

Latin Bases and Prefixes in English

Alternate Forms

Linguistics 1010

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Latin Prefixes

- Why do prefixes sometimes have alternate forms?
 - **ad-, ac-**
 - **dif, dis-, di-**
 - **con-, co-, com-, col-**
- Ease of articulation.
- **Assimilation:** the process by which sounds that are next door to one another become more alike.

Latin Prefix Combinations

base	prefix (citation form)	compound	assimilated form of prefix
DUC 'lead'	con- 'with, together'	conduct	NA
LOC 'talk'	con-	collocation	col-
SPIR 'breathe'	ad- 'to, towards'	aspirate	a-
SIMIL 'like'	ad-	assimilate	as-
CED 'leave'	sub- 'under'	succeed	suc-
FER 'bear'	dis- 'apart'	different	dif-
FAC 'do'	ex- 'away'	efficient	ef-

Latin Bases

- Sometimes a base all by itself is a word:

<i>Base</i>	<i>Meaning</i>	<i>English word</i>
FIRM-	stable	firm
VERB-	word	verb
FORT-	strong	fort

Latin Bases

- Sometimes silent -e is added to the base:

<i>Base</i>	<i>Meaning</i>	<i>English word</i>
GRAV-	heavy	grave
FIN-	end	fine
GRAD-	step	grade

Latin Bases

- Sometimes English got two alternate forms of the base—one directly from Latin and the other via French:

<i>Latin</i>	<i>French</i>	<i>Meaning</i>
GRAV-	GRIEV-	grave
LIN-	LIGN-	line
VEN-	VENU-	arrive

Weakening of a Verb Base

- When a prefix attaches to the front of a verb base, the vowel of the base often changes. This is called **weakening**:

base	meaning	combination exemplifying 'weakened vowel'
SACR-	holy	con sec rate, ex ec rate
APT-	fit	in ep t
FAC-	make	eff ic ient, eff ec t
SED-	sit	con sider ate, pres ide
GRAD-	step	prog ress

Latin Verb Bases

- There are three forms of Latin verb bases that have come into English:
- The **verb stem**, e.g., *audi-* ‘hear’
- The **past participle stem**, e.g., *audit-* ‘heard [of a thing]’
- The **present participle stem**, e.g., *audien(t)-* ‘hearing [of a person]’

Latin Past Participles

- The past participle stem takes different forms, depending upon verb conjugation:

<i>Verb stem</i>	<i>Conjugation</i>	<i>Participle</i>
ama- 'love'	1	ama-t-us 'loved'
mone- 'warn'	2	moni-t-us 'warned'
duc- 'lead'	3	duc-t-us 'lead'
ced- 'leave'	3 (stem ending in <i>-d</i>)	ces-s-us 'left'
audi- 'hear'	4	audi-t-us 'heard'

Latin Past Participles

- The past participle stem is important because it is found very often in English words derived from Latin.
- One reason: the Latin slang that became Romance contained many intensive verb forms; these are formed from the past participle stem.

Latin Intensive Forms

- *ag-* ‘to set in motion’ vs. *agit-* ‘to set in constant motion’
- *can-* ‘to sing’ vs. *cant-* ‘to sing and play’
- *sal-* ‘to jump up’ vs. *salt-* ‘to attack’
- *duc-* ‘to lead’ vs. *duct-* ‘to lead a line’
- *cap-* ‘to take’ vs. *capt-* ‘to seize’

Latin Past Participles

- Another reason that the Latin past participle stem appears in many English words: it was used to form **agentive nouns** from verbs.
- These used the suffix *-or*, related to English *-er*, as found in the words *singer*, *teacher*, *writer*.

Latin Agentive Forms

- Here are some Latin agentive forms.
- Can you guess their meanings?

amator

monitor

auditor

captor

actor

Latin Past Participles

- Another reason that many Latin bases appear in their past-participle form in English is that the past participle was used to form **action nouns**
- Examples of action nouns are: English *suffering, growth, abuse, departure*.
- Latin action nouns are formed by putting the suffix *-io* on the end of the passive-participle stem.

Latin Action Nouns

verbal base	action noun
CESS 'leave'	<i>cessio</i> 'a giving up'
PAT 'suffer'	<i>passio</i> 'a suffering'
AG 'drive'	<i>actio</i> 'an action'
FAC 'do'	<i>factio</i> 'a doing'
SPIR 'breathe'	<i>spiratio</i> 'a breathing'