

# Readroots User's Guide

A Root Literacy Project

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Welcome to Readroots! We believe you will find it to be a useful resource for teaching Greek and Latin roots and affixes (an affix is a prefix or a suffix). Greek and Latin roots and affixes make up at least 60% of English words and over 90% of Science words, so knowing them can help your students decode a lot of words! Because learners recall images easily, we use images to help students remember the roots and affixes. We also lean heavily on repetition, games, and collaboration, as these are proven ways for students to hold on to what they're learning.

### A Few Things You Should Know Before You Start

1. We use the literal/original meanings of the roots and affixes. These literal meanings may not match with your prior knowledge of a word's meaning or a dictionary's definition of the word. The word "interject," for example, literally means "to throw between" while the word "explain" means "to flatten out," which makes sense if you consider that, to explain something that had been rolled up, like a map or a drawing, you'd need to flatten it out first. Simply put, the narrow constraints of literal translations can be tricky; some of your definitions (and ours) just won't make perfect sense.

2. Words derived from Greek and Latin roots need to be decoded from back to front. The word "explainable," for example, has three parts: ex\_/plain/\_able. Decoding back to front, we get: "capable of" (\_able), followed by "to flatten" (plain), followed by "out" (ex\_). Put these together and you have: "capable of being flattened out" (to facilitate meaning, we changed "to flatten" into "being flattened"). There are some exceptions to the back-to-front decoding rule, such as when a word begins with a "not" prefix (e.g., "un\_" or "in\_") to a word. For this, we almost always start with the prefix and then decode the rest of the word back to front. Consider the word "unexplainable," which has four parts: un\_/ex\_/plain/\_able. To decode this word, we read it as "not" followed by "capable of" followed by "to flatten" followed by "out." Put these together and you have: "not capable of being flattened out." Please note that you will frequently, as in the "being flattened" example above, need to adjust verbs when you decode.

3. Roots and affixes can be confusing because homophonic roots (i.e., the roots sound similar) can have very different meanings. The root "par," for example, means "to appear/be visible," as in the words "apparent" and "transparent." If you're a Harry Potter fan, you will recognize this root in the wizard word "disapparate." But "par" also means "equal," as in the words "parity" and "compare." And it also means "to put in order/make ready," as in the words "prepare" and "separate." There are lots of homophonic roots and affixes. The prefixes "in\_/im\_" and "in\_/im\_" may be the most confusing, as they mean both "in" and "not. Affixes,

particularly suffixes, can also be confusing because quite a few of them mean something along the lines of “the state, action, or condition of.”

4. Some Latin and Greek verbs have tenses that are dissimilar enough to be confusing. Though they look nothing alike, the roots “ceive” and “cap,” for example, are both tenses of the Latin verb “capere” (to take). To reduce confusion, we have sometimes placed tenses of the same verb into different units.

### Using Readroots

One thing that makes Readroots special is that each unit is a self-contained collection of roots and affixes that work together to create words. We also ordered the units so that they build on each other, with new words incorporating and reinforcing previously-learned parts, thereby constantly and recursively re-exposing students to prior learning.

There are lots of Readroots activities to facilitate interaction with the roots and affixes. We recommend that, as much as possible, you allow students to work together on the activities, with the possible exception of the matching quizzes, particularly if you feel the need to have a grade for their work. We've found that the more that students discuss the roots and affixes with each other, the better they learn and remember them. Below is the list of activities.

1. Unit Notes and Attributions
2. Presentation Slideshow
3. Roots and Affixes Intro
4. Words Derived From the Unit and Prior Units
5. Concentration/Memory game
6. Cut and Sort task
7. Break It Down task
8. Break It Down key
9. Making Meaning task
10. Literal Translations task
11. Literal Translations key
12. Crossword Puzzle task
13. Crossword Puzzle key
14. Neologisms task (starts with Unit 2)
15. Neologisms key (also starts with Unit 2)
16. Review Slideshow
17. Quizlet Reviews
18. Matching Quiz
19. Matching Quiz key

Excepting the slideshows, the Concentration/Memory game, and the Quizlet Reviews, all of the pages are sized for students to cut out and glue into a standard composition book. The composition book, which at the very least should contain the “Roots and Affixes Intro” documents, will be a resource for tackling future units.

Everything is here except for the slideshows and the Quizlet Reviews. To access Quizlet, simply go to [www.quizlet.com](http://www.quizlet.com) and search for Readroots. We recommend that your students complete the rest of the activities as they’re ordered here, though you may also land on a different order or use only some of the activities. Instructions for most activities (but not Concentration/Memory) are on the actual activity pages.

The first item on the list, “Notes and Attributions,” is really intended as a resource for teachers, though there are some things from the notes you’ll want to share, such as interesting etymologies or the age of some words. It’s important for students to develop an understanding that language is fluid and that word meanings change over time, so please do anything you can do to further their understanding of this.

The first thing students should see and participate in is the slideshow presentation. Each Readroots image represents a word (or words) that incorporates the root or affix. These representative words are in the “Speaker Notes” section of each slide and also in the “Intro” document. Here is the link to the presentations: <https://bit.ly/readrootspresentations>. Each presentation, except for the Unit 1 and Unit 2 presentations, provides the parts, meaning, and images from the two preceding units. When you work through the slideshows with your students, stop at each slide and ask them to explain their perceptions of the connection between the image and the root or affix and its meaning. You should also share your thoughts and/or any mnemonic suggestions I made note of in the Notes and Attributions section. As much as possible, make the slideshow presentation a conversation. This is vital work to get them started and hooked.

The “Roots and Affixes Intro,” is the next thing students should see and the first thing they should cut out and glue into their composition books. It provides each unit’s roots and affixes (hereafter referred to as “parts”), the words those parts create, and how the parts connect to some of the parts from previous units.

There are thousands upon thousands of words derived from Greek and Latin roots and affixes; the Readroots lexicon is just the tip of the iceberg. Many of these words are captured, unit-by-unit, in the “Words

Derived From the Unit and Prior Units” document. One thing you should know about Readroots is that every single Readroots word can only be made with Readroots parts. For example, the word “gravity” (“grav” and “\_ity”) is included, because “grav” and “\_ity” are both Readroots parts. The word “gravitas,” on the other hand, is not included, as the suffix “\_itas” is not a Readroots part. When you talk with your students about the “Words Derived” document, you could mention that the words do not represent all of the words produced by that root or affix, just the words that can be produced by that part and previously-learned Readroots roots and affixes. When you put the “Words Derived” document in front of your students, please have them scan it for words they know or words they’re interested in knowing. Maybe highlight for them the words that you think are most useful or most surprising (e.g., who would have guessed that “egregious” and “gregarious” have the same root?). My advice is to just talk with them as much as you can about the words and how to use them.

The “Concentration/Memory” game requires a bit of explanation. The game consists of three pages, all of which need to be cut into eighths (by cutting each page in half, then fourths, then eighths). Ideally, you should print or copy these pages onto card stock for durability. The third “Concentration/Memory” page contains four of each meaning, to simplify copying for classroom teachers (who should make three extra copies of each of the first two pages and just one copy of the final page to create four total sets; if you are making a single set, just discard the unnecessary parts from the third page). Each set should have eighteen cards (six images, six parts, and six meanings), with students trying to find sets of three, therefore turning over three cards each time. For best results, each time a student turns over a card, she should say aloud the other two cards she needs to turn over in order to complete the match. This repetition will help students learn the parts more quickly. For an extra challenge, combine games from different units to increase the number of cards.

The instructions for the remaining tasks are located on the task pages themselves.

Here is the link to the review slideshows:  
<https://bit.ly/readrootsreviews>.