Greek and Latin Roots

Did you know Greek and Latin words form the basis, or root, for several words in the English language? Indeed, we have borrowed from [Greek](https://reference.yourdictionary.com/resources/roots-english-words-greek-mythology.html), [Latin](https://reference.yourdictionary.com/other-languages/latin-vocabulary.html), [French](https://grammar.yourdictionary.com/grammar/style-and-usage/common-french-words-and-phrases-we-use-in-english.html), and almost every other classic or romance language. Why is this important? Well, sometimes we come across words that not even [context clues](https://examples.yourdictionary.com/examples-of-context-clues.html) can help us define. So, understanding the root of as many words as possible will help us decipher complex words that are unfamiliar to us.

In this way, if you understand the root, a simple [suffix](https://examples.yourdictionary.com/list-of-suffixes-and-suffix-examples.html) or [prefix](https://examples.yourdictionary.com/reference/examples/prefix-examples.html) won't deter you from comprehension. Let's take the word antisocial, for example. As long as you remember the prefix anti- means against or opposite, and social refers to community or companionship you'll quickly understand antisocial means unfriendly or against society's norms.

Being a voracious reader will naturally boost your vocabulary. [Context clues](https://examples.yourdictionary.com/examples-of-context-clues.html) also provide helpful hints. But, certainly, a thorough understanding of our Greek and Latin root words is another tool in your kit. Let's take a look at some examples from each language.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Greek Root** | **Meaning** | **English Words** |
| aer | air, atmosphere | aeronautics, aerosol |
| arche/archaeo | primitive, ancient, origin | archaic, archaeology |
| auto | self | autobiography, autoimmune |
| biblio | books, of books | bibliography, bibliophile |
| bio | life | autobiography, biology |
| chron | time | chronology, chronological |
| cosm/cosmo | world | microcosm, cosmic |
| dem | people | demographics, democracy |
| derma | skin | dermatologist, hypodermic |
| ethn/ethno | nation, race | ethnicity, ethos |
| geo | earth | geography, geology |
| gen | family, race | genealogy, genetic |
| gram | writing | grammar, grammatical |
| hemo | blood | hemophiliac, hemorrhage |
| hiero | sacred, holy | hieroglyphics, hierarchy |
| hydr/hydra/hydro | water | hydrate, hydraulic |
| ideo | idea | ideology, ideologue |
| log/logy | study, speech | logic, dialogue |
| meter/metr | measure | diameter, thermometer |
| micro | small | microscope, microcosm |
| ono/onym | name | anonymous, onomatopoeia |
| phil | loving | philanthropic, philanthropy |
| phob | fear | phobia, arachnophobia |
| phon | sound | phonetic, telephone |
| photo/phos | light | photograph, phosphorous |
| pneu | air, breath | pneumonia, pneumatic |
| polis | city | metropolis, cosmopolitan |
| psyche | mind, spirit | psychology, psychic |
| pyr | fire | pyromaniac, pyrogen |
| techno | Art, skill | architect, technique |
| the/theo | god | theology, apotheosize |
| **Latin Root** | **Meaning** | **English Words** |
| acer/acid/acri | bitter, sour | acerbic, acidic |
| agri | field, country | agriculture, agribusiness |
| alb | white | albino, alabaster |
| amic | friendly | amicable, inimical |
| aud | hear, sound | audible, audiology |
| bon | good | bonanza, bonus |
| ced/cess | go, yield | recession, recede |
| femin | woman | feminine, feminism |
| flect/flex | bend | reflect, flexible |
| foli | leaf | foliage, defoliant |
| fract | to break | fracture, fractal |
| lat | broad, wide | latitude, lateral |
| lingu | language | bilingual, linguistics |
| longus | long | longevity, longitude |
| magn | great, large | magnificent, magnitude |
| mar | sea | maritime, marine |
| mir | amazement, wonder | miraculous, mirage |
| mit/miss | send, cast | remit, dismiss |
| mut | to change | mutate, mutation |
| naut | sailor | nautical, nautilus |
| nomin | to name | name, nominate |
| not | note, paper | notable, noted |
| nov | new | novice, novelty |
| port | to carry, to bear | portal, transport |
| pel/puls | drive, push | dispel, repulse |
| port | carry | transport, portable |
| rupt | to break | rupture, interrupt |
| sed | Sit | reside, sediment |
| sol | comfort, soothe | consolation, solace |
| tact | to touch | contact, tactile |