HOW THE WORD ROOTS HELP IN FINDING THE MEANING OF AN ENGLISH WORD

Many of the words we use come from a root word. Once you pull off any prefixes or suffixes, the root will be normally at the front or the back of the remaining word. A little digging will uncover just what the root word really means. For example, in a word such as scissors, the root word is sciss, which means cut.

Determining a Root Word

Some examples of root words can be found in everyday language. The root word for *bicycle* would be *cycle* and the root word for *transactions* would be *action*.
Words can even have two root words, such as schoolhouse.

Root Words Can Have Their Own Meaning

There are many root words that are frequently used as parts of common words in the English language. For example, the following root words are provided with their meaning and, in italics, with an example of the root word as part of a word:

- Aqua - means water. *Aquamarine*
- Arbor - means tree. *Arboreal*
- Audio - means sound or hearing. *Audible*
- Bell - means war. *Bellicism*
- Dict - means say. *Dictation*
- Geo - means earth. *Geography*
- Graph - means write. *Graphics*
- Hydra - means water. *Hydrofoil*
- Man - means hand. *Manual*
- Min - means small. *Minimal*
- Nov - means new. *Novice*
- Path - means feeling or suffering. *Pathetic and Apathy*
- Sol - means sun. *Solar*
- Therm - means heat. *Thermometer*
- Vac - means empty. *Vacuum*
- Vent - means opening to let air in. *Ventilate*

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- Vit - means life. *Vitamin*

Liter, glyph, cap, morph, crypt, plan, ego, scent, and zoo are also root words. For example, animal is the actual meaning of the root word zoo, so when they named the zoo, they were right.

Root Words Can Be Partial Words

Some root words aren't even fully words, such as *bio*. *Bio* is the root word for biography or biology. Bio means life. Here are a few more examples:

- Acri - means bitter. *Acrimony*
- Carn - means flesh. *Carnivorous*
- Corp - means body. *Corporal punishment*
- Deca - means ten. *Decade*
- Erg - means work. *Energy*
- Gen - means birth. *Genesis*
- Lum - means light. *Luminary*
- Sen - means old. *Senior*
- Tele - means far. *Telephone*
- Vor - means eat greedily. *Devour*

By knowing different root words, you can understand what a word means even if you don't know the word, since the meaning can be derived from a combination of the root words.

Meaning Does Not Always Equal the Definition

Some root words make less sense. For example, take the word apology. The root word "logy" is the study of something, and apo is from or away from. So, if you interpret the meaning of apology based on root words alone, you would see that it means "away from the study of something?" Not a very good explanation. When we see apology we think sorry or sad about something. So, although many words have root words, knowing the meaning of the roots won't always provide you with a clear definition.

Some Common Root Words

When talking with friends or reading a book, you're constantly hearing root words. Here are some examples of root words, their meanings and other

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words that are formed by adding prefixes and/or suffixes to these building blocks:

- Act - means to move or do. *Action, activity and transaction*
- Ambul - means move or walk. *Amble, ambulant, ambulate*
- Auto - means self or same. *Autocrat, automatic*
- Cardio - means heart. *Cardiovascular, cardiology*
- Cede - means go. *Exceed, recede, accessible*
- Counter - means against or opposite. *Counteract, counterpoint and counterargument*
- Demo - means people. *Democracy, democrat and demographic*
- Derma - means skin. *Dermatology, epidermis*
- Equi - means equal. *Equity, equilateral and equidistant*
- Ex - means out or away. *Exit, extract and explosion*
- Extra - means outside. *Extraordinary, extraterrestrial*
- Hypno - means sleep. *Hypnosis, hypnotic*
- In and im - means not. *Impossible and innocent*
- Intra - means within or into. *Intrapersonal, intramural and intravenous*
- Ject - means to throw. *Reject, eject and inject*
- Mal - means bad. *Malignant, malfunction and malice*
- Mangi - means big or great. *Magnificent, magnify*
- Multi - means many. *Multiple, multifaceted and multilingual*
- Omni - means all. *Omnipotent, omnipresent and omnivore*
- Poly - means many. *Polygamous, polychrome and polytheist*
- Script - means write. *Manuscript, postscript*
- Sect - means cut. *Intersect, dissect and section*
- Semi - means half. *Semicircle and semifinalist*
- Un - means not. *Unfinished, uncooked and unreadable*
- Vis, vid - means see. *Envision, evident*

Origins of Most Root Words

Every root word has a meaning and that meaning corresponds to the new word made from it.

Root words are derived from Latin and Greek, and many word can be traced back to the Latin or Greek root word. So, in the movie *My Big Fat Greek Wedding,* Tula's father may have been right when he said "Give me a word, any word, and I'll show you that the root of that word is Greek."

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Defining a Root Word

Defining a root word from a word is simple when you have a list of all the root words available. The easiest place to find the root word for a longer word would be to look up the longer word here on YourDictionary.com. By searching the longer word and the root word in a dictionary or in one of the specialty reference sources on YourDictionary.com you can learn the definition, where the word came from, and information on who came up with the word.

Defining Etymology

Etymology is the study of root words, or the history of words. Etymologists discover how words are formed and what their meaning is and how that meaning has changed over time.
Etymologists apply specific steps to analyze the origin of words. They have to perform philological research, make use of dialectological data, and study semantic change.

Etymologists must know a wide range of languages and understand how they were developed. Not only are the words important, but how the language interprets it is also vital in the study of etymology.

The first etymologists were the Sanskrit linguists and grammarians in ancient India, but etymology is still practiced today.

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