

## Prefixes

Prefixes are letters which we add to the beginning of a word to make a new word with a different meaning. Prefixes can, for example, create a new word opposite in meaning to the word the prefix is attached to. They can also make a word negative or express relations of time, place or manner. Here are some examples:

base word	prefixed word	type of meaning
<i>possible</i>	<b><i>impossible</i></b>	opposite
<i>able</i>	<b><i>unable</i></b>	opposite/negation
<i>payment</i>	<b><i>non-payment</i></b>	negation
<i>war</i>	<b><i>pre-war</i></b>	time (before)
<i>terrestrial</i>	<b><i>extraterrestrial</i></b>	place (outside of/beyond)
<i>cook</i>	<b><i>overcook</i></b>	manner (too much)

*I'm sorry I was **unable** to attend the meeting.*

***Non-payment*** of fees could result in a student being asked to leave the course.

*Has anyone ever really met an **extraterrestrial** being?* (meaning a being from another planet)

*The meat was **overcooked** and quite tasteless.*

### The most common prefixes

prefix	meaning	examples
<i>anti-</i>	against/opposed to	<i>anti-government, anti-racist, anti-war</i>
<i>auto-</i>	self	<i>autobiography, automobile</i>
<i>de-</i>	reverse or change	<i>de-classify, decontaminate, demotivate</i>
<i>dis-</i>	reverse or remove	<i>disagree, displeasure, disqualify</i>
<i>down-</i>	reduce or lower	<i>downgrade, downhearted</i>

prefix	meaning	examples
<i>extra-</i>	beyond	<i>extraordinary, extraterrestrial</i>
<i>hyper-</i>	extreme	<i>hyperactive, hypertension</i>
<i>il-, im-, in-, ir-</i>	not	<i>illegal, impossible, insecure, irregular</i>
<i>inter-</i>	between	<i>interactive, international</i>
<i>mega-</i>	very big, important	<i>megabyte, mega-deal, megaton</i>
<i>mid-</i>	middle	<i>midday, midnight, mid-October</i>
<i>mis-</i>	incorrectly, badly	<i>misaligned, mislead, misspelt</i>
<i>non-</i>	not	<i>non-payment, non-smoking</i>
<i>over-</i>	too much	<i>overcook, overcharge, overrate</i>
<i>out-</i>	go beyond	<i>outdo, out-perform, outrun</i>
<i>post-</i>	after	<i>post-election, post-war</i>
<i>pre-</i>	before	<i>prehistoric, pre-war</i>
<i>pro-</i>	in favour of	<i>pro-communist, pro-democracy</i>
<i>re-</i>	again	<i>reconsider, redo, rewrite</i>
<i>semi-</i>	half	<i>semicircle, semi-retired</i>
<i>sub-</i>	under, below	<i>submarine, sub-Saharan</i>
<i>super-</i>	above, beyond	<i>super-hero, supermodel</i>
<i>tele-</i>	at a distance	<i>television, telepathic</i>
<i>trans-</i>	across	<i>transatlantic, transfer</i>

prefix	meaning	examples
<i>ultra-</i>	extremely	<i>ultra-compact, ultrasound</i>
<i>un-</i>	remove, reverse, not	<i>undo, unpack, unhappy</i>
<i>under-</i>	less than, beneath	<i>undercook, underestimate</i>
<i>up-</i>	make or move higher	<i>upgrade, uphill</i>

### Writing prefixes: hyphens (*super-hero* or *supermodel*)

There are no absolute rules for when to use a hyphen or when to write a prefixed word as one whole word (see the examples in the table). A good learner's dictionary will tell you how to write a prefixed word.