

# 114 Prefixes

Prefixes are small groups of letters which can be added to the start of many words to give them different meanings.

See also:

Types of verbs 49

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## 114.1 PREFIXES

Prefixes attach to the start of a word to change its meaning. Prefixes usually give the same change in meaning to each word they attach to.

**im-** = not

Polly thought her boss was very rude and **im**polite.



**mis-** = wrongly

Leona was worried that she had **mis**understood the recipe.



**re-** = again

Tom was **re**writing his essay because his teacher gave him a low grade.



**un-** = not

Jane is **un**likely to study history because she prefers science.



## FURTHER EXAMPLES

This exercise is too hard. It's completely **im**possible!



Brendan had **mis**placed his passport. He couldn't find it anywhere.



I didn't work very hard this year. I'll have to **re**take my exams.



Please clean up your desk. It's very **un**tidy.



A fear of ghosts is totally **irr**rational, they don't exist!



You should go to see the new exhibit. It's absolutely **out**standing.



## 114.2 USING PREFIXES

Some words can take more than one kind of prefix to give different meanings.

The fish is **cooked** perfectly. It's delicious! 

The fish is **undercooked**. It tastes terrible. 

The fish is **overcooked**. It's totally burned. 

## 114.3 COMMON PREFIXES

PREFIX	MEANING	SAMPLE SENTENCE
anti-	against	It's always safer to use an <b>antibacterial</b> handwash.
co-	together	Erika loves her job because her <b>coworkers</b> are so nice.
dis-	not	My parents <b>disapprove</b> of my career decisions.
ex-	former	Clara is an <b>ex-soldier</b> . She used to be in the army.
im-, in-, ir-	not	Unfortunately, most of my answers were <b>incorrect</b> .
inter-	between, among	Matteo's band had become an <b>international</b> success.
mid-	middle	Jo's essay got a low grade because it finished <b>mid-sentence</b> .
mis-	wrongly	I think the referee <b>misjudged</b> the situation.
non-	not	I don't like this book at all. The plot is complete <b>nonsense</b> .
out-	better than others	Yue's work is fantastic. She's <b>outperforming</b> everyone.
over-	too much	It's okay to work hard, but make sure you don't <b>overdo</b> it.
post-	after	New mothers should receive good <b>postnatal</b> care.
pre-	before	The experiment will go ahead at a <b>prearranged</b> time.
re-	again	If you don't get into the school, you could <b>reapply</b> next year.
self-	oneself	Ronda can be a little bit too <b>self-confident</b> sometimes.
sub-	under	Mark's work this year has been <b>substandard</b> .
super-, sur-	above, over	There's a small <b>surcharge</b> if you want to use a credit card.
un-	reverse, cancel, not	Stacy couldn't find the right key to <b>unlock</b> the safe.
under-	beneath, below	I think the waiter has <b>undercharged</b> us for this meal.