

Handout 7: Common Affixes and Their Meanings

Prefixes

Prefixes are letter groups added before a base word or root. Prefixes generally add to or change the meaning of a word.

Prefix	Meaning	Example
Ab-	away from	absent, abnormal
Ad-	to, toward	advance, addition
After-	later, behind	aftermath, afterward
Anti-	against, opposed	antibiotic, antigravity
Auto-	self	automobile, autobiography
Be-	make	believe, belittle
Bi-	two	bicycle, biceps
Com, con, co-	with, together	commune, concrete
Contra-	against	contradict, contrary
De-	downward, undo	deflate, defect
Deci-	ten	decibels, decimal
Dis-	not	dislike, distrust
E, ex-	out of, prior to	explain, expense
En, em-	in, into, cover	engage, employ
Extra-	outside	extravagant, extraterrestrial
Im-	not	impose, imply
In-	into, not	include, incurable
Inter-	among	interact, internal
Macro-	large	macroeconomics, macrotiotic
Magni-	great	magnify, magnificent
Mega-	huge	megaphone, megabucks
Micro-	small	microscope, microbe
Mis-	wrongly	mistake, mislead
Non-	not	nonsense, nonviolent
Over-	above, beyond	overflow, overdue
Post-	after	postdate, postmark
Pre-	before, prior to	preheat, prehistoric
Pro-	in favor of	protest, protect
Re-	again	repeat, revise
Sub-	under, beneath	submarine, subject
Super-	above, beyond	superior, supernatural
Tele-	far	telescope, telephone

Handout 7 (continued)
Common Affixes and Their Meanings

Prefix	Meaning	Example
Trans-	across	transfer, transit
Tri-	three	tricycle, triangle
Un-	not	unknown, unjust
Ultra-	beyond	ultraviolet, ultrasuede
Under-	beneath, below	underneath, underline
Uni-	one, single	unicorn, uniform

Suffixes

Suffixes are groups of letters added after a base word or root. The following is a sample of the wide variety.

Suffix	Meaning	Example
-ant	one who	assistant
-ar	one who	liar
-arium	place for	aquarium
-ble	inclined to	gullible
-ent	one who	resident
-er	one who	teacher
-er	more	brighter
-ery, ry	products	pottery
-ess	one who (female)	actress
-est	most	most*****
-ful	full of	mouthful
-ing	material	roofing
-ing	(present tense)	smiling
-less	without	motherless
-ling	small	fledgling
-ly	every	weekly
-ly	(adverb)	happily
-ness	state of being	happiness
-ology	study of	biology
-or	one who	doctor
-ous	full of	wondrous
-s, es	more than one	boxes
-y	state of	sunny

Pinnell, G.S., Fountas, I.C. (1998). *Word matters: Teaching phonics and spelling in the reading/writing classroom*.
 Plymouth, NH: Heinemann.