

Part B Determining Meaning Through Word Analysis

Words are made up of various combinations of the following parts: *prefix*, *suffix*, *base word*, and *root*. Analysis of these parts is another way to determine an unfamiliar word's meaning. The following terms are used in analyzing word parts.

| | |
|------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Prefix | a word part that is added to the beginning of another word or word part |
| Suffix | a word part that is added to the end of another word or word part |
| Base word | a complete word to which a prefix and/or a suffix may be added |
| Root | a word part to which a prefix and/or a suffix must be added. A root cannot stand alone. |

For example, the word *undemocratic* is made up of the prefix *un-*, the base word *democrat*, and the suffix *-ic*. If you know the meanings of these parts, you can determine the meaning of the whole word.

un- ("not") + *democrat* ("a person who believes in government by the people")
+ *-ic* ("relating to")
undemocratic = "relating to something or someone who does not believe in government by the people"

Now look at a word with a root. *Inscription* is made up of the prefix *in-* ("into, on"), the Latin root *script* ("write"), and the suffix *-tion* ("a thing that is"). *Inscription* means "something written on a surface, such as an engraving on a monument."

Prefixes

The following chart contains prefixes that have only one meaning.

Prefixes That Have a Single Meaning

| Prefix | Meaning | Example |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------------------------|
| <i>bene-</i> | good | benefit |
| <i>circum-</i> | around | circumference |
| <i>col-, com-, con-, cor-</i> | with, together | collapse, compile construct, correspond |
| <i>contra-</i> | opposed | contradict |
| <i>equi-</i> | equal | equidistant |
| <i>extra-</i> | outside | extraordinary |
| <i>hemi-</i> | half | hemisphere |
| <i>inter-</i> | between, among | international |
| <i>mal-</i> | bad | maltreat, malignant |
| <i>mid-</i> | halfway | midday |
| <i>mis-</i> | wrong | misspell |
| <i>non-</i> | not | nonworking |
| <i>post-</i> | after in time or space | postpone |
| <i>pre-</i> | before | predawn |
| <i>sub-</i> | under, below | subzero |

Some prefixes have more than one meaning. Study the common prefixes listed in the following chart.

Prefixes That Have More Than One Meaning

| Prefix | Meaning | Example |
|---------------------------|-------------------|------------------|
| <i>a-, ab-</i> | up, out | arise |
| | not | abnormal |
| | away | absent |
| <i>anti-</i> | against | antiaircraft |
| | prevents, cures | antidote |
| <i>de-</i> | away from, off | derail |
| | down | decline |
| | reverse action of | defrost |
| <i>dis-</i> | lack of | distrust |
| | not | dishonest |
| | away | disarm |
| <i>em-, en-</i> | to get into, on | embark |
| | to make, cause | enable |
| | in, into | enclose |
| <i>il-, im-, in-, ir-</i> | not | illegal |
| | in, into | investigate |
| <i>pro-</i> | in favor of | profamily |
| | forward, ahead | propel |
| <i>re-</i> | again | rethink |
| | back | repay |
| <i>semi-</i> | half | semicircle |
| | twice in a period | semiannual |
| | partly | semiconscious |
| <i>super-</i> | over and above | superhuman |
| | very large | supertanker |
| <i>trans-</i> | across | transcontinental |
| | beyond | transcend |
| <i>un-</i> | not | unhappy |
| | reverse of | unfasten |

Suffixes

Like a prefix, a suffix has a meaning that can provide a strong clue to the definition of a whole word. Suffixes can also determine the part of speech. Certain suffixes make words nouns; others create adjectives, verbs, or adverbs.

Once you know suffixes and their meanings, you can form new words by attaching suffixes to base words or to roots. For instance, the suffix *-ician* can be added to the base word *politics* to create the word *politician*. Notice that the spelling of a base word may change when a suffix is added. In the preceding example, the *-ics* from *politics* was dropped when *-ician* was added. For information about spelling rules for adding suffixes, see the **Spelling Handbook**, pages 218–243.

Noun suffixes, when added to a base word or root, form nouns. Become familiar with the following common noun suffixes.

Noun Suffixes That Refer to Someone Who Does Something

| Suffix | Examples |
|---------------|--------------------------|
| <i>-ant</i> | commandant, occupant |
| <i>-eer</i> | auctioneer |
| <i>-er</i> | manager |
| <i>-ician</i> | beautician, statistician |
| <i>-ist</i> | geologist |
| <i>-or</i> | counselor |

Noun Suffixes That Make Abstract Words

| Suffix | Examples |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <i>-ance, -ancy, -ence</i> | vigilance, vacancy, independence |
| <i>-ation, -ion, -ition</i> | imagination, inspection, recognition |
| <i>-cy</i> | accuracy |
| <i>-dom</i> | freedom, kingdom |
| <i>-hood</i> | womanhood, brotherhood |
| <i>-ice</i> | cowardice, prejudice |
| <i>-ism</i> | realism, federalism |
| <i>-ity, -ty</i> | sincerity, frailty |
| <i>-ment</i> | encouragement, commitment |
| <i>-ness</i> | kindness, fondness |
| <i>-ship</i> | ownership, worship |
| <i>-tude</i> | gratitude, solitude |

Adjective suffixes, when added to a base word or root, create adjectives—words that are used to modify nouns and pronouns.

Adjective Suffixes

| Suffix | Meaning | Example |
|--------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| -able, -ible | able to be | readable, convertible |
| -al | relating to | musical |
| -ant | relating to | triumphant |
| -ar | relating to | polar |
| -ate | having, full of | passionate |
| -ful | full of | harmful |
| -ic | pertaining to, like | heroic |
| -ish | pertaining to, like | foolish |
| -ive | pertaining to | descriptive |
| -less | without | senseless |
| -like | like | lifelike |
| -ly | like | scholarly |
| -most | at the extreme | topmost |
| -ous | full of | furious |

Verb suffixes change base words to verbs. The following chart lists four common verb suffixes.

Verb Suffixes

| Suffix | Meaning | Example |
|------------|-----------|--------------------------|
| -ate | to make | activate |
| -en | to become | strengthen |
| -fy | to make | simplify |
| -ise, -ize | to become | merchandise, computerize |

Adverb suffixes change base words to adverbs—words that modify verbs, adjectives, and other adverbs. The following chart lists the most common adverb suffixes.

Adverb Suffixes

| Suffix | Meaning | Example |
|-----------|---------|------------------|
| -ily, -ly | manner | happily, quickly |
| -ward | toward | skyward |
| -wise | like | clockwise |

Useful Latin Roots

| Root | Meaning | Example |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <i>capt, cept</i> | take, have | capture, accept |
| <i>cede, ceed, cess</i> | go, yield, give way | secede, proceed, recess |
| <i>cred</i> | believe | credit, creed |
| <i>dic, dict</i> | speak, say, tell | dictate, dictionary |
| <i>duc, duct</i> | lead | introduce, conductor |
| <i>fact, fect</i> | do, make | factory, defect |
| <i>fer</i> | carry | transfer |
| <i>ject</i> | throw, hurl | eject, inject |
| <i>junct</i> | join | junction |
| <i>miss, mit</i> | send, let go | dismiss, admit |
| <i>mob, mot, mov</i> | move | mobility, motion, movie |
| <i>par, para</i> | get ready | prepare, parachute |
| <i>pon, pos, posit</i> | place, put | opponent, deposit |
| <i>port</i> | carry | porter, portable |
| <i>puls</i> | throb, urge | pulsate, compulsory |
| <i>scrib, script</i> | write | prescribe, scripture |
| <i>spec, spect, spic</i> | look, see | speculate, spectacle, conspicuous |
| <i>stat</i> | stand, put in a place | statue, state |
| <i>tain, ten, tent</i> | hold | contain, tenant, attention |
| <i>tract</i> | pull, move | tractor, retract |
| <i>ven, vent</i> | come | convention, event |
| <i>vers, vert</i> | turn | versatile, invert |
| <i>vid, vis</i> | see | video, vista |
| <i>voc, vok</i> | voice, call | vocal, invoke |
| <i>vol</i> | wish | volunteer, malevolent |
| <i>volv</i> | roll | revolve, involve |

Determining Word Meaning Through Prefixes and Suffixes Draw lines to separate each of the following words into three parts—prefix, base word, and suffix. Determine the meaning of the prefix and the suffix. Then, by adding the meanings of the prefix and the suffix to the base word, determine the meaning of the complete word and write the definition in the blank.