

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

