



# LESSON 2

## Prefixes and Suffixes

In Lesson 1, you learned how to use context to work out the meaning of unfamiliar words. Another good way is to look for a prefix or suffix that can help you decode the word's meaning. Prefixes and suffixes are attached to the central "core" or root of many words of more than one syllable.

### Prefixes

*Prefixes* are word parts that are found at the *beginning* of words. The prefix *pre-* means "before" or "beginning."

Here are some common prefixes to watch for as you read.

Common Prefixes			
ab-	from, off	intra-	within
ad-	to, toward	magn-	large
anti-	against	micro-	small
auto-	self	non-	not
bi-	two	pre-	before
con-	with	pro-	for, in favor of
contra-,		re-	again
counter-	against, opposite	sub-	under, below
dis-	not	super-	above
ex-	out from OR no longer	sym-	together
extra-	beyond	tri-	three
im-	not	un-	not
in-	into OR not	uni-	one
inter-	between, among		

### Examples

- *The United States is bisected by the Mississippi River.*  
You know that the prefix *bi-* means "two," so you can make an educated guess that this word means "divided into two sections."
- *One of the goals of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was interracial harmony.*  
You know that the prefix *inter-* means "between" or "among," so you can make an educated guess that this word means "between races."



## Prefixes and Suffixes (continued)

### Suffixes

*Suffixes* are word parts that are found at the end of words. Here are some common suffixes you can learn to recognize in your reading.

Common Suffixes			
-able, -ible	able to be	-less	without
-ful	full of	-ly	in such a manner
-hood	condition, state	-ment	state; act
-ion, -tion,		-ship	state, condition
-ity	state; quality	-some	like, tending to
-ish	like; having the characteristics of	-ward	in the direction of
-ive	relating to; having the quality of		

### Example

- *The crew of the clipper ship spotted land to the windward side.*  
Since *-ward* is a suffix meaning "in the direction of," you can assume that the crew saw land in the direction from which the wind was blowing.

### Prefixes and Suffixes in Action

Read the following passage.

In November 1753, George Washington was asked by the governor of Virginia to investigate the newly built French forts along the Ohio River and to ask the French to withdraw. Washington met with many difficulties along the way, including impassable streams and bothersome weather.

When he finally met with the French, Washington commented, "They pretend to have an undoubted right to the river from a discovery made by one La Salle sixty years ago." His counterproductive discussions with the French eventually led to the beginning of the Seven Years War.

The underlined words in the paragraph above may be unfamiliar to you. Your knowledge of prefixes and suffixes can help you decode them. Take the word *impassable*, for instance. It consists of three parts: the prefix *im-* ("not"), the core word *pass* ("to go by or over"), and the suffix *-able* ("able to be"). If you put all three of these meanings together, you get "not able to be passed or crossed over." In other words, Washington found many streams that he could not cross.



## Prefixes and Suffixes (continued)

The word *bothersome* consists of the core word *bother* ("to worry, trouble, or annoy") and the suffix *-some* ("tending to"). Poor weather tended to bother the travelers in Washington's party.

What about *undoubted*? Take the prefix *un-* ("not") and the familiar word *doubted*. The meaning of this word is "not doubted," or "certain."

Finally, take the word *counterproductive*. The prefix *counter-* means "against" or "the opposite of." The core word *product* means "effect" or "result." The suffix *-ive* means "having the quality of." Taken as a whole, this word means that Washington's discussions with the French were the opposite of having a good effect—they did not have a positive result.

### Application

Read the passage below. Then use your knowledge of prefixes and suffixes to answer the questions that follow.

In 1848 and 1849, the gold rush lured thousands of fortune hunters from all over the world to California. In a number of uninhabited wilderness areas, one canvas city after another sprang up nearly overnight. In places like Sacramento and Stockton, men dug feverishly for the subterranean gold dust that could bring up to five hundred dollars a day for the lucky. However, once the gold was extracted

from the earth and sold, many fortunes were foolishly lost through drinking, gambling, horse trading, and other wild behavior. There was a general feeling that the gold supply would last forever. As one prospector wrote of his fellow diggers, "They had found gold at every step and looked on the supply as inexhaustible." Of course, this assumption was proved wrong in the years that followed.

1. The word *uninhabited* means
  - (a) not occupied
  - (b) not behaving in a socially acceptable way
  - (c) crowded
  - (d) not having a regular routine

Which vocabulary strategies helped you figure out the meaning of this word? \_\_\_\_\_



## Prefixes and Suffixes (continued)

2. *Feverishly* means

- (a) at a reasonable pace
- (b) in high temperatures
- (c) with intensity
- (d) with little hope

Which vocabulary strategies helped you figure out the meaning of this word? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. *Subterranean* refers to something that is

- (a) under the sea
- (b) under the earth
- (c) in a ship
- (d) hidden in a tunnel

Which vocabulary strategies helped you figure out the meaning of this word? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4. The word *extracted* means

- (a) blown up
- (b) sold
- (c) moved on tracks
- (d) removed

Which vocabulary strategies did you use? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

5. *Inexhaustible* describes something that is

- (a) not causing pollution
- (b) never running out
- (c) extremely tired
- (d) not asleep

Which vocabulary strategies did you use? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

