

Prefixes · Free resource

## Prefix: *re-*

**Source:** DfE, *English Appendix 1: Spelling* (2013) — Years 3–4 statutory prefix

**Origin:** Latin *re-*, meaning "again" or "back"

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### What it means

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**re-** means **again** or **back**.

*redo* = do **again**

*return* = go **back**

*recycle* = use **again**

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## Where it comes from

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*re-* is one of the oldest Latin prefixes in English, entering through French after 1066. It is extraordinarily productive — it can attach to almost any verb to mean "do that thing again." This is why it's the highest-frequency prefix in English.

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## Statutory examples (Appendix 1, Y3/4)

Word	Meaning
<b>redo</b>	<b>do again</b>
<b>return</b>	<b>go back</b>
<b>refresh</b>	<b>make fresh again</b>
<b>reappear</b>	<b>appear again</b>
<b>rebuild</b>	<b>build again</b>
<b>rewrite</b>	<b>write again</b>
<b>reread</b>	<b>read again</b>
<b>remember</b>	<b>bring back to mind</b>
<b>recent</b>	<b>not long past (from <i>re-</i> + <i>cent-</i> – going back is recent)</b>

## Morpheme matrix

	<b>re-</b>	<b>(nothing)</b>
<b>-do</b>	redo	do
<b>-play</b>	replay	play
<b>-cycle</b>	recycle	cycle
<b>-build</b>	rebuild	build
<b>-appear</b>	reappear	appear
<b>-write</b>	rewrite	write
<b>-arrange</b>	rearrange	arrange
<b>-fill</b>	refill	fill
<b>-use</b>	reuse	use
<b>-turn</b>	return	turn

## Word family

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*re-* + a wide range of verbs:

reconsider · rethink · reorganise · reload · reopen · refund · reimburse · reprint · reproduce ·  
reschedule · reset · restart · restore · retrieve · revise · rewind

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## Common confusions

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**re-** before a vowel sometimes takes a hyphen to avoid misreading:

*re-enter* (not *reenter* — though both are accepted)

*re-educate*

*re-elect*

In most cases, no hyphen is needed: *reread*, *reuse*, *redo*.

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## Classroom activity: the *re-* generator

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Write a base verb on the board. Ask: if I add *re-*, what would it mean? Does that word exist?

*reheat* → heat again ✓

*redo* → do again ✓

*resit* → sit an exam again ✓ (British English for retaking)

*resleep* → sleep again? ✗ (not a standard word — but why not?)

Discuss: *re-* can attach to almost anything — but not everything sounds natural. What makes a *re-* word "stick"?

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## Dictation sentences

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She had to **rewrite** the whole letter because the first version was unclear.

**Return** the book to the library and **refill** your water bottle on the way back.

They **rebuilt** the bridge and **reopened** the road **recently**.

He decided to **reconsider** and **reorganise** the whole project from scratch.

**Reread** the instructions carefully before you **redo** the experiment.

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*Source: DfE English Appendix 1: Spelling (2013). Etymology: Oxford English Dictionary, from Latin re-*