

---

Michigan's Multi-Tiered System of Supports Technical Assistance Center  
January 2026 – Version 1.0

---

## 20 Most Common Prefixes

The following table lists the most common prefixes in English. This list can provide guidance for instructional decisions in the classroom. This list is adapted from Joan Sedita's Keys to Literacy website: [20 Most Common Prefixes Found in Frequently Used Prefixed Words](#).

| Prefix                | Common Meaning                              | Examples                                | Percentage |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|------------|
| 1. Un-                | Not, opposite of, Contrary to               | Unhappy, Unlock                         | 26.4%      |
| 2. Re-                | Again, anew, backwards, back                | Restore, Return                         | 13.6%      |
| 3. In-, im-, il-, ir- | Not                                         | Inactive, immoral, illogical, irregular | 10.6%      |
| 4. Dis-               | Not, opposite of, remove                    | Discolor, Disengage, Discover           | 7.3%       |
| 5. En-, em-           | Put or go into or onto, to cause to be      | Encage, embed, Endear, emblaze          | 4.5%       |
| 6. Non-               | Not                                         | Nonfiction                              | 4.3%       |
| 7. In-, im            | Into, inside, within                        | Inbound, Immerge, Illuminate            | 3.5%       |
| 8. Over-              | Above, too much                             | Overthrow                               | 3.3%       |
| 9. Mis-               | Bad, wrong, failure, lack                   | Misfortune, Mistreat                    | 2.8%       |
| 10. Sub-              | Below, Under, Secondary, less than complete | Submerge, Subplot, Subpar               | 2.7%       |
| 11. Pre-              | Before, in front of                         | Prehistoric                             | 2.7%       |
| 12. Inter-            | Between, among                              | International                           | 2.6%       |
| 13. Fore-             | Before, in front of                         | Foreshadow                              | 2.5%       |
| 14. De-               | Make opposite of, remove, reduce,           | Decriminalize, Declass, dethrone        | 2.4%       |
| 15. Trans-            | Across, beyond, change, through             | Transmit, transcribe, transfer          | 1.6%       |

| Prefix     | Common Meaning                     | Examples                           | Percentage |
|------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------|
| 16. Super- | Above, over, Superior, Excessive   | Supernatural, superhero            | 1.5%       |
| 17. Semi-  | Half, partial, happening two times | Semiformal, semicircle, semiweekly | 1.3%       |
| 18. Anti-  | Opposite, counteracting            | Antisocial, antifreeze             | 1.1%       |
| 19. Mid-   | Middle                             | Midair                             | 1.1%       |
| 20. Under- | Beneath, below, less in degree     | Underscore                         | .8%        |

### References

Carroll, J.B., Davies, P., & Richman, B. (1971). *The American Heritage Word Frequency Book*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

White, T. G., Sowell, J., & Yanagihara, A. (1989). Teaching Elementary Students to Use Word-Part Clues. *The Reading Teacher*, 42(4), 302–308. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20200115>

### URLs Used in Document

[Keys to Literacy](https://keystoliteracy.com/wp-content/pdfs/5b-wkshp-templates/CommonPrefix.pdf)

(<https://keystoliteracy.com/wp-content/pdfs/5b-wkshp-templates/CommonPrefix.pdf>)

Michigan's MTSS Technical Assistance Center is funded by the Michigan Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs.