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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 break up 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."

Studying the etymology of vocabulary words reveals repeated word-formation patterns, so that we can dissect or guess the meanings of unfamiliar words based on their constituent prefixes and roots that we 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 derived almost entirely from Latin. Over time, 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, studying these elements makes our learning of vocabulary more efficient. Instead of learning word meanings in isolation, we can study a standard set of Latin prefixes and common roots that we can "mix and match" to learn several new words or variations. The study of etymology thus can accelerate the expansion of our vocabulary while helping us appreciate how meanings and usages have evolved.

For example, knowing that the root "gress" means 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 across)

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	intercept
telephone	microphone	automobile	extraterrestrial	interrupt
telescope	microscope	autograph	extraordinary	interdict
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
duct	transfer	teleport	adverse
ductile	prefer	airport	perverse
educate	offer	purport	obverse
induce		export	averse
produce		import	inverse
seduce		comport	transverse
viaduct		support	controversy

As you proceed through these etymology books, taking note of similar patterns and linkages may prove to be interesting detective work and help you retain more vocabulary quickly.

Lesson I

AB -, AC -, AMBI -, ANTE -, BENE -, BI -

AB-, ABS- from, away from	AC-, AD- to, toward	AMBI- both	ANTE- before	BENE- good, well	BI- two
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abduct, abhor, abrasion, abrupt, absorb, accord, adaptable, adhere, adjacent, adversary, ambidextrous, ambiguous, ante meridian, anticipate, benediction, benefactor, bicep, bicuspid, bilateral, bilingual, bisect

Word Definitions

abduct	v. to take (someone) away illegally by force or deception; kidnap "Paris <u>abducted</u> Helen from Sparta to Troy." <i>abduction (n.)</i> <i>abducere</i> to lead away: <i>ab-</i> away + <i>ducere</i> to lead
abhor	v. to regard with loathing or detest "Gandhi was said to <u>abhor</u> violence." <i>abhorrere</i> : <i>ab-</i> away from + <i>horrere</i> to shudder
abrasion	n. the action of, process of, or result of wearing away by friction and rubbing; a scrape "A slip on the asphalt caused the man to suffer a knee <u>abrasion</u> ." <i>abradere</i> : <i>ab-</i> away + <i>radere</i> to scrape, to shave
abrupt	adj. sudden and unexpected; brief to the point of rudeness, curt "Feeling suddenly ill, the diner <u>abruptly</u> left the table." <i>abruptness (n.)</i> <i>abrumperere</i> to break off, to sever: <i>ab-</i> away + <i>rumperere</i> to break
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</i> to swallow, to suck: <i>ab-</i> from + <i>sorbere</i> to suck in
accord	v. to give or grant someone (power or recognition) n. an official agreement or treaty; a meeting of the minds "Hostilities ceased when the two sides reached a peace <u>accord</u> ." <i>ad-</i> to + <i>cor-</i> , <i>cord</i> heart, mind, spirit
adaptable	adj. able to adjust to new conditions "Humans are <u>adaptable</u> to all manner of climates."

adaptability (n.)
adaptably (ad.)
adaptare to adjust, to modify: *ad-* to + *aptare* to fit < *aptus* fitting

adhere **v.** to stick fast to; to believe in and follow the practices of; to represent truthfully and in detail
"Orthodox Jews adhere to strict dietary laws."
adhaerere to adhere, to cling: *ad-* to + *haerere* to stick

adjacent **adj.** next to or adjoining something else; having a common vertex or a common side.
"Massachusetts is adjacent to five other states."
adjacency (n.)
adjacere to lie near: *ad-* to + *jacere* to lie down, to sleep

adversary **n.** an opponent
"George Bush overcame his adversary, John Kerry, and was reelected."
adversarial (adj)
advertere to turn toward, to face: *ad-* to + *vertere* to turn

ambidextrous **adj.** able to use the right and left hands equally well
"Grover Cleveland, who was ambidextrous, could write with two hands simultaneously."
ambidexterity (n.)
ambi- both + *dexter* right-handed

ambiguous **adj.** having more than one meaning, open to different interpretations
"The word 'sanction' is ambiguous as it has two opposite meanings."
ambiguus doubtful, changeable < *ambigere* to hesitate, to doubt: *ambi-* both + *agere* to drive, to act

ANTE **before**

ante meridian **adj.** of or relating to or taking place in the morning; A.M.
"Breakfast is normally an ante meridian meal."
ante- before + *meridies* noon

anticipate **v.** to be aware of and prepare for; to look forward to
"Hannibal was able to anticipate the Roman moves and thwart them."
anticipare to take before: *ante-* before + *capere* to take hold, to grasp

BENE- **good, well**

benediction **n.** the utterance or bestowing of a blessing
"The Sunday service closed with the minister's benediction."
benedicere to bless: *bene* well + *dicere* to say

benefactor **n.** a person who gives money or other help to a person or cause
"The secret benefactor gave money to charity anonymously."
bene good + *facere* to make, to do

BI- **two**

bicep **n.** the large muscle in the upper arm (which has two points of attachment)
"Schwarzenegger's biceps protrude from his short sleeves."
bi- two + *caput* head

bicuspid	adj. having two cusps or points n. a tooth with two cusps, especially a human premolar tooth "A crescent moon has a <u>bicuspid</u> form." <i>bi-</i> two + <i>cuspis, cuspidis</i> sharp point
bilateral	adj. having or relating to two sides "The human body evinces <u>bilateral</u> symmetry." <i>bi-</i> two + <i>latus</i> side
bilingual	adj. speaking two languages fluently "Most Swiss are at least <u>bilingual</u> , speaking German and French." <i>bi-</i> two + <i>lingua</i> tongue, language
bisect	v. to divide into two parts, usually equal "The Mississippi River roughly <u>bisects</u> the United States. " <i>bisector</i> (n.) <i>bi-</i> two + <i>secare</i> to cut

Exercise A

Fill in the blanks in the sentences below with the correct form of a word in the scroll above:

1. The Al Qaeda terrorists lured the American journalist away from safety in order to _____ him.
2. Many Democrats _____ the practice of capital punishment.
3. Upon seeing a squirrel in the middle of the road, the driver made an _____ evasive maneuver to avoid hitting it.
4. When Karen spilled cranberry juice on the kitchen counter, she used a wad of paper towels to _____ the liquid.
5. The cement levee protecting the ocean-front cottage was crumbling after years of _____ by high tides and pounding waves.
6. Nancy and Jeffrey agreed to disagree, and reached an _____ to refrain from arguing for the rest of the day.
7. *Spiderman*, starring Toby McGuire as the web-slinger and Willem Dafoe as his _____, the Green Goblin, was so successful that it spawned a blockbuster sequel.
8. Though tempted to keep the paper bag full of money, Sarah _____ to her principles and tracked down the rightful owner.
9. The SUV was too large for the parking space at Tan-O-Rama, so it ended up occupying half of an _____ space.

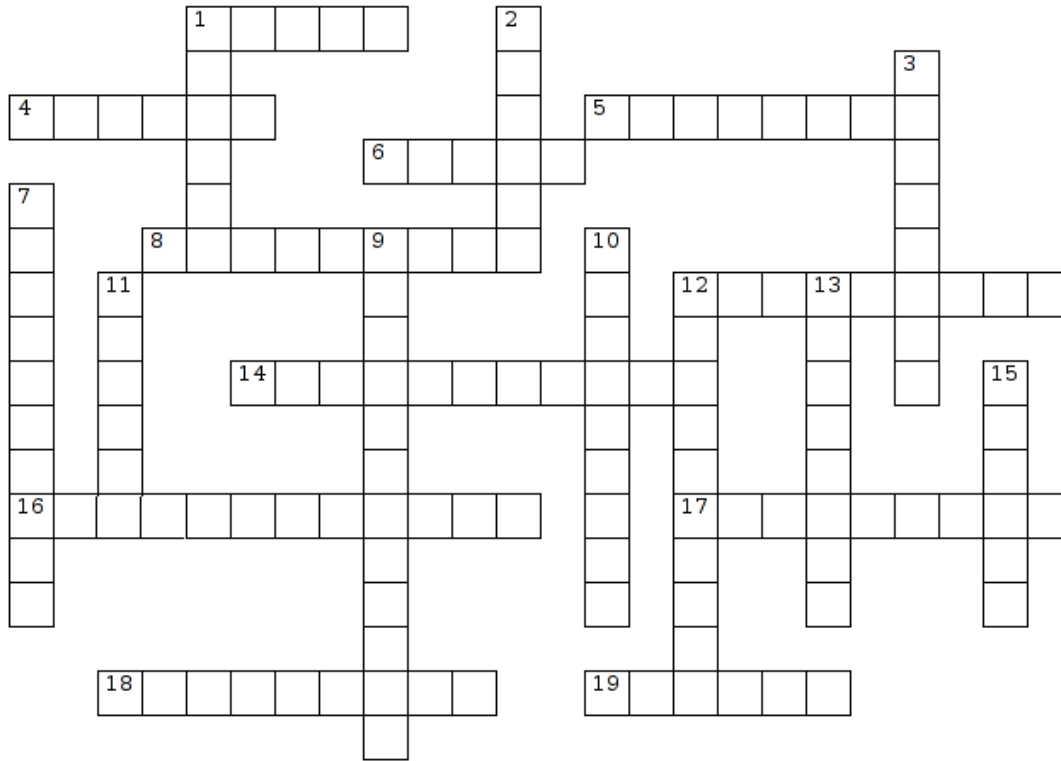
10. Since the rain jacket had a removable fleece lining for insulation, it was _____ for use in any climate or season.
11. People learning English as a second language struggle with _____ words such as "fair" and "tire."
12. Some _____ artists draw with one hand and write with another.
13. Seeing the puzzled look on Jessica's face, Nick explained that _____ was a term that meant "before noon".
14. Marquez didn't _____ the holiday bonus he received from his boss, because he had begun working for Dynacorp just a few weeks earlier.
15. At the end of the interfaith service, the minister asked the congregation to bow their heads while he gave the _____.
16. After losing all her baby teeth, Julia noticed that a _____ began to grow next to her molars.
17. The dotted yellow line _____ the highway.
18. Ancient mathematicians found the _____ symmetry of the isosceles triangle so beautiful they included it in the architecture of their greatest buildings.
19. The Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, Massachusetts, recognizes its most generous _____ on a prominent plaque in the lobby.
20. Mr. Banderas grew up in a Spanish-speaking house, but went to an English-speaking school and became _____.

Exercise B

Match the word with the letter of its definition.

- | | |
|-----------------------|--|
| 1. ___ abduct | a. to carry off unlawfully |
| 2. ___ abhor | b. to soak up |
| 3. ___ abrasion | c. the result of wearing away |
| 4. ___ abrupt | d. to detest, intense hatred |
| 5. ___ absorb | e. a sudden change in action or manner |
| 6. ___ accord | f. an enemy |
| 7. ___ adaptable | g. an agreement |
| 8. ___ adhere | h. to attach |
| 9. ___ adjacent | i. bordering |
| 10. ___ adversary | j. able to adjust to new situations |
| 11. ___ ambidextrous | k. before noon |
| 12. ___ ambiguous | l. having more than one interpretation |
| 13. ___ ante meridian | m. to expect |
| 14. ___ anticipate | n. the ability to use left and right hands equally |
| 15. ___ benediction | o. a blessing |
| 16. ___ benefactor | p. a double pointed tooth |
| 17. ___ bicuspid | q. having two sides |
| 18. ___ bilateral | r. the ability to speak two languages |
| 19. ___ bilingual | s. to divide into two equal parts |
| 20. ___ bisect | t. a person who offers financial support |

Exercise C



ACROSS

4 To divide into two parts, usually equally. **5** Having two cusps or points. **6** The large muscle in the upper arm (which has two points of attachment). **8** Able to adjust to new conditions. **12** Having or relating to two sides. **14** A blessing; an invocation of divine blessing. **16** Able to use right and left hands equally well. **17** Having more than one meaning; open to different interpretations. **18** Opponent. **19** Sudden and unexpected; brief to the point of rudeness, curt.

DOWN

1 To give or grant someone power or recognition. **2** To sitck fast to; to believe in and follow the practices of. **3** Next to or adjoining something. **7** To be aware of and prepare for; to look forward to. **9** Of or relating to or taking place in the morning; A.M. stands for ante meridian. **10** Speaking two languages fluently. **11** To soak up (liquid or another substance); to assimilate (a lesser entity) into a larger one. **12** A person who gives money or other help to a person or cause. **13** The action of, process of, or result of wearing away by friction and rubbing or being abraded. **15** To take someone away illegally by force or deception, kidnap.