

Tools for Instruction

Introduce Prefix and Suffix Families

Students develop word consciousness by identifying meaningful word parts and exploring how each part contributes to the meaning of the word. Help students understand and remember prefixes and suffixes by introducing them as “families” with related meanings, such as the “not” family (*un-*, *dis-*, *in-/im-*, *non-*). Have students explore connections within prefix and suffix families by working with one family at a time as they break words into meaningful parts, build new words, and investigate how adding word parts can affect the meaning, spelling, and function of a word.

Three Ways to Teach

Use Prefix Families to Understand Words 20–30 minutes

Note: The instructions below use the “position” prefix family, but this activity can be repeated with other prefix families. See **Prefixes, Suffixes, and Roots** (page 5).

- Remind students that a *prefix* is a word part added to the beginning of a base word. Explain that some prefixes have similar or related meanings. Introduce prefixes in the “position” family (*pre-*, *fore-*, *mid-*, *inter-*, *post-*) using a chart like the one below.

Prefix Family: “position”					
Prefix	<i>pre-</i>	<i>fore-</i>	<i>mid-</i>	<i>inter-</i>	<i>post-</i>
Meaning	before	before, in front	middle	between	after

- Write the word *preview* on an index card. Work together to identify the prefix and base word. Discuss what each word part means. (*Pre-* means “before”; *view* means “to look at.”) Discuss how each part relates to the meaning of the whole word. (*Pre/view* means “to look at before” or “to watch before.”)
- Ask students to share examples of when they’ve heard the word *preview* used. (Examples might include seeing movie previews before a feature film or seeing short scenes of upcoming TV programs.)
- Next, model how to cut the index card between the prefix and base word. Review the type and meaning of each part.



preview

Use Prefix Families to Understand Words Continued

- Now, provide a set of eight to ten words with prefixes in the “position” family to each set of partners. See **Position Family Prefix Cards** (page 4).

preheat	premade	preview	forehead	forewarn
postgame	midday	midpoint	international	interlock

- Ask partners to begin by identifying the prefix and base word in each word. Students can refer to the Prefix Family chart on the previous page as needed. Then have partners cut each word into its prefix and base word.
- Have partners mix up their word parts and work together to rebuild the words.
- When all the words are rebuilt, ask for volunteers to choose a word, identify its parts and meanings, and then tell about a context in which the word might be used.

Use Prefix Families to Build Words 15–20 minutes

Have students build words with opposite meanings using prefixes from the “not” family.

- Display prefixes from the “not” family (*un-*, *dis-*, *in-/im-*, *non-*). Explain that all words with these prefixes are related because they include the meaning “not” or “opposite.”
- Review how adding a “not” prefix to a base word will create a new word with the opposite meaning. Point out, however, that not every prefix will work with every base word. Model trying out different prefixes with the base word *visible*.

un + visible	dis + visible	in + visible	im + visible	non + visible
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- Ask students to discuss which word is a real word and explain how they know. (*Students may explain where they've heard or read the word, or that it “sounds right.”*) Model how to check if a word is real by looking up *visible* in the dictionary. Show where the entry provides related words or antonyms.
- Have partners work together to combine “not” prefixes with base words to build words with opposite meanings:
 - Have partners write each “not” prefix on an index card or slip of paper. Then display a list of base words, such as the one below, or create your own list from your classroom reading.
 - Partners should try out each prefix with each base word, decide which words are real, and keep a list of the words they create.

correct	kind	appear	fiction	polite	agree
fair	sense	like	possible	active	lock

- Have volunteers share and compare the words they created. Guide a discussion to help clarify which words are real words. (*Disappear is a real word, but unappear is not a word.*) Remind students that when they work independently, they can use a dictionary to check which words are real.
- Throughout the week, have students look for words with these prefixes as they read. Ask them to write the words they find and add an illustration that shows the meaning. Group their illustrated words by prefix and display them on the wall for reference.

Use Suffixes to Describe People 15–20 minutes

- Display suffixes in the “person” family (-ee, -er/-or, -ian, -ist).
- Explain how these suffixes can be combined with base words to create nouns that identify people who do something specific. Provide a simple example such as *A person who teaches is a teacher.*
- Have students brainstorm other words they know with these suffixes. List the words for the group. Work together to explain what each ending means. (Examples: employee, referee, attendee; farmer, firefighter, shopkeeper, bricklayer, author, tutor; librarian, musician, electrician, vegetarian; dentist, guitarist, scientist, artist, pianist)
- Point out that spellings sometimes change when a suffix is added (*vegetarian* rather than *vegetablarian*; *pianist* rather than *pianoist*). Also, words like *author* and *tutor* don’t “break apart” very well, but their endings can still provide a clue that they’re people.
- Play a version of Charades by having volunteers act out one of the words from the list and challenging the group to identify them using a word with a “person” suffix.

Check for Understanding

If you observe...	Then try...
difficulty understanding the nuanced or figurative meaning of words or word parts	using the word in a sentence to provide context. Context can help clarify the meaning of words like <i>forewarn</i> . <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>When you <u>forewarn</u> someone, you give them a warning before something happens. For example, “Jake, it’s freezing out. If you don’t wear your winter coat, you’ll be cold.” You <u>forewarned</u> Jake. Or you gave Jake a <u>forewarning</u>.</i>
difficulty selecting the appropriate “not” prefix for a given base word	modeling how to verify whether a word is real by looking it up in the dictionary. Model how to look up a created word (unpolite) or a base word (polite). Point out where some base word entries provide related words or antonyms.
confusion about parts of words that look like prefixes but are not prefixes	demonstrating that when you try to break words like <i>uncle</i> into parts (<i>un/cle</i>), <i>cle</i> is not a base word or root with meaning, and the meaning of <i>uncle</i> does not include the meaning of the prefix <i>un-</i> , meaning “not or opposite.”
confusion when prefixes have more than one possible meaning	explaining that some prefixes like <i>in-</i> have two meanings. <i>In-</i> can mean “not,” as in the word <i><u>in</u>correct</i> (“not correct”). It can also mean “in,” as in the word <i><u>in</u>hale</i> (“breathe in”).

Name _____

Position Family Prefix Cards

First, cut out each word card. Then cut each word card between the prefix and base word. Mix up the prefixes and base words. Then put the words back together.

preheat**postgame****premade****midday****preview****midpoint****forehead****international****forewarn****interlock**

Prefixes, Suffixes, and Roots

Prefix and Suffix Families

This list shows prefixes and suffixes by meaning and includes example words that represent a range of grade levels, arranged from lower to higher levels. Choose words for activities that match your students' needs and abilities.

Prefix Family: "not"							
Prefix	<i>dis-</i>	<i>il-</i>	<i>im-</i>	<i>in-</i>	<i>ir-</i>	<i>non-</i>	<i>un-</i>
Meaning	not, opposite of						
Example Words	disagree disappear disloyal	illogical illegal illegible	imperfect immobile imperceptible	invisible inedible inevitable	irregular irreplaceable irrelevant	nonstop nonfiction nonviolent	unpack unafraid unjust

Prefix Family: "position"					
Prefix	<i>pre-</i>	<i>fore-</i>	<i>mid-</i>	<i>inter-</i>	<i>post-</i>
Meaning	before	before, in front	middle	between	after
Example Words	preview premade prearrange	forehead forewarn forethought	midnight midair midwinter	interact interstate interrupt	postseason postwar postmodern

Prefix Family: "over and under"						
Prefix	<i>hyper-</i>	<i>over-</i>	<i>super-</i>	<i>hypo-</i>	<i>under-</i>	<i>sub-</i>
Meaning	more than, too much	more than, too much, above	above, beyond	too little, below	too little, below	below
Example Words	hyperactive hyperextend hyperbole	overcoat overload overexert	superhuman supervise superimpose	hypothermia hypothesis hypochondria	underground underdone understatement	subway subset subside

Prefix Family: "together"			
Prefix	<i>co-</i>	<i>com-</i>	<i>con-</i>
Meaning	together, with		
Example Words	copilot coexist cooperate	compress compassion community	conform conclusion concern

Prefix Family: "against"

Prefix	<i>anti-</i>	<i>contra-</i>
Meaning	against, opposite	
Example Words	antifreeze antislip antibiotic	contrast contradict contraindication

Prefix Family: "bad"

Prefix	<i>mis-</i>	<i>mal-</i>
Meaning	bad, wrong, not	bad, ill
Example Words	misuse misunderstand misaligned	maltreat malnourished maladjusted

Prefix Family: "number"

Prefix	<i>uni-</i>	<i>mono-</i>	<i>bi-</i>	<i>tri-</i>	<i>quad-</i>
Meaning	one		two	three	four
Example Words	unicycle uniform unidirectional	monorail monotone monocle	bicycle bilingual biannual	tricycle triathlon tripod	quadrilateral quadrangle quadruped

Prefix Family: "number"

Prefix	<i>penta-</i>	<i>dec-</i>	<i>centi-</i>	<i>semi-</i>
Meaning	five	ten	hundred	half, part
Example Words	pentagon pentathlon pentameter	decade decathlon decibel	cent century percent	semicircle semiformal semiconscious

Other Useful Prefixes

Prefix	<i>de-</i>	<i>en-/em-</i>	<i>ex-</i>	<i>in-/im-</i>	<i>re-</i>	<i>trans-</i>
Meaning	away, apart	put into, cause something to be more	out of, away from	in	again, back	across, through
Example Words	decode defrost decentralize	enlarge enrich empower	export exhale exclude	intake inhale import	reheat remove reorder	transnational transport transmit

Suffix Family: "person"

Suffix	-ee	-ian	-ist	-er	-or
Meaning	a person who is or does something	a person who does or works at something		a person who does or works at something, a thing that does something	
Example Words	employee referee trainee	librarian vegetarian physician	pianist dentist therapist	writer sprinkler consumer	inventor elevator donor

Suffix Family: "state, quality, or act"

Suffix	-ance/-ence	-hood	-ity/-ty	-ment	-ness
Meaning	the state, quality, or act of	state or quality of	the state or condition of being or having something	the state or result of doing something	the state or quality of being a certain way
Example Words	performance difference existence	childhood falsehood neighborhood	similarity humanity equality	movement improvement encouragement	darkness kindness sleepiness

Other Useful Suffixes

Suffix	-ant/-ent	-age	-able/-ible	-al/-ial	-er	-est
Meaning	being or doing something	the process or result of	can be done, having or giving something	relating to, referring to	more than	the most
Example Words	student pleasant resident	usage storage voyage	breakable visible believable	natural survival trivial	faster greater larger	fastest greatest largest

Other Useful Suffixes

Suffix	-ion/-tion	-ive/-ative/-itive	-ful	-less	-ous/-eous/-ious
Meaning	the process, act, or result of doing something	tending to	full of	without, free of	having or being full of
Example Words	action collection competition	supportive imaginative inquisitive	colorful helpful suspenseful	fearless endless selfless	dangerous harmonious spontaneous

Source: Based on "Bumping Into Spicy, Tasty Words That Catch Your Tongue": A Formative Experiment on Vocabulary Instruction by James F. Baumann, Donna Ware, and Elizabeth Carr. *The Reading Teacher*, 61(2), 2007, pp. 108–122.

Common Greek and Latin Roots

Root	Meaning	Origin	Example Words
<i>aster/astro</i>	star	Greek	asteroid, astronomy
<i>aud</i>	hear	Latin	audible, audience
<i>auto</i>	self	Greek	automobile, automatic
<i>bene</i>	good	Latin	benefit, benign
<i>bio</i>	life	Greek	biology, biography
<i>chrono</i>	time	Greek	chronology, synchronize
<i>dict</i>	say	Latin	dictate, predict
<i>duc</i>	lead, make	Latin	deduce, produce
<i>fend</i>	ward off	Latin	fender, defend
<i>form</i>	shape	Latin	formation, inform
<i>gen</i>	give birth	Latin	gene, generate
<i>geo</i>	earth	Greek	geography, geology
<i>graph</i>	write	Greek	autograph, graph
<i>jur/jus</i>	law	Latin	jury, justice
<i>log/logue</i>	thought	Latin	logic, dialogue
<i>luc</i>	light	Latin	lucid, translucent
<i>man(u)</i>	hand	Latin	manual, manuscript
<i>mand/mend</i>	order	Latin	demand, recommend
<i>meter</i>	measure	Greek	thermometer, kilometer
<i>min</i>	little, small	Latin	minimum, miniature
<i>mis/mit</i>	send	Latin	mission, transmit
<i>omni</i>	all	Latin	omnivore, omnipotent
<i>path</i>	feel	Greek	empathy, sympathy
<i>ped</i>	foot	Latin	pedal, pedestrian
<i>phil</i>	love	Greek	philosophy, bibliophile
<i>phon</i>	sound	Greek	telephone, phonics
<i>photo</i>	light	Greek	photograph, photosynthesis
<i>port</i>	carry	Latin	portable, export
<i>qui(t)</i>	quiet, let go	Latin	tranquil, acquit
<i>rupt</i>	break	Latin	rupture, disrupt
<i>scrib/scrip</i>	write	Latin	scribble, script

Root	Meaning	Origin	Example Words
<i>sens/sent</i>	feel	Latin	sensation, sentimental
<i>spect</i>	see	Latin	spectator, spectacle, inspect
<i>struct</i>	build	Latin	structure, construct
<i>tele</i>	far off	Greek	telescope, television
<i>terr</i>	earth	Latin	terrain, territory
<i>therm</i>	heat	Greek	thermometer, thermal
<i>vac</i>	empty	Latin	vacuum, vacant
<i>vid, vis</i>	see	Latin	video, visible