



Toolkit for Michigan's GED Transition to Postsecondary Education and the Workplace

Prefixes, Suffixes, Head Words

Why do I need to know this?

If you can learn the meanings of various word parts, you will be able to unlock a world of new vocabulary.



Origins of the English Language

- Most words in the English language are based on Latin and Greek words.
- Other words come from a wide variety of other languages, including German, Spanish, and Italian.
- Each language provides us with the basis for our prefixes, roots, and suffixes.

Prefixes

- The prefix “pre” means before. A prefix is a word part that comes before the root.
- A prefix can change the meaning of the root slightly or even totally. For example, if you add the prefix “ab” (meaning not) to the root normal, the resulting word is abnormal (meaning not normal).
- Another prefix that means not is “a.” If you add the prefix “a” to the word vocation (meaning job or career), the resulting word, avocation, means hobby, the opposite of a job.

Roots

- The main part of a word is the root.
- Many roots are complete words. Adding a prefix or a suffix to a root will change its meaning.
- Some roots need a prefix or a suffix to make them complete words.
- Examples: audio (sound), bio (life), chrono (time), derma (skin), geo (earth), micro (small), and psycho (mind).

Suffixes

- A suffix is a word part added to the end of a root.
- A suffix can change the meaning of a word and it can change the part of speech that word plays in a sentence.
- For example, if you add the suffix “ly” to an adjective, it will change the adjective to an adverb (soft—adjective; softly—adverb).
- Some common suffixes and their meanings are: “er”—used to compare two people or objects; “est”—the most or best of three or more people or objects; “ment”—a condition; “nes”—a state of being; “ous”—full of.

Conclusion

- Therefore, you can rapidly increase your reading vocabulary simply by memorizing the means of word prefixes, roots, and suffixes.
- By using this technique in combination with context clues, your reading vocabulary will grow tremendously.



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