

Understanding Vocabulary in Context

Words, words, words. There aren't enough hours in a day to learn and remember all the words that exist. No one knows every word. Do you know what *samite* ('sam-īt) means? Chances are, you don't. Probably, your teacher doesn't either. However, if you read this sentence: *Queen Alexandra enfolded herself in samite*, you might guess that samite is a material. Correct. Specifically, it's a "rich medieval silk fabric interwoven with gold or silver." If you can use **context clues**, you can still get close to an unknown word's meaning. Maybe you didn't quite get *enfolded*. That should be easy to fix by learning what different prefixes and suffixes mean. *Enfolded* means "to cover with or as if with folds...to surround with a covering." You could substitute *enveloped*, a synonym, for *enfolded*.

To figure out a word strictly using context, use the **spotlight strategy**. This means you shine focus (shine your spotlight) on what you know in the sentence that comes before and after the word you don't know. You might have to do this with sentences before and after the word you don't know if the words in the immediate sentence don't give you any clues to figure out the unknown word. We used this strategy to figure out what *samite* means. You wrap yourself in blankets and clothing—things made out of fabric. Queens have very expensive and special things...hence the silver and gold threads.



If you learn a few prefixes and suffixes, you'll be ahead of the game. Instead of inventing new words, many words are made by adding something at the beginning or end or both. You'll need to know the root or base word; then, all you have to do is use your knowledge of the affixes.

Here are a few:

Use these Latin and Greek prefixes to make sense out of the following. Fill in the blanks to make correct words. P.S., the word after the blank is the root or base word.

| Prefix: | Meaning: |
|-------------|---------------|
| pre | before |
| post | after |
| sub | under |
| super | above |
| re | back or again |
| pro | forward |
| a, ab | away |
| dis | apart |
| in, ir, im | not |
| bi | two |
| tri | three |
| uni or mono | one |
| poly | many |
| mis | wrong |
| geo | land |
| hydro | water |
| trans | across |
| ex | out |
| con | together |
| inter | between |

- We had to _____view before the test.
- _____game activities included a formal dance.
- The carpet store had to install a _____floor because of water damage.
- The Siamese twins were _____joined.
- The _____game dinner got us in the mood for winning.
- The billfold was a _____fold style. I could put things in three places.
- We receive semester grades _____yearly.
- A _____gon has lots of sides.
- When you _____spell a word, you lose credibility.
- The _____atlantic trip took three weeks.
- After damaging his knee in football, he had to have _____therapy in the pool.
- I lost my _____graphy book.
- I hope I won't be _____pelled from school for lying.
- He had a _____brow the barber wanted to fix.
- The _____session was not scheduled for everyone.
- The computer put the "th" as a _____script.

**These are just a FEW prefixes. There are many more!
Study these first.**

| Suffix: | Meaning: |
|----------------|-----------------------------------|
| able, ible | able, can do |
| ade | result of action |
| age | act of, state of, collection of |
| al | relating to |
| an, ian | native of, relating to |
| ance, ancy | action, process, state |
| ar, er, or | one who, that which |
| ary, ery, ory | relating to, quality, place where |
| ate | cause, make |
| cian | having a certain skill or art |
| cide | kill |
| cule, ling | very small |
| dom | quality, realm, office |
| ee | one who receives the action |
| ence, ency | action, state of, quality |
| ese | a native of, the language of |
| ess | female |
| et, ette | a small one, group |
| fic | making, causing |
| ful | full of |
| fy | make |
| hood | order, condition, quality |

Use these suffixes to make the correct word to fit in the context of the sentence.

1. The plan wasn't feas_____ ; we didn't have enough money to make it happen.
2. The As_____ restaurant wasn't open yet.
3. The block_____ caused by the flood was inconvenient.
4. The scienti_____ exploration of space taught us many things.
5. The musi_____ charged us to listen.
6. Geno_____ occurred during the Holocaust.
7. The baby bird drank a minis_____ amount of water.
8. "My king_____ for a horse" is a famous quotation.
9. He shouted "Stop" with urgen_____.
10. The lion_____ played with her cubs.
11. The employ_____ was fired because of theft.
12. The drum major_____ led the parade.
13. The lawyer spoke in legal_____.
14. The company had to liquid_____ its merchandise because of fire damage.
15. He started a fight because he thought his man_____ was being questioned.
16. Please simpli_____ your answer.
17. Her face was beauti_____.
18. He needed assist_____ with his first checking account.

In your own words, explain how prefixes and suffixes work.