placed in an incubator until they develop further.			
pan	all, every	<i>panacea</i>	a cure for all diseases or problems
In the 1920's, the influenza pandemic killed hundreds of thousands all over the world.			
per	Through, completely	<i>percutaneous</i>	administered or absorbed through the skin
In a technique known as perfusion , a liquid is introduced into a tissue or organ by circulating it through blood vessels or other channels within the body.			
peri	Around, near	<i>perinatal</i> <i>periotic</i>	relating to or occurring during the period around childbirth involving the area around the ear
The periosteum is the sheath of connective tissue that surrounds bones except those at joints.			
poly	many	<i>polygamy</i> <i>polyglot</i>	the practice of having more than one wife capable of reading, writing or speaking many languages
Polygamy is illegal in the United States.			
pre	before	<i>precaution</i>	action taken to prevent possible harm
One of my best friends had to have her stomach removed recently because testing revealed the presence of precancerous cells.			

post	after	<i>postdoctoral</i> <i>posterior</i> <i>postpartum</i>	studies undertaken after a doctorate has been awarded situated at the back of a human being's or animal's body the period immediately after childbirth
Some women suffer from postpartum depression shortly after the birth of a child.			
prim	first	<i>primary school</i>	Grades 1-6; elementary school
In many countries, patients see a primary care physician before being referred to a specialist.			
pro	Toward, in favor of	<i>proceed</i> <i>process</i> <i>proponent</i>	to go on to do something actions directed toward a particular aim supporter
The proponents of anti-smoking laws have been very successful in the United States.			
pseudo	false	<i>pseudonym</i>	false name used particularly for an author in publications
Pseudotuberculosis is a disease in which nodules form similar to those found in tuberculosis but are not caused by the tubercle bacillus.			
re	again	<i>repeat</i> <i>revitalize</i>	to say, write, do something again to give new life or energy to something or somebody.
Some people claim that taking certain vitamins makes them feel revitalized .			
retro	backward	<i>retroactive</i> <i>retrospect</i>	effective as of a past date looking back
In retrospect , the patient realized he had many symptoms a long time before he become very ill but didn't pay attention to them.			
semi	Half, partly	<i>semiannual</i> <i>semidesert</i>	happening twice a year a region lying between a desert and a vegetated area.
Upon arriving at the emergency room, the patient was semiconscious .			
sub	under	<i>subacute</i> <i>subclinical</i>	a medical condition that develops less rapidly and with less severity than an acute condition used to describe an early stage of a condition for which no symptoms are detectable
Subclinical hypothyroidism is extremely common these days, especially among older women.			
syn	together	<i>synthesis</i> <i>synchronize</i>	The process of combining different ideas and influences to create a new unified whole. to cause to happen at the same time
Synthesis is an important part of the process of writing.			
trans	across	<i>transportation</i>	the act of carrying people from one place to another
The transverse colon passes from right to left across the upper abdominal cavity.			
un	not	<i>unpopular</i>	not popular
Many patients claim that the hospital's food is uninviting .			
uni	one	<i>unify</i>	to bring people/things together to form a whole
The union of a sperm and egg creates an embryo.			

II. Roots/combining forms

aqua	water	<i>aquaphobia</i> <i>aqueous</i>	abnormal fear of water containing or consisting mostly of water
In the eye, there is a transparent fluid that circulates between the back of the cornea and the front of the iris and pupil. This fluid is known as aqueous humor.			
auto	self	<i>automatic</i> <i>automobile</i>	started or regulated by a mechanism without human intervention propelled by its own engine
The autonomic nervous system controls involuntary activity, such as breathing.			
biblio	book	<i>bibliography</i>	a list of books and articles used in writing a research paper or other text
There are number of different ways to organize a bibliography .			
corp	body	<i>corpse</i> <i>corporal</i> <i>punishment</i>	dead body the striking of the body for punishment.
The hospital has a special place known as a morgue where corpses are kept.			
mater/matr	mother	<i>matrimony</i> <i>maternal</i>	marriage pertaining to motherhood
Hospitals have maternity wards, where women who have just had a baby stay.			
mori/mort	to die	<i>mortuary</i>	a room/building where the dead are kept until they are buried or cremated
Without treatment, the mortality rate for snake bites is quite high.			
morph	shape	<i>endomorph</i>	someone with a large frame (shape)
Morphology is the study of the form and structure of organisms.			
omni	all	<i>omniscient</i> <i>omnivore</i>	knowing all eating all
As opposed to herbivores, who eat only plants, omnivores eat meat and plants.			
port	able to be carried	<i>transport</i>	act of carrying people/goods from one place to another
Ambulances have portable equipment since they sometimes need it to bring inside a building.			
potent	powerful	<i>impotent</i> <i>potency</i>	lacking strength or power (esp. used to describe male sexual dysfunction) refers to the strength of a drug
Since the potency of a drug is reduced over time, it is important to observe expiration dates.			
rupt	to break	<i>interrupt</i> <i>rupture</i>	to break into a conversation a tear in body tissue
A ruptured appendix is a serious medical problem.			
scope, scopy	to watch, examine	<i>endoscope</i>	medical device for diagnostic exam
gastroscopy is a medical procedure in which the inside of the stomach is examined.			
scrib, script	to write	<i>scripture</i> <i>prescription</i>	sacred (religious writings) a written order by a doctor authorizing a pharmacist to dispense a particular medication
The pharmacist would not issue the drug without a prescription from the doctor.			
sect	To cut	<i>dissect</i>	To cut apart
Sometimes, when a delivery is difficult, the mother must undergo a Cesarean section , a procedure by which the baby is removed directly from her abdomen.			

therm	heat	<i>thermal</i> <i>thermotherapy</i>	involving or producing heat the use of heat to alleviate pain and increase circulation
A thermometer is a device for measuring temperature.			
vac	empty	<i>vacuum</i> <i>vacant</i> <i>vacuum aspirator</i>	an emptiness caused by something or someone's absence having no occupant or contents a device for drawing out fluids by suction
Patients must take an enema to evacuate their bowels prior to many operations.			
viv, vit	alive	<i>vivacious</i> <i>vivisection</i>	full of life practice of operating on living animals to gain knowledge of pathological or physiological processes
At the scene of an accident, the first thing to do is check the patient's vital signs.			