

Greek & Latin roots and affixes for academic terms

How to use: Print first for the main practice. Then use the device to repeat activities and save progress.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 1 Identify Greek and Latin roots and affixes in multi-syllable academic words
- 2 Match roots to their core meanings to decode unfamiliar vocabulary
- 3 Combine a root with a prefix or suffix to form a complete academic word
- 4 Apply root-and-affix analysis to infer the meaning of complex terms across subjects

MINI LESSON

Academic English draws heavily on Greek and Latin. A root carries the core meaning of a word, while a prefix placed before it shifts that meaning and a suffix placed after it changes its grammatical role. Recognising these parts lets you decode multi-syllable words you have never seen before — a skill that becomes increasingly powerful in Grade 6 and beyond.

Greek roots — science, sound, and thought

- graph (write / draw) — autograph, seismograph, choreography, paragraph
- phon (sound) — phonics, polyphonic, cacophony, microphone
- bio (life) — biology, biome, antibiotic, symbiosis
- geo (earth) — geology, geothermal, geopolitics, geography
- spect (look) — spectator, inspect, retrospect, perspective
- chron (time) — chronology, synchronise, anachronism
- log / logy (word / study) — biology, geology, dialogue, prologue

Latin roots — action, law, and communication

- port (carry) — transport, deport, portable, import
- dict (say / tell) — predict, contradict, verdict, dictate
- rupt (break) — interrupt, erupt, disrupt, bankrupt
- aud (hear) — audience, auditorium, audible, audition
- scrib / script (write) — describe, transcript, manuscript, prescription
- vid / vis (see) — video, visible, evidence, supervise
- mit / miss (send) — transmit, dismiss, omit, admission

Common prefixes and suffixes

- Prefixes: trans- (across), re- (again), pre- (before), con- (together), mis- (wrongly), in-/im- (not)
- Suffixes: -tion / -ion (act of), -able / -ible (can be), -ology (study of), -ist (person who), -ify (make)

! Strategy: strip the prefix, strip the suffix, and read the bare root. The root almost always contains the central meaning clue. Then rebuild from root outward.

Worked example

Analyse the word "geothermal" into its parts.

What does geothermal literally mean?

"Of or relating to earth's heat" — root **geo** (earth) + root **therm** (heat) + suffix **-al** (relating to).

Now apply the same method to "chronological": **chron** (time) + **log** (order/word) + **-ical** (relating to) = "arranged in time order."

VOCABULARY

root The base unit of a word that carries its core meaning across many derivations.
e.g. The Latin root "dict" means say or speak: dictate, predict, contradiction.

affix A morpheme attached to a root — either a prefix or a suffix.
e.g. In "unbreakable", "un-" and "-able" are affixes.

prefix An affix attached to the front of a root that modifies meaning.
e.g. "Trans-" in "transparent" means across or through.

suffix An affix attached to the end of a root, often signalling part of speech.
e.g. "-ology" turns a root into the noun for a study, as in biology.

morphology The study of how words are formed from their meaningful parts.
e.g. Morphology helps you decode "misanthropic" by analyzing its parts.

academic register The formal vocabulary used in textbooks and scholarly writing.
e.g. Words like "hypothesis" and "infer" belong to academic register.

Anatomy of a Word: AUDITORIUM



a place for listeners / an audience hall
root + connectors + suffixes = whole-word meaning

Roots Family Wheel



One root, many academic words.

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morphology	The study of how words are formed from their meaningful parts. <i>e.g. Morphology helps you decode "misanthropic" by analyzing its parts.</i>
academic register	The formal vocabulary used in textbooks and scholarly writing. <i>e.g. Words like "hypothesis" and "infer" belong to academic register.</i>

GUIDED PRACTICE — MINI-BOOK

MINI-BOOK

The Root Detectives

PAGE 1

Ms Rivera wrote a single sentence on the board: "The geologist examined the seismograph data." She turned to the class. "Before we discuss what it means, I want you to become word detectives. Every big word in that sentence is hiding clues." She tapped "geologist." "This word has three parts. Can anyone peel them apart?"

1

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Marcus raised his hand. "Geo means earth — like geography. And -logy means study of. So a geologist is someone who studies the earth." Ms Rivera nodded. "Now try seismograph." Priya noticed "graph" — meaning write. Seismo- referred to earthquakes. "A device that writes down earthquake movements!" she said. The class erupted in surprise.

2

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Ms Rivera explained that Greek and Latin roots are like a hidden code baked into academic language. Phon means sound, so microphone means “small voice amplifier.” Bio means life, making biology “the study of life.” Aud means hear, so auditorium is literally “a place for listeners.” The roots never disappear — they travel through centuries into modern English.

3

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By the end of class, every student had decoded at least five new words using only roots and affixes. “You don’t need to memorise every word,” Ms Rivera said. “You just need the roots. Once you know port means carry, you understand transport, import, export, and portable — all from one root.” Marcus smiled. He had unlocked a master key to the English language.

4

~ The End ~

EXERCISES — MATCH THE PAIRS

Draw a line to match each Greek or Latin root to its meaning.

1. graph	A. earth
2. phon	B. life
3. bio	C. sound
4. geo	D. write / draw
5. port	E. hear
6. dict	F. break
7. rupt	G. say / tell
8. aud	H. carry

Write the matching letter next to each number (e.g. 1-B, 2-A, 3-C...).

1 — ____ 2 — ____ 3 — ____ 4 — ____ 5 — ____ 6 — ____ 7 — ____ 8 — ____

“Flip the page upside down to see the answer key “

1-D 2-C 3-B 4-A 5-H 6-G 7-F 8-E

EXERCISES — FILL IN THE BLANKS

Use the root and affix clues to write the complete academic word.

A scientist who studies living things — root bio (life) + suffix -logy — works in the field of

1. _____ .

A device that records earthquakes — root graph (write) + prefix seismo- — is called a

2. _____ .

3. A handwritten book — root script (write) + prefix manu- (hand) — is called a _____ .

When a speaker says the opposite — root dict (say) + prefix contra- — they _____

4. the other person.

5. The science of the earth's structure — root geo (earth) + suffix -logy — is called _____ .

6. A volcano that violently breaks open — root rupt (break) + prefix e- — _____ .

A signal sent across a network — root mit (send) + prefix trans- + suffix -ion — is called a

7. _____ .

8. A large hall built for listening — root aud (hear) + suffixes -itor + -ium — is called an _____ .

"Flip the page upside down to see the answer key"

1. biology 2. seismograph 3. manuscript 4. contradict 5. geology 6. erupts 7. transmission 8. auditorium

EXERCISES — MULTIPLE CHOICE

Circle the best answer.

1. In the word "biography," which roots combine, and what does the word literally mean?

- bio (life) + graph (write) — "writing about a life"
- bi (two) + graph (write) — "two writings"
- bio (body) + graphy (picture) — "body picture"
- bio (below) + graph (map) — "map below ground"

2. Which word does NOT contain the Latin root "port" meaning "carry"?

- transport
- portable
- import
- portion

3. You encounter the word "chronological." Using roots, what is the BEST meaning?

- Arranged in the order of time
- Arranged from largest to smallest
- Relating to the study of colour
- Relating to the study of living things

4. The suffix "-ology" means "the study of." Which word uses it correctly?

- geology — the study of the earth
- audiology — the study of colour
- biology — the study of books
- technology — the study of sound

5. Which pair of words shares the SAME root with the SAME meaning?

- interrupt and erupt — both share "rupt" (break)
- audible and visible — both share "vis" (see)
- predict and transport — both share "port" (carry)
- describe and prescribe — both share "pre" (before)

6. A student says "visible evidence" in a debate. Which statement is TRUE about the roots used?

- Both "visible" and "evidence" contain the root "vid/vis" meaning see
- "Visible" contains "aud" (hear) and "evidence" contains "port" (carry)
- Neither word has a Latin root
- "Evidence" contains "dict" (say) and "visible" contains "graph" (write)

7. What is the literal meaning of "transmission"?

- The act of sending across
- A type of broken machine
- A job that was changed
- The study of signals

8. Why is knowing Greek and Latin roots especially powerful for Grade 6 academic reading?

- It tells you exactly how to pronounce every syllable
- It lets you infer the meaning of complex words you have never seen before
- It replaces the need to read the surrounding context
- It is only useful for science words, not social studies or maths

"Flip the page upside down to see the answer key"

1.a.2.d.3.a.4.a.5.a.6.a.7.a.8.b

ASSESSMENT

PARENT / TEACHER CHECKLIST

- Match all eight Greek and Latin roots to their correct meanings without looking at notes.
- Build at least seven of eight academic words from the root and affix clues given.
- Explain in your own words how stripping a prefix and suffix reveals the core meaning of a word.
- Give two examples of words from different subjects that share the same root and explain the connection.