

ROOTS, PREFIXES AND SUFFIXES*
A Helpful List

ROOTS

- Som = sleep** Take *Sominex* to sleep. If you have *insomnia*, you can't sleep. (The prefix *in-* = not.)
- Sop = sleep** A glass of warm milk is *soporific*. So is a boring teacher.
- Son = sound** A *sonic* boom breaks the sound barrier. *Dissonance* is clashing sounds.
- Phon = sound** *Phonics* helps you to sound out words. *Cacophony* is bad sound; *euphony* is good sound. *Homophones* are words that sound the same, such as *red* and *read*.
- Path = feeling** Something *pathetic* arouses sympathy or a feeling of pity. To *sympathize* is to share the feelings. *Antipathy* is a dislike – literally, a feeling against, as in: You may harbor *antipathy* toward the jerk that backed into your car.
- Mut = change** The Teenage *Mutant* Ninja Turtles *mutated*, or changed, from mild-mannered turtles to pizza-gobbling crime fighters. Something *immutable* is not changeable but remains constant. (Don't confuse *mut* (change) with *mute* (silent).)
- Meta = change, transformation** A *metamorphosis* is a change of shape.
- Morph = shape** Something *amorphous* is without shape. *Morphology* is the study of shape.
- Loq, log, loc, lix = speech or talk** Someone who is *loquacious* talks a lot. A *dialogue* is talk or conversation between two people. *Elocution* is proper speech. A *prolix* person is very talkative. (Pro-means big or much. Literally, he or she engages in big, or much, talk.)
- cred = trust or belief** Something *incredible* is unbelievable. If you are *credulous*, you are trusting and naïve (literally, full of trust). Do not confuse the words *credible* and *credulous*. Something *credible* is trustable or believable. A *credible* excuse can get you out of trouble if you come home late for curfew. *Credulous*, on the other hand, means full of trust, naïve, or gullible. The more credulous your parents are, the less credible that excuse needs to be.
- Gyn = woman** A *gynecologist* is a physician who treats women. A *misogynist* is a person who hates women.
- Andro = man** Commander Data on *Star Trek: The Next Generation* is an *android*; he's a robot **shaped** like a man. Someone *androgynous* exhibits both male (*andro*) and female (*gyn*) characteristics – for example, the character Pat on *Saturday Night Live* is androgynous.
- Anthro = human or mankind** *Anthropology* is the study of humans (not just men or women, but humans in general). A *misanthrope* hates humans.

Pac = peace, calm	Why do you give a baby a <i>pacifier</i> ? To calm him or her down. To get its name, the <i>Pacific Ocean</i> must have appeared calm at the time it was discovered.
Plac = peace, calm	To <i>placate</i> someone is to calm him or her down or to make peace with that person. You <i>placate</i> your irate sweetheart, for example, by sending a dozen roses. Someone <i>implacable</i> is someone you are not able to calm down – or someone really stubborn.
Pug = war, fight	Someone <i>pugnacious</i> is ready to fight. A <i>pugilist</i> is a person who likes to fight - such as a professional boxer.
Bellu, belli = war, fight	If you're <i>belligerent</i> , you're ready to fight – in fact, you're downright hostile. An <i>antebellum</i> mansion is one that was created before the Civil War. (Remember that <i>ante-</i> means <i>before</i> .)
gnos = knowledge	A doctor shows his or her knowledge by making a <i>diagnosis</i> (analysis of the situation) or a <i>prognosis</i> (prediction about the future of the illness). An <i>agnostic</i> is a person who doesn't know whether a god exists. Differentiate an <i>agnostic</i> from an <i>atheist</i> . An <i>atheist</i> is literally without God, a person who believes there is no god. An <i>agnostic</i> is without knowledge, believing that a god may or may not exist.
Scien = knowledge	A <i>scientist</i> is a person with knowledge. Someone <i>prescient</i> has forethought or knowledge ahead of time – for example, a prognosticator. After you learn these roots, you'll be closer to being <i>omniscient</i> – all-knowing.
Greg – group, herd	A <i>congregation</i> is a group or herd of people. A <i>gregarious</i> person likes to be a part of a group – is sociable. To <i>segregate</i> is literally to make away from the group. <i>Se-</i> means apart or away from, as in <i>separate</i> , <i>sever</i> , <i>sequester</i> , and <i>seclusion</i> .
Luc, lum, lus = light, clear	Something <i>luminous</i> is shiny and full of light. Ask the teacher to <i>elucidate</i> something you don't understand (literally, to make clear). <i>Lustrous</i> hair reflects the light and is sleek and glossy.
Ambu = walk, move	In a hospital, patients are either bedridden or <i>ambulatory</i> (they can walk and move about). A <i>somnambulist</i> is a sleepwalker. <i>Som-</i> means sleep; <i>-ist</i> is a person; <i>ambu-</i> is to walk or move. A <i>somnambulist</i> , therefore, is a person who walks or moves in his or her sleep.

PREFIXES

A- = not or without	Someone <i>amoral</i> is without morals. Someone <i>atypical</i> is not typical. Someone <i>pathetic</i> is without feeling, or uncaring.
Ab- = away from	Your parents ask you to <i>abstain</i> from drinking and driving. What does a queen do when she <i>abdicates</i> the throne? She goes away from it. When a thief <i>absconds</i> with your valuables, he takes them away from you.
Ad- = toward, addition	When you <i>advocate</i> a point of view, you go toward it. Because you are hopelessly <i>addicted</i> to the SAT, you are drawn to it.
An- = not or without	An <i>anaerobic</i> environment is without oxygen. <i>Anarchy</i> is without rule or government.
Eu- = good	A <i>eulogy</i> is a good speech, usually given for the dearly departed at a funeral. A <i>euphemism</i> is a polite expression.
Ben-/bon- = good	A <i>benefit</i> is something that has a good result, an advantage. Someone <i>benevolent</i> is good and kind; a <i>benevolent</i> father lets you take his new car on a date rather than your old junker. <i>Bon</i> voyage means have a good voyage; a <i>bon vivant</i> is a person who lives the good life.
Caco- = bad	Something <i>cacophonous</i> is bad-sounding, such as nails scratching on a chalkboard.
Ne-/mal- = bad	Something <i>negative</i> is bad, like a <i>negative</i> attitude. Someone <i>nefarious</i> is “full of bad,” or wicked and evil. Something <i>malicious</i> also is “full of bad,” like a <i>malicious</i> rumor. A <i>malapropism</i> is a ridiculous use of words.
Im- = not	Something <i>impossible</i> is not possible. Someone <i>immortal</i> is not going to die but will live forever. Someone <i>implacable</i> is not able to be calmed down, stubborn. Notice that <i>im-</i> can also mean inside (<i>immerse</i> means to put into), but that meaning is not as common on the SAT. First think of <i>im-</i> as meaning not; if that doesn’t seem appropriate, switch to Plan B and see whether it can mean inside in the context of the question.
In- = not	Something <i>inappropriate</i> is not appropriate. Someone <i>inept</i> is not adept, not skillful. Someone <i>insolvent</i> has no money, is bankrupt, like most students after the prom. <i>In-</i> can also mean <i>inside</i> (<i>innate</i> means something born inside of you) or beginning (the <i>initial</i> letters of your name are the beginning letters). However, its most common meaning is <i>not</i> . Think of that one first; if it doesn’t seem to work, try the others.
Ante- = before	When the clock tells you that it’s 5 a.m., the a.m. stands for <i>ante</i> meridian, which means before the middle, or the first half of the day. <i>Antebellum</i> means before the war. Tara in <i>Gone with the Wind</i> was an <i>antebellum</i> mansion, built before the Civil War. <i>antediluvian</i> literally means before the flood, before Noah’s deluge.
Post- = after	When the clock tells you it’s 5 p.m., the p.m. stands for <i>post</i> meridian. It means after the middle, or the second half of the day. Something <i>postmortem</i> occurs after death. A <i>postmortem</i> exam is an autopsy.

Pro- = big, much

Profuse apologies are big, much – in essence, a lot of apologies. A *prolific* writer produces a great deal of written material. Note: *Pro* has two additional meanings less commonly used on the SAT. It can mean before, as in “A *prologue* comes before a play.” Similarly, to *prognosticate* is to make known before or to predict. A *prognosticator* is a fortune teller. *Pro* can also mean for. Someone who is *pro* freedom of speech is in favor of freedom of speech. Someone with a *proclivity* toward a certain activity is for that activity or has a natural tendency toward it.

De- = down from, away from (to put down)

To *descend* or *depart* is to go down from or away from. to *denounce* is to put down or to speak badly of. Many unknown words on the SAT that start with *de* mean to put down in the sense of to criticize or bad-mouth. Here are just a few: *demean*, *denounce*, *denigrate*, *derogate*, *deprecate*, *decry*.

Ex- = out of, away from

An *exit* is literally out of or away from it – ex-it. To *extricate* is to get out of something. You can *extricate* yourself from an argument by pretending to faint. To *exculpate* is to get off the hook – literally to make away from guilt (*culp* means guilt). If the dean of students wants to know who egged his house last weekend, you can claim that you and your friends are not *culpable*.

SUFFIXES

-ette = little

A *cigarette* is a little cigar. A *dinette* table is a little dining table. A *coquette* is a little flirt (literally, a little chicken).

-illo = little

An *armadillo* is a little armored animal. A *peccadillo* is a little sin.

-ous = full of (very)

Someone *joyous* is full of joy. Someone *amorous* is full of amor, or love, and is very loving. Someone *pulchritudinous* is full of beauty, beautiful.

-ist = a person

A *typist* is a person who types. A *pugilist* is a person who fights (pug- means war or fight), a boxer. A *pacifist* is a person who believes in peace, a noncombatant (pac- means peace or calm).

-ify (-efy) = to make

To *beautify* is to make beautiful. To *ossify* is to make bone. To *deify* is to make into a deity, a god.

-ize = to make

To *alphabetize* is to make alphabetical. To *immunize* is to make immune. To *ostracize* is to make separate from the group, to shun.

-ate = to make

To *duplicate* is to make double. To *renovate* is to make new again (nov- means new). To *placate* is to make peaceful or calm (plac- means peace or calm).

-ity – noun suffix that doesn't actually mean anything; it just turns a word into a noun *Jollity* is the noun form of jolly. *Serenity* is the noun form of serene. *Timidity* is the noun form of timid.