

# ENGLISH PREFIXES

## Examples of Prefixes

Prefix	Meaning	Examples
un	not, in reverse	untidy, unsure, unwrap
im	not	impossible, improper, immature
in	not	indirect, inactive, incomplete
il	not	illegal, illiterate, illegible
ir	not	irregular, irrational, irresponsible
mis	wrong	mislead, misbehave, misadvise
dis	not, reverse	dislike, disloyal, discourage
non	not	non-stop, nonsense, non-cooperation

# Prefixes for negative adjectives

**un** + adjective

unkind, unable, unwise, unhealthy,  
unclean, unfaithful

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<http://hagarlanguages.wordpress.com/>

**in** + adjective

incapable, inanimate, insane,  
indecent, indefinite, inactive

but "in" changes when it comes before "p", "m", "l" and "r":

**im** + adjective

impossible, impatient, impolite,  
immortal, immoral, immobile

**il** + adjective

illegal, illogical, illegible

**ir** + adjective

irregular, irreverent, irreversible

## NEGATIVE PREFIXES IN ENGLISH

**ir**

responsible

rational

regular

refutable

**im**

material

mortal

mobile

mature

practical

balanced

possible

**in**

effectual

operable

numerable

tolerable

credible

secure

sane

active

**il**

legible

logical

legal

literate





# PREFIXES

A **prefix** is a letter or group of letters added to the beginning of a word. A prefix has meaning. For example, the prefix **un-** means “not.” When a prefix is added to the beginning of a word, it changes the word’s meaning.

**un-** + *happy* = *unhappy* (not glad)

Prefix	Meaning	Sample Word and Meaning
<b>anti-</b>	against	<b>antigravity</b> — works against the effect of gravity
<b>auto-</b>	self	<b>autopilot</b> — system to make a vehicle steer itself
<b>bi-</b>	two	<b>bicycle</b> — cycle with two wheels
<b>dis-</b>	not	<b>disagree</b> — not agree
<b>ex-</b>	out, former	<b>ex-boyfriend</b> — former boyfriend
<b>in-, im-, ir-</b>	not	<b>improper</b> — not proper
<b>inter-</b>	between	<b>interstate</b> — going between states
<b>micro-</b>	small	<b>microbiology</b> — study of tiny life forms
<b>mis-</b>	wrong	<b>misled</b> — led wrongly
<b>mono-</b>	one	<b>monotone</b> — a single tone of voice
<b>poly-</b>	many	<b>polygon</b> — many-sided figure
<b>post-</b>	later, behind	<b>postdate</b> — put a later date on
<b>pre-</b>	before	<b>prepay</b> — pay beforehand
<b>re-</b>	again	<b>reuse</b> — use again
<b>semi-</b>	half	<b>semicircle</b> — half a circle
<b>sub-</b>	under	<b>subfloor</b> — floor under a finished floor
<b>tri-</b>	three	<b>triangle</b> — three-sided polygon
<b>un-</b>	not	<b>unpopular</b> — not popular
<b>uni-</b>	one	<b>unilateral</b> — one sided

# PREFIXES



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prefix	meaning	examples		
anti	against	anti-war	antisocial	antibiotic
auto	of or by oneself	autograph	auto-pilot	autobiography
bi	two, twice	bicycle	biannual	bilingual
ex	former	ex-wife	ex-student	ex-president
ex	out of	extract	exhale	excommunicate
micro	small	micro-computer	microwave	microscopic
mis	badly/wrongly	misunderstand	mistranslate	misinform
mono	one/single	monotonous	monologue	monogamous
multi	many	multi-national	multi-cultural	multi-purpose
over	too much	overdo	overtired	oversleep
post	after	post-government	post-war	post-revolution
pro	in favour of	pro-government	pro-type	pro-revolutionary
pseudo	false	pseudo-scientific		pseudo-intellectual
re	again or back	retype	replace	rewind
semi	half	semiculture	semi-final	semi-detached
sub	under	subway	submarine	subdivision
under	not enough	underworked	underused	undercooked

- **Put one of the prefixes in each space in the phrases below to make the word which follows its opposite in meaning.**
- **un- dis-**
- 
- \_\_\_\_ comfortable chair
- to \_\_\_\_ lock a door
- \_\_\_\_ believable story
- to \_\_\_\_ obey an order
- \_\_\_\_ punctual train
- \_\_\_\_ respectful pupil
- to \_\_\_\_ believe a story
- to \_\_\_\_ agree with someone
- \_\_\_\_ popular man
- \_\_\_\_ honest shopkeeper
- to \_\_\_\_ load a ship
- to \_\_\_\_ approve of someone
- \_\_\_\_ lucky accident
- to \_\_\_\_ like cheese
- \_\_\_\_ familiar city
- to \_\_\_\_ appear round the corner
- \_\_\_\_ satisfied customer
- to \_\_\_\_ button a jacket
- \_\_\_\_ grateful child
- to \_\_\_\_ cover buried treasure
- \_\_\_\_ united party
- to \_\_\_\_ trust a politician
-

- **Put one of the prefixes in each space in the phrases below to make the word which follows its opposite in meaning.**

- **ir- il- im- in-**

- 

\_\_\_resistible temptation

- \_\_\_possible plan

- \_\_\_polite letter

- \_\_\_legal business deal

- \_\_\_literate person

- \_\_\_accurate calculation

- \_\_\_frequent buses

- \_\_\_mature young man

- \_\_\_legible handwriting

- \_\_\_moral action

- \_\_\_curable illness

- \_\_\_convenient arrangement

- \_\_\_regular train service

- \_\_\_logical answer

- \_\_\_dependent country

- \_\_\_responsible boy

- \_\_\_formal clothes

- \_\_\_patient motorist

- \_\_\_replaceable work of art

- \_\_\_secure feeling

- \_\_\_expensive present



# KEY

- **un- dis-**
- an **un**comfortable chair
- to **un**lock a door
- an **un**believable story
- to **dis**obey an order
- an **un**punctual train
- a **dis**respectful pupil
- to **dis**believe a story
- to **dis**agree with someone
- an **un**popular man
- a **dis**honest shopkeeper

# KEY

- to **un**load a ship
- to **dis**approve of someone
- an **un**lucky accident
- to **dis**like cheese
- an **un**familiar city
- to **dis**appear round the corner
- an **dis**satisfied customer
- to **un**button a jacket
- an **un**grateful child
- to **dis**cover buried treasure
- a **dis**united party
- to **dis**trust a politician

# KEY

- **ir**resistible temptation
- an **im**possible plan
- an **im**polite letter
- an **il**legal business deal
- an **il**literate person
- an **in**accurate calculation
- **in**frequent buses
- an **im**mature young man
- **il**legible handwriting
- an **im**moral action
- an **in**curable illness

# KEY

- an **in**convenient arrangement
- **ir**regular train service
- an **il**logical answer
- an **in**dependent country
- an **ir**responsible boy
- **in**formal clothes
- an **im**patient motorist
- an **ir**replaceable work of art
- an **in**secure feeling
- an **in**expensive present

