

# Understanding Word Parts: Prefixes, Roots, and Suffixes

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## Why This Matters:

Knowing the parts of a word—prefixes, roots, and suffixes—helps you figure out what new words mean. This is really helpful when you're reading or writing a research paper. Instead of guessing or checking the dictionary every time, you can use what you know to understand the word quickly.

## 1. What Is Word Structure?

Word structure means looking at the parts of a word to understand what it means. Words are like puzzles—if you know what the pieces mean, you can figure out the whole word.

There are three main parts of a word:

- Prefix – Comes at the beginning
- Root – The main part of the word
- Suffix – Comes at the end

Example:

Unhappiness = un- (not) + happy (root) + -ness (state of) → the state of not being happy

## 2. Prefixes

A prefix is a word part added to the beginning of a root word. It changes the meaning of the word.

Common Prefixes:

- un- (not): unhappy, unsafe
- non- (not): nonstop, nonfiction
- dis- (not, opposite): dislike, disobey
- in- (not/in): incorrect, inhale

Prefixes that show location:

- sub- (under): subway
- super- (above): superhero
- inter- (between): internet
- trans- (across): transport

Prefixes that show time:

- pre- (before): preview
- post- (after): postwar

Why learn prefixes?

They can quickly help you understand what a word means and are super common in school texts and research papers.

### 3. Root Words

A root is the main part of a word. It gives the basic meaning. Many English roots come from Latin or Greek.

Examples of Roots:

- scrib/script (write): script, describe
- ject (throw): eject, reject
- cred (believe): credible, credit
- bio (life): biology, biography
- dict (speak): dictionary, predict

If you know the root, you can figure out many other words that use it. For example, if you know “bio” means life, then biology is the study of life.

### 4. Suffixes

A suffix is a word part added to the end of a word. Suffixes can:

- Change the part of speech (like turning a verb into a noun)
- Add meaning (like “full of” or “able to”)
- Show tense (like past or present)

Examples of Common Suffixes:

- -ful (full of): joyful
- -er/or (person who does something): teacher, actor
- -ment (action or process): enjoyment
- -less (without): fearless
- -able/ible (can be): readable, visible
- -tion/sion (act of): celebration, decision

Spelling tip:

Sometimes spelling changes when you add a suffix.

Example: happy → happier, happily

### 5. Using Word Parts to Help You in School

When writing a research paper or reading complex texts, you’ll often come across unfamiliar words. Instead of skipping them, use what you know:

- Look at the prefix to see if it changes the meaning.
- Check the root to find the base meaning.
- Look at the suffix to see what kind of word it is (noun, verb, adjective).

This strategy can help you figure out about 60% of new words—that's a lot!

## **6. Fun Example: The Word “Prescribed”**

Let's break it down:

- Pre- (before)
- scribe (write)

→ “Prescribe” means to write ahead of time, like when a doctor writes a prescription.

Final Tip:

Think of a dinosaur to help you remember the order:

- Head = Prefix
- Body = Root
- Tail = Suffix

Understanding word parts helps you read better, write stronger, and become a smarter researcher.