**ESL 116: Negative Prefixes**

Words with negative prefixes are incredibly common in English. You cannot possibly be a good reader in English if you do not recognize and understand these prefixes and the words they help compose. You should, however, be aware of the limitations of these prefixes. You cannot simply take a word in English that you want to give a negative meaning, stick any of the negative prefixes in front of it, and create a new word. Check your creations in the dictionary.

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| **Prefix** | **Meaning** | **Example** |
| \*in- | not | incompetent, incorrect |
| non- | not, without | nonalcoholic, noncommittal, nonaligned |
| un- | not or reverse | unwritten, unrealistic |
| a- | without, lacking | apolitical, apathetic, asexual |
| anti- | against, opposite, preventing | antiwar, anti-inflammatory |
| dis- | not | disobey, disapprove |
| dis- | remove | disconnect, disassemble |
| de- | reverse | deregulate, decontaminate |
| mal- | poorly | malnourished, malformation |
| mis- | wrongly, incorrectly | misbehave, misinform |

\*IMPORTANT NOTE: Due to a process called assimilation, in- will change to il- before an 1 (illogical); to im- before an m, b, or p (immodest, impossible); to ir- before an r (irrational).

Exercise 1: Analyze the meaning of the underlined word. Write the prefix and root in the spaces provided. Circle or highlight the part of speech (n,v,adj,adv) and write the meaning of the word; if possible, do not use the same root in your definition.

EXAMPLE: They disconnected the telephone because I didn’t pay the bill.

prefix: *dis* root: *connect*

meaning (n, v, adj, adv) *to undo the joining of*

1. Your handwriting is illegible; please type your next paper.

prefix: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ root: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

meaning (n, v, adj, adv): \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

2. To illiterates, newspapers and books are just worthless piles of paper.

prefix: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ root: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

meaning (n, v, adj, adv): \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

3. Air itself is invisible, although we can hear and feel it move.

prefix: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ root: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

meaning (n, v, adj, adv): \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. Imprecise calculations have been reduced since students have begun to use calculators.

prefix: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ root: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

meaning (n, v, adj, adv): \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

5. Gestures constitute one of the most important forms of nonverbal communication.

prefix:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ root: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

meaning (n, v, adj, adv): \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

6. Nonconformists often pay a penalty for being different.

prefix: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ root: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

meaning (n, v, adj, adv): \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

7. Many antinuclear protests are purposely nonviolent.

prefix :\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ root: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

meaning (n, v, adj, adv): \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

prefix : \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ root: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

meaning (n, v, adj, adv): \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

8. Doctors pay high premiums for malpractice insurance to protect them from high-priced lawsuits.

prefix: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_root: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

meaning (n, v, adj, adv): \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

9. Discontinued merchandise is often sold at reduced cost.

prefix: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ root: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

meaning (n, v, adj, adv): \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. He uncovered a plot to steal the money.

prefix: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ root: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

meaning (n, v, adj, adv): \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_