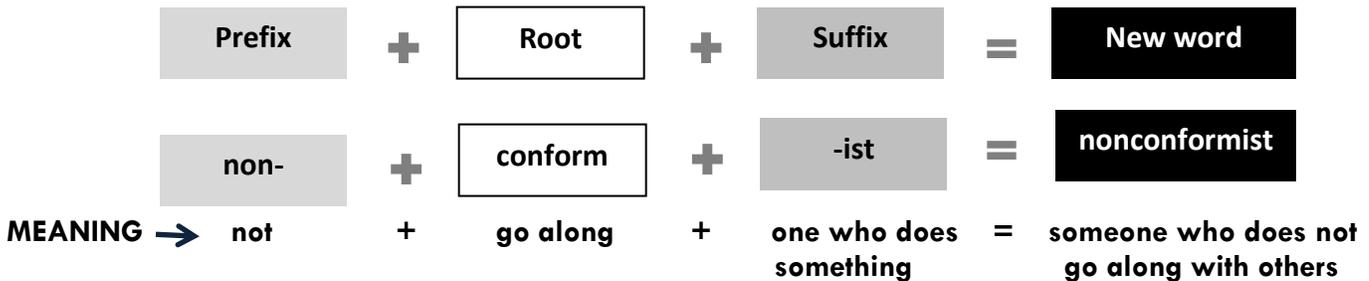


Suppose that you come across the following sentence in a literature textbook.

Ralph Waldo Emerson led a movement of nonconformist thinkers.

If you did not know the meaning of nonconformist, how could you determine it? An easy and fast alternative to looking in the dictionary is to break the word into parts and analyze the meaning of each part. Many words in the English language are made up of word parts called **prefixes**, **roots**, and **suffixes**. These word parts have specific meanings that, when added together, can help you determine the meaning of the word as a whole.



Knowing the meanings of the most common word parts gives you the building blocks for hundreds of words in the English language. Before you use word parts there are a few things you need to know.

- 1. In most cases, a word is built upon at least one root.**
- 2. Words can have more than one prefix, root, or suffix.**
  - Words can be made up of two or more roots (*geo/logy*).
  - Some words have two prefixes (*in/sub/ordination*).
  - Some words have two suffixes (*beauti/ful/ly*).
- 3. Words do not always have a prefix and a suffix.**
  - Some words have neither a prefix nor a suffix (*read*).
  - Others have a suffix but no prefix (*reading/ing*).
  - Others have a prefix but no suffix (*pre/read*).
- 4. The spelling of roots may change as they are combined with suffixes.**
- 5. Different prefixes, roots, or suffixes may have the same meaning.**

For example, the prefixes *bi-*, *di-*, and *duo-* all mean “two.”
- 6. Sometimes you may identify a group of letters as a prefix or root but find that it does not carry the meaning of that prefix or root.**

For example, the letters mis in *missile* are part of the root and are not the prefix mis-, which means “wrong; bad.”

## Prefixes

When a group of letters having a special meaning appears at the beginning of a word, we call that group of letters a **prefix**. Following is a list of the most frequently used prefixes that account for 97% of prefixed words in printed English.

<b>Prefix</b>	<b>Meaning</b>	<b>Example</b>
<b>dis-</b>	opposite	defrost
<b>in-, im-, il-, ir-</b>	not	injustice, impossible
<b>re-</b>	again	return
<b>un-</b>	not	unfriendly

## Roots

Word **roots** are the words from other languages that are the origin of many English words. About 60% of all English words have Latin or Greek origins. Roots give words their fixed meaning. Prefixes and suffixes can then be attached to the roots to form new words.

<b>Root</b>	<b>Meaning</b>	<b>Example</b>
<b>bio</b>	life	biology, biography
<b>chron</b>	time	chronology, synchronize
<b>fer</b>	carry	transfer, inference
<b>geo</b>	earth	geography, geode
<b>nom</b>	name	nominate, nomenclature
<b>tele</b>	distant	telegraph, telepathy

## Suffixes

A group of letters with a special meaning appearing at the *end* of a word is called a **suffix**. Here is a list of 6 important suffixes. Following is a list of the 6 most frequently used suffixes that account for 97% of prefixed words in printed English.

<b>Suffix</b>	<b>Meaning</b>	<b>Example</b>
<b>-ed</b>	past-tense verbs	hopped
<b>-ing</b>	verb form/present participle	running
<b>-ly</b>	characteristic of	quickly
<b>-s, -es</b>	more than one	books, boxes
<b>-able, -ible</b>	able to be	manageable, defensible
<b>-ful</b>	full of	wishful

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**Further explanation and activities for Learning Word Parts: Roots, Prefixes, and Suffixes can be found in the following texts:**

Fleming, Loraine. *Reading for Results*, 12<sup>th</sup> ed. Boston: Wadsworth, 2014. (See pages 77-83, 108-114)

Fleming, Loraine. *Reading Keys*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Boston: Wadsworth, 2011. (See pages 63-74)

McWhorter, Kathleen T. *Reading Across the Disciplines: College Reading and Beyond*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. San Francisco: Pearson Education, 2009. (See pages 57-69)