

Preface

The word “etymology” refers to tracing the origin and historical development of words in a language. How is a given word derived from an earlier word or words?

Just as we can “parse” or decompose a sentence into parts of speech – noun, verb, adjective, adverb, etc. – so we can deconstruct a given word into its constituent meaning elements and trace their origins. For example, the word “etymology” consists of an original Greek root “etymon” – meaning “an earlier form of the same word” – and the Greek “logos” – meaning “word” or “speech”, which took on the later form “ology” – meaning “study of.” So, there we have the etymology of the word “etymology.”

The reason to study the etymology of vocabulary words is that doing reveals repeated word-formation patterns, so that we can dissect or guess the meanings of unfamiliar words based on their constituent prefixes and roots which we may have encountered earlier. For example, by knowing that the prefix “pre” means “before” or “ahead” and that “dict” is rooted in “speaking” or “saying”, we can surmise that “predict” means to foretell or talk about something before it happens.

The English language is built primarily from the Anglo-Saxon (Germanic) and Latin languages. Historically, the Angles and Saxons occupied Britain, and after a few brief occupations by the Roman legions, in 1066 the tribes were defeated by the Norman leader William the Conqueror, who spoke French – a language which is in a sense a form of Latin with a French accent. Subsequently, the Germanic and Latinate languages blended to become what we know as English.

Because Latin is such a fundamental basis of English and because Latin is built from a regular system of “reusable” prefixes and roots, we undertake the study of these elements to make our learning of vocabulary more efficient. Rather than learn individual word meanings in isolation, by studying a standard set of Latin prefixes and frequently occurring roots, we can often “mix and match” to learn several new words (or “permutations”) each time a new root is encountered. The study of etymology thus can short cut or accelerate the expansion of our vocabulary and appreciate how meanings and usages have evolved.

For example, knowing that the root “gress” relates a step or advance, and knowing a series of prefixes, we can deduce word meanings:

“ad”	= to, toward	address (“g” in “gress” becomes a “d”)
“co, con”	= together	congress (movement together)
“di”	= split	digress (move away from)
“e, ex”	= out of, from	egress (way out, exit)
“in”	= in, into	ingress (way in, entrance)
“pro”	= forward, for	progress (move forward)
“re”	= back	regress (move backward)
“trans”	= across, over	transgress (move beyond)

To a lesser extent Classical Greek also contributed to English, given that the Roman conquest of Greece and admiration for its culture led to the incorporation of many Greek terms into Latin. So, we make a point of studying Greek roots and prefixes as well. For example, the Greek root “pathos” means feeling or suffering, from which come such words as:

“a”	= not	apathy (not caring)
“anti”	= against	antipathy (dislike or hostility)
“em, en”	= into, in	empathy (sharing in another’s feeling)
“sym”	= together, with	sympathy (feeling sorrow for another)

In addition, there are other English words based on the same root, such as “pathetic”, “pathology”, “pathos”, and so on.

Consider the common prefixes and cross-connections of the words below:

telecommute	micron	automaton	extrasensory	intercede
telegraph	micrograph	autobiography	extravehicular	interrupt
telephone	microphone	automobile	extraterrestrial	interdict
telescope	microscope	autograph	extraordinary	intervene
television	micromanage	autonomy	extralegal	intervene

or the roots “duc” (“lead”), “fer” (“bear, bring”), “port” (“carry”) and “vers” (“turn”) as seen below:

aqueduct	confer	report	converse
conduct	defer	deport	diverse
deduce	refer	transport	reverse
deduct	transfer	teleport	adverse
duct	prefer	airport	perverse
ductile	offer	purport	obverse
educa	te		export
induce		import	averse
produce		comport	inverse
reduce		support	transverse
seduce			controversy
viaduct			traverse

As you proceed through these etymology books, taking note of similar patterns and linkages may prove interesting detective work and may help in retaining more vocabulary at a more rapid pace.

Lesson I:

Ab -, Abs -, A -

AB-, ABS-
from, away from

*abdicate, abduct, abhor, abject, abjure, abominate, abrasion, abrogate,
abrupt, abscess, abscond, absolve, absorb, abstain, abstemious,
abstruse, abuse, averse, avert, avocation*

Word Definitions

- abdicate** **v.** to renounce the throne; to fail to fulfill or undertake (a duty)
“Queen Elizabeth may abdicate the throne to her son, Charles.”
abdication (n.)
abdicare: ab- away + dicare to declare.
- abduct** **v.** to take (someone) away illegally by force or deception; kidnap
“Paris abducted Helen from Sparta to Troy.”
abduction (n.)
abducere to lead away: ab- away + ducere to lead.
- abhor** **v.** to regard loathing or detest
“Pacifist Gandhi was said to abhor violence.”
abhorrere: ab- away from + horrere to shudder.
- abject** **adj.** (of something bad) experienced to the maximum degree
“Starving, disease-ridden refugees in Niger live abject lives.”
abjection (n.), abjectly (adv.)
abicere: ab- away + jacere to throw.

abjure	v. to solemnly renounce (a belief or claim); to give up or to abstain from “Priests must <u>abjure</u> marriage and remain celibate.” <i>abjuration (n.)</i> <i>abjurare: ab-</i> away + <i>jurare</i> to swear.
abominate	v. to regard with hatred or disgust “Indiana Jones <u>abominated</u> Nazis.” <i>abomination (n.)</i> <i>abominari</i> to deprecate: <i>ab-</i> away, from + <i>ominari</i> to prophesize.
abrasion	n. the action of, process of, or result of wearing away by friction and rubbing or being abraded “A slip onto the asphalt caused the pedestrian a knee <u>abrasion</u> .” <i>abradere: ab-</i> away + <i>radere</i> to scrape.
abrogate	v. to cancel, repeal, or abolish (especially a law or agreement) “The North Koreans’ atomic test <u>abrogated</u> the weapons treaty.” <i>abrogation (n.)</i> <i>abrogare</i> to repeal: <i>ab-</i> away + <i>rogare</i> to propose a law.
abrupt	adj. sudden and unexpected; brief to the point of rudeness, curt “Feeling suddenly ill, the diner <u>abruptly</u> left the table.” <i>abruptly (n.)</i> <i>abrupere: ab-</i> away + <i>rumpere</i> to break..
abscess	n. a swollen area within body tissue, containing an accumulation of pus “The untreated blister became an infected <u>abscess</u> .” <i>abscedere: abs-</i> away, from + <i>cedere</i> to go
abscond	v. to leave hurriedly and secretly to escape from custody or avoid arrest “The fleeing thief had <u>absconded</u> with the bank’s money.” <i>abscondere</i> to hide: <i>ab-</i> away + <i>condere</i> to stow .
absolve	v. to declare (someone) free from guilt or responsibility “The accused was <u>absolved</u> when his alibi was confirmed.” <i>absolvere: to set free, to acquit: ab-</i> from + <i>solvere</i> to loosen.
absorb	v. to soak up (liquid or another substance); to assimilate (a lesser entity) into a larger one “Distracted by a CD player, the pupil did not <u>absorb</u> the lesson.” <i>absorbere: ab-</i> from + <i>sorbere</i> to suck in.
abstain	v. to restrain or refrain from doing something “Mormons <u>abstain</u> from drinking alcohol.” <i>abstinere: ab-</i> from + <i>tenere</i> to hold.
abstemious	adj. indulging only very moderately in something, especially food and drink “Dieters are <u>abstemious</u> from high-calorie desserts.” <i>abstemiously (adv.)</i> <i>abstemius: ab-</i> from + <i>tenetum</i> alcoholic liquor + -ous.

Exercise B

Match the word with the letter of its definition.

- | | |
|--------------------|----------------------------------------|
| 1. ___ abdicate | a) prevent from happening |
| 2. ___ abduct | b) challenging to comprehend |
| 3. ___ abhor | c) declare innocent of guilt or sin |
| 4. ___ abject | d) hobby or minor occupation |
| 5. ___ abjure | e) carry off unlawfully |
| 6. ___ abominate | f) leave hurriedly to avoid arrest |
| 7. ___ abrasion | g) result of an infection |
| 8. ___ abrogate | h) soak up |
| 9. ___ abrupt | i) opposed to |
| 10. ___ abscess | j) result of wearing away |
| 11. ___ abscond | k) shrink away from with disgust |
| 12. ___ absolve | l) misuse |
| 13. ___ absorb | m) sparing in the consumption of food |
| 14. ___ abstain | n) relinquish authority |
| 15. ___ abstemious | o) swear to reject |
| 16. ___ abstruse | p) cancel a law or treaty |
| 17. ___ abuse | q) detest, feel intense hatred towards |
| 18. ___ averse | r) sudden change in action or manner |
| 19. ___ avert | s) miserable, hopeless |
| 20. ___ avocation | t) refrain from doing |

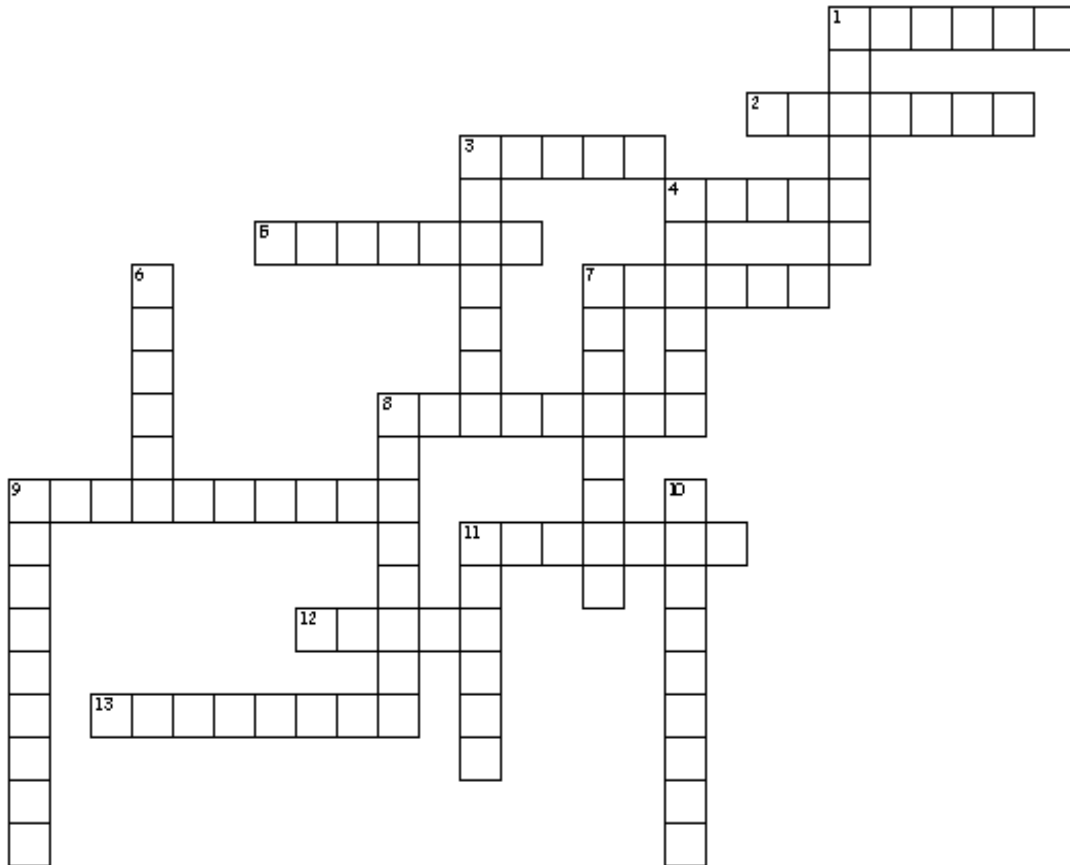
Exercise C

Circle the letter of the definition that best fits the meaning of the word.

- | | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. abdicate <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. shrink away from with disgustb. relinquish authorityc. steal away withd. support faithfullye. divert blame | 3. abhor <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. eat with great enthusiasmb. draw in the essence ofc. shrink away from with disgustd. spit out quicklye. tease mercilessly |
| 2. abduct <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. carry off unlawfullyb. pardon of guiltc. disagree withd. eat voraciouslye. plagiarize | 4. abject <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. miserable, hopelessb. standing out from surroundingsc. unable to be deterredd. unusual, offbeate. quick to anger |

Exercise D

Solve the crossword puzzle:



Across

1. Sudden and unexpected; brief to the point of rudeness, curt. 2. To restrain or refrain from doing something. 3. To prevent or ward off; to turn away (one's eyes or thoughts). 4. To regard loathing or detest. 5. A swollen area within body tissue, containing an accumulation of pus. 7. (Of something bad) experienced to the maximum degree. 8. To renounce the throne; to fail to fulfill or undertake (a duty). 9. Indulging only very moderately in something, especially food and drink. 11. To declare (someone) free from guilt or responsibility. 12. To misuse or use badly. 13. To cancel, repeal, or abolish (especially a law or agreement).

Down

1. To soak up (liquid or another substance); to assimilate (a lesser entity) into a larger one. 3. To leave hurriedly and secretly to escape from custody or avoid arrest. 4. To solemnly renounce (a belief or claim); to give up or to abstain from. 6. To take (someone) away illegally by force or deception; kidnap. 7. The action of, process of, or result of wearing away by friction and rubbing or being abraded. 8. Difficult to understand. 9. To regard with hatred or disgust. 10. A hobby or minor occupation. 11. Strongly disliking or opposed.