

Prefix Game and Associated Worksheets

- A starter for group literacy sessions. Use as a stand-alone activity or as an introduction to a longer session on prefixes, antonyms and spelling strategies.
- The game fits in well with almost any scheme of literacy work and any number of students.
- No previous knowledge of prefixes, antonyms or root words is assumed. For levels E2 to L2.

Aims / objectives / targets



- Understand the terms prefix, root and antonym.
- Match prefixes with suitable base words.
- Spelling investigation - what happens when a prefix is added?
- Consider how the prefix alters the meaning of a root word.

Main Curriculum Links

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Understand term "prefix". Use this knowledge to work out word meanings. Rw/E3.1 Rw/L1.3 Rw/L2.1 - Use knowledge of prefixes to decode /read words. Rw/E2.3 Rw/E3.5 - Use thesaurus or dictionary to find out or check meanings, find antonyms, check spelling, word origins, etc. Rw/L2.2 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Understand term "antonym". Make antonyms of common words - especially those made by adding prefixes. Ww/E3.2 - Understand and use rules for adding prefixes as one possible spelling strategy. Ww/E2.2 Ww/E3.2 Ww/L1.1 Ww/L2.1 - Various listening skills are also covered. |
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Preparation - you will need a whiteboard, colour pens, blu-tak. Pages 2-3 are best printed on card (or laminated) and cut out. You may need two copies of page 3. Page 6 is an overhead transparency.

How to Play (outline only – see page 7 for further details)

1. Explain briefly about prefixes and root words (encourage class discussion here). Write a few examples on the board – undo, unkind, irregular, disappear, illegal. *Do not spend too long on this as the whole point of the game is for students to discover these things for themselves!*
2. Clean board. Now divide whiteboard into ten sections (5x2 works well). Use blu-tak to attach the ten headers on page 2 at the top of each section (or write headings on board).
3. Share out cards (page 3) between the students. Each student should have 2 - 4 cards. If you have more than four students print out an extra set. *It does not matter if two or more students have the same cards or if some students have more cards than others do.*
4. Explain that you are going to call out some root words (suggested list on page 5). If a student thinks they can make a new word by adding one of their prefixes they call out the new word or hold up their card.
5. There may well be disagreement over possible words! A student or volunteer tutor can be in charge of the dictionary to sort out disputes!
6. Write the new word on the whiteboard under the correct heading. *Write the prefix in a different colour if wished.*
7. Carry on until you have enough words on the board for students to spot patterns in spellings, word meanings, word classes, etc. *You will probably only use about half the root words on page 5. OT on p6 summarises main points. For teaching prompts and further activities see page 7.*

Contents

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Page 1 - This page. Page 2 - Heading cards for whiteboard Page 3 - Game cards for students Page 4 - Reference cards / headers Page 5 - Alphabetical root word list. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Page 6 - OT for spelling rules Page 7 - Ideas and extension work Page 8 - Prefix worksheet Page 9 - Prefix word cards for page 8 Page 10/11 - Spelling "test" and answers |
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Adult Literacy. Level E2 upwards

de

ir

mis

dis

un

non-

in

im

il

anti

de

ir

mis

dis

un

non-

in

im

il

anti

ir – not	de – undo, remove.
dis – not	mis – wrong, false
non – not, opposite of	un – not, opposite
im – not	in – not (also in, into)
anti - against	il – not

able	hear	possible
accurate	helpful	probable
active	honest	proper
appear	lead	put
balance	legal	rational
behave	legitimate	read
body	liberal	regular
capable	like	relevant
carry	likely	resistible
climax	literate	responsible
clockwise	logical	reversible
compress	logical	satisfy
convenient	lucky.	scale
count	mate	sense
credible	material	septic
decent	mature	shape
direct	mist	similar
drip	mobile	smoker
edible	moral	social
fiction	mortal	spell
fire	named	stop
fit	natural	take
flammable	necessary	taste
form	nerve	tidy
fortunate	patient	tie
freeze	please	trust
frost	polite	use
happy	populate	wise

<p>de - undo, remove. frost, mist, populate, scale, compress, form. <i>(mainly verbs?)</i></p>	<p>ir - not <u>r</u>ational, <u>r</u>egular, <u>r</u>elevant, <u>r</u>esistible, <u>r</u>esponsible, <u>r</u>eversible <i>before an r (mainly adjectives?)</i> <i>exception: unreasonable</i></p>
<p>mis - wrong, false take, <u>s</u>hape, <u>s</u>pell, behave, count, carry, lead, fire, fit, hear, read, use.</p>	<p>dis - not appear, <u>s</u>imilar, <u>s</u>atisfy, trust, honest, like, taste</p>
<p>un - not, opposite <u>n</u>ecessary, tidy, wise, <u>n</u>atural, <u>n</u>erve, likely, helpful, <u>n</u>amed, happy, fortunate, tie, able, lucky. <i>before an n (mainly adjectives?) and</i> <i>many other letters</i></p>	<p>non- - not, opposite of sense, drip, stop, smoker, flammable, fiction. <i>need a hyphen except for nonsense</i></p>
<p>in - not (also in, into) credible, decent, active, direct, accurate, capable, edible, convenient</p>	<p>im - not proper, possible, polite, patient, <u>m</u>ature, <u>m</u>obile, <u>m</u>ortal, <u>m</u>oral, <u>m</u>aterial, probable. <i>before an m or p (mainly adjectives?)</i> <i>exceptions: imbalance, inmate, input,</i> <i>displease.</i></p>
<p>il - not <u>l</u>ogical, <u>l</u>egal, <u>l</u>iterate, <u>l</u>egitimate, <u>l</u>iberal, <u>l</u>ogical <i>before an l (mainly adjectives?)</i> <i>exceptions: unload.</i></p>	<p>anti - against clockwise, climax, body, freeze, septic, social</p>

Further Suggestions and Alternative Activities

- Your knowledge of individual students will indicate which prefix cards to give each student. For example, Entry Level 2 students may be happier with un-, dis-, non- and de-. It is difficult to hear the difference between -im and -in so these prefixes could be reserved for students who are good spellers. Likewise -il and -ir.
- Play the game with fewer prefixes and/or roots – ideal for groups of Entry Level students.
- Discuss the fact that some roots can take more than one prefix (and their different meanings).
- Read roots randomly from list (tick each one off as it is used). Alternatively, read alphabetically if trying to emphasise (for example) that il- is used with roots beginning with l, ir- with roots beginning with r, im- used before a p, etc.
- Once you have a good selection of words on the board encourage students to look for patterns and spelling rules.
- Ask Level 1/2 students to check words in a dictionary during the game. A surprising number of words will be suggested – even the tutor will need a dictionary to check whether some exist!

Useful spelling rules

Try to encourage students to spot patterns and rules for themselves.

The overhead transparency on page 6 provides a useful summary but do not display until there has been plenty of discussion. It is probably best to show this several sessions later, when students have had time to digest all the information.

Suggested prompts

- What does im- always seem to come before? (root words beginning with p)
- What does il- come before? (words beginning with l)
- What happens to the base word when you add a prefix? (Nothing – no spelling changes)
- Point out that this is important in words where people can never remember whether to double the ss or the nn – unnecessary, misspelled, etc. (two n's , two s's because you are adding un- / mis- to a root word that already begins with an n or an s).
- Likewise, words like illegal, irregular have two l's and two r's.
- Following on from this - words such as unusual only have one n because you are adding un- to the root word "usual".

Extension Activities

- Look at the word lists you have made on the whiteboard and encourage students to think about their meanings. Discuss meanings of each prefix and whether it always has the same affect.
- Use this to introduce the idea of antonyms. Introduce some writing work; for example, rewrite adverts or descriptions using as many antonyms as possible – what affect does this have?
- The OT on page 6 gives a summary of meanings. Alternatively, the cards on page 4 can be printed back-to-back with page 3 and used for student reference or as prompts.
- Students can also consider the class of word. For example, un- is found mainly in adjectives, de- with verbs etc. (to defrost, to depopulate, unhappy, unwell).
- After the group session use worksheets / spelling tests etc. for individual work (see our web site for related worksheets).
- Play the game again but ask students to spell the words rather than calling out the name.
- Play game in reverse – call out words and ask student to respond by removing the prefix.
- Look at other prefixes – such as bi- (two) and micro- (small) and their meanings.
- Discuss English oddities such as inflammable / flammable (same meaning – antonym is non-flammable) and impractical / unpractical. Also tricky meanings such as disinterested / uninterested or misused / disused / unused. Spelling exceptions – dispirited (drops an s).

Prefixes

- A prefix is a letter or group of letters that you add to the beginning of a word to change its meaning.
- It is easy to spell using prefixes – you just add the prefix and make no changes to the root word.

How many new words can you make by adding one of the prefixes in the box to the root words below?

dis- mis- un-

Root Words:

*able	do	hear	lucky	read
agree	fair	honest	obey	spell
approve	fire	kind	order	take
arm	*fit	lay	*place	tidy
behave	fortune	lead	please	tie
continue	happy	*like	popular	well

List your new words here - you should be able to make at least one new word from each root word.

- Did you notice anything about the words marked with a star?
- Have you worked out what un-, dis- and mis- mean?
- Use five of the new words you have made in sentences of your own (continue on a separate sheet).

Individual Worksheet. Adult Literacy. Level E2/E3.

Reading and Writing: Word and Sentence Focus. Making news words by adding prefixes . Meaning of prefixes. Writing sentences. (This worksheet has a set of optional word cards that can be used – see page 9).

Prefix word cards to be used in conjunction with worksheet on page 8. Cards can also be used independently. For EL2 students: give a small selection (do, fire, fit, lucky, like, etc.) - ask students to experiment and see how many words they can make. A larger selection can be given to EL3 students. The large mis-, un- and dis- cards can be used as headers (put root words under correct header) or match root words directly with the smaller prefix cards (print extra sets if needed).

able*
agree
approve
arm
behave
continue
do
fair
fire
fit*
fortune
happy
hear
honest
kind

lay
lead
like*
lucky
obey
order
place*
please
popular
read
spell
take
tidy
tie
well

<u>dis</u>
<u>dis</u>
<u>dis</u>
<u>un</u>
<u>un</u>
<u>un</u>
<u>mis</u>
<u>mis</u>
<u>mis</u>
mis
dis
un

Prefix Spelling Test!

Here are five of the prefixes we looked at last time:

mis dis im un il

Study the prefixes then fold the top of the paper over if you wish.

Good Luck!

List your new antonyms here:

1. _____

11. _____

2. _____

12. _____

3. _____

13. _____

4. _____

14. _____

5. _____

15. _____

6. _____

16. _____

7. _____

17. _____

8. _____

18. _____

9. _____

19. _____

10. _____

20. _____

Prefix Spelling – Answers and Instructions

- Possibly the least scary spelling test in the world! Students of all levels actually enjoy this test!
- Allow students several minutes to study the five prefixes. Explain that they only need to be able to spell the prefix – not the root word.
- When they have studied the prefixes ask them to fold the top of paper (E1 students could keep the paper flat if wished).
- Explain that they will be making and spelling antonyms.
- Call out a list of suitable words (suggested list below, or use page 5 for ideas).
- As you call out words, write the root (only) on the whiteboard or flip chart. The students must write the complete word in the blanks on page 10.
- Pass this answer sheet around the class for self-checking (better than asking students to hand in their answers).
- Level 1/2 students should be encouraged to spell the complete word unaided.
- Students could also work in pairs - thinking up word lists and testing each other.

mis dis im un il

List of suggested spellings (10-15 if often enough, you do not have to read out all twenty):

- | | |
|--------------------|------------------|
| 1. misspell | 11. unwise |
| 2. unlucky | 12. unhelpful |
| 3. unnecessary | 13. improper |
| 4. misbehave | 14. dishonest |
| 5. illegal | 15. illegible |
| 6. disappear | 16. discontinue |
| 7. dissatisfaction | 17. disapprove |
| 8. immature | 18. misshape |
| 9. illogical | 19. unpopular |
| 10. impossible | 20. illegitimate |