

## *Greek Roots and Derivatives*

The quality of words, the company they keep, their strange and sometimes unaccountable fortunes as they journey down through the centuries are rewarding fields of exploration.

—J. DONALD ADAMS

# GREEK ROOTS AND DERIVATIVES

## APPROACH

Success and vocabulary go hand in hand. This has been proved so often that it no longer admits of argument.

—WILFRED FUNK

What's in a word? A clue to its meaning. Almost every English word contains one or more clues which a word detective is quick to note and to make use of. With a very little training you will begin to recognize these clues and make them serve you. You may later decide to go far enough in the field to become an expert word detective.

Clues appear as roots, prefixes, or suffixes. The most common prefixes and suffixes are given below and on the next page. Get the meanings of these in mind very early in the course, but do not try to memorize them outright. Instead, read them over carefully and use them for reference in connection with each lesson hereafter until you know them.

**Prefixes:** Prefixes with the force of prepositions or adverbs are listed here. Those which come from adjectives will be found in the lessons to follow.

<i>Prefix</i>	<i>Meaning</i>	<i>Example</i>
1. a-, an-	without; not	apathetic
2. amphi-, amph-	both; around	amphitheater
3. anti-, ant-	against	antipathy
4. dia-	through; across	diameter
5. ec-, ex-	out	exodus
6. en- [em-]	in	energy
7. epi-, ep-	upon; at; in addition	epitaph
8. hyper-	over; excessively	hypercritical
9. hypo-, hyp-	under; less than; too little	hypodermic
10. para-, par-	beside; contrary; amiss; astray	parallel
11. peri-	around	perimeter
12. pro-	before	program
13. syn- [syl-, sym-, sy-] <sup>1</sup>	with; together	synthetic

<sup>1</sup>By a process called *assimilation*, some Greek and Latin prefixes change their final consonants to the initial consonants of roots to which they are attached (symmetry; syllable) or are otherwise modified to promote ease of pronunciation (sympathy; system). In this book the term *assimilation* includes both such modifications of form. Variant forms resulting from assimilation appear in brackets.

The following prepositional prefixes are less commonly found, except in science. Those students interested in the sciences, particularly biology, botany, or medicine, will do well to learn these additional prefixes.

<i>Prefix</i>	<i>Meaning</i>
1. ana-	up; upon; again; back
2. apo-, ap-, aph-	off; away from
3. cata-, cat-, cath-	down; completely; according to; against
4. ecto-	outside of
5. endo-, ento-	within
6. meta-, met-, meth-	among; with; after; beyond; completely; differently
7. pros-	toward; in addition

**Suffixes:** The suffixes below do not have definite meanings, but they do have the effects here indicated upon the words to which they are attached.

<i>Suffix</i>	<i>Effect</i>	<i>Example</i>
1. -ac	makes a noun, or an adjective	maniac cardiac
2. -ia	makes an abstract noun	mania
3. -ic	makes a noun, or an adjective	critic dynamic
4. -ics	makes a noun	dynamics
5. -ist	makes a noun designating a person	philanthropist
6. -ism	makes an abstract noun, indicating condition or action	atheism
7. -sis	makes an abstract noun, indicating condition	paralysis
8. -y	makes an abstract noun	monarchy

Roots listed in lessons hereafter as suffixes because of their normal position in derivatives may themselves have a variety of the endings given above. Be on the alert for other suffixes and consult a dictionary for help in their interpretation.

Scarcely any of our intellectual operations could be carried on to any considerable extent without the agency of words.

—ROGET

## PRELIMINARY QUESTIONS

Questions will occur to you as you begin the study of the lessons ahead. Some of these have been anticipated and answered here. Turn now to Lesson I, page 24. Read it through thoughtfully; then turn back to the questions and answers below.

*What is the difference between the roots, the prefixes, and the suffixes of a lesson?*

All are elements that may be combined to form words. An element usually appearing *first* in a word is listed as a prefix (euphonious, eulogy); an element usually appearing *last* in a word is listed as a suffix (bibliomaniac, monomaniac); an element frequently appearing *anywhere* in a word is listed as a root (anthropology, philanthropy). A word may have two or more prefixes (a/sym/metrical), two or more suffixes (physic/ist), any number of roots (chromo/photo/graphy).

Roots, prefixes, and suffixes are listed separately in the lessons, but in general reference the term *root* includes prefixes and suffixes, as in the heading Greek Roots and Derivatives.

*Why are the roots in lessons not arranged in alphabetical order?*

Roots arranged alphabetically have no relationship in meaning. An arrangement based on association of ideas is an aid to memory. Listed in any one lesson, therefore, will be (1) roots with meanings readily combined; the meaning of *phil* (Lesson I) combines more logically with the meanings of *anthrop* and *biblio* (Lesson I) than with those of *cephal* and *pod* (Lesson VI); (2) roots deceptively similar in appearance; *chron* and *chrom* (Lesson III) are given consecutive listing to pinpoint the one-letter difference.

*Why is such a word as phonograph, from phon and graph, not spelled phongraph?*

A vowel is inserted between two roots when there would otherwise be difficulty in pronunciation. The vowel most commonly used is *o*. What appears to be such a linking vowel is sometimes a part of the original root as in *anthropology*. Either such vowel may fail to appear before a root beginning with a vowel (misoanthrope). In this book Greek roots and prefixes are listed without such vowels except (1) when the vowel is not an *o* (tele; mega); (2) when the root or prefix seldom appears without the vowel (biblio); or (3) when the vowel distinguishes one word element from a similar one (bio—life; bi—two).

*Why are several forms given for the suffixes of each lesson?*

Variant forms alter the meanings of suffixes somewhat.

*bibliomania*—an excessive fondness for books

*bibliomaniac*—a person excessively fond of books

*bibliomaniacal*—having an excessive fondness for books

No one of these words could be substituted for another, though all combine the same essential elements. Varying forms of Greek suffixes will appear in the lessons in the following order:

1. Noun signifying act, practice, quality, or condition
2. Noun designating a person or thing closely associated with the act, practice, or quality
3. Adjective indicating association with the act, practice, or quality

*What is to be done with the words in the lesson listed under Exercise?*

The Exercise merely gives examples of words employing the roots of the day. Such words help to fix meanings of roots in mind.

Every workman in the exercise of his art should be provided with proper implements. . . . The writer as well as the speaker employs the instrumentality of words; it is in words that he clothes his thoughts; it is by means of words that he depicts his feelings. It is therefore essential to his success that he be provided with a copious vocabulary.—ROGET