

Latin & Greek Roots · Free resource

Latin and Greek roots – Years 5/6 extension

Year group: 5/6 (extension)

Source: Non-statutory extension to DfE English Appendix 1 (2013), grounded in research showing morphological instruction significantly improves vocabulary and spelling in KS2. *(Source: Kieffer & Lesaux (2007, 2011). Morphological awareness and literacy. Multiple studies.)*

Why teach roots at Year 5/6?

70% of multisyllabic words in English derive from Latin or Greek roots. A child who knows 20 high-frequency roots can decode thousands of words they have never encountered. This is the single highest-leverage vocabulary intervention available in upper KS2.

(Source: Rasinski, T. et al. (2008). The Latin-Greek connection. The Reading Teacher.)

How to teach a root

Name the root and its meaning — write it large on the board

Show 4–6 English words that use it — include at least one the children know

Ask for more — can pupils suggest any others?

Explore the meanings — does knowing the root help you understand each word?

Add to a class "root wall" — visible reference that grows across the year

The 20 most productive roots for KS2

port (Latin: carry)

Word	How it works
transport	carry across (<i>trans-</i> = across)
import	carry into (<i>im-</i> = in)
export	carry out (<i>ex-</i> = out)
portable	able to be carried
report	carry back (<i>re-</i> = back)
support	carry from below (<i>sub-</i> = under)
portfolio	a case for carrying papers (<i>folio</i> = leaf)
airport	where aircraft are carried in

***rupt* (Latin: break)**

Word	How it works
interrupt	break between (<i>inter-</i> = between)
erupt	break out (<i>e-</i> = out)
disrupt	break apart (<i>dis-</i> = apart)
bankrupt	broken finances
corrupt	thoroughly broken (<i>cor-</i> = thoroughly)
abrupt	broken off suddenly
rupture	a breaking

struct (Latin: build)

Word	How it works
construct	build together (<i>con-</i> = together)
instruct	build into (<i>in-</i> = into)
destruction	un-building (<i>de-</i> = undo)
structure	the way something is built
obstruct	build against; block (<i>ob-</i> = against)
reconstruct	build again (<i>re-</i> = again)
infrastructure	the underlying structure

dict (Latin: say)

Word	How it works
predict	say before (<i>pre-</i> = before)
dictate	say (to someone to write down)
contradict	say against (<i>contra-</i> = against)
dictionary	a book of words said/defined
verdict	truth said (<i>ver-</i> = truth)
addict	said to be bound to something
diction	the way of saying words
dedicate	say apart for a purpose

***scrib/script* (Latin: write)**

Word	How it works
describe	write about (<i>de-</i> = about)
inscription	writing cut into stone (<i>in-</i> = into)
prescribe	write before; order in advance
manuscript	hand-written (<i>manus</i> = hand)
subscribe	write under; sign up (<i>sub-</i> = under)
transcript	a written copy (<i>trans-</i> = across)
scripture	holy writings

vis/vid (Latin: see)

Word	How it works
visible	able to be seen
revision	seeing again (<i>re-</i> = again)
video	I see (Latin verb)
evidence	the things you can see for yourself
vision	the act of seeing
supervise	see from above
individual	not divisible; a single seen unit
invisible	not able to be seen

aud (Latin: hear)

Word	How it works
audience	people who hear
audible	able to be heard
audio	relating to hearing
auditorium	a place to hear (a performance)
audition	a hearing (to assess performers)
inaudible	not able to be heard

terr (Latin: land, earth)

Word	How it works
territory	a piece of land
terrain	the character of the land
terrestrial	of the earth
Mediterranean	middle of the land (sea)
terrarium	a glass case for land animals
underground	(related concept; <i>terra</i> → ground)

bio (Greek: life)

Word	How it works
biology	the study of life
biography	a life written (<i>graph</i> = write)
autobiography	one's own life written (<i>auto</i> = self)
antibiotic	against living organisms
biodiversity	variety of life
microbiome	tiny (<i>micro</i>) life community
symbiosis	living together (<i>sym</i> = together)

graph/gram (Greek: write)

Word	How it works
photograph	writing with light (<i>photo</i> = light)
telegraph	writing from afar (<i>tele</i> = far)
autograph	self-writing (<i>auto</i> = self)
paragraph	a distinct written section
diagram	a figure drawn through (<i>dia</i> = through)
programme	a written plan ahead (<i>pro</i> = before)
grammar	the rules of writing/speaking
geography	writing/describing the earth (<i>geo</i> = earth)

phon (Greek: sound)

Word	How it works
telephone	sound from afar (<i>tele</i> = far)
microphone	tiny sound-carrier (<i>micro</i> = small)
phonics	the science of sounds
symphony	sounds together (<i>sym</i> = together)
saxophone	(named after inventor Sax) + <i>phone</i>
homophone	same sound (<i>homo</i> = same)
cacophony	bad sounds (<i>caco</i> = bad)

therm (Greek: heat)

Word	How it works
thermometer	measure of heat (<i>meter</i> = measure)
thermal	relating to heat
thermostat	keeping heat steady (<i>stat</i> = standing)
thermodynamics	heat + movement science
hypothermia	below normal heat (<i>hypo</i> = under)
geothermal	earth heat (<i>geo</i> = earth)

geo (Greek: earth)

Word	How it works
geography	writing about the earth
geology	the study of the earth
geothermal	heat from the earth
geometry	measuring the earth (<i>meter</i> = measure)
geocentric	earth-centred

hydro (Greek: water)

Word	How it works
hydrogen	water-former (<i>gen</i> = produce)
dehydrate	remove (<i>de-</i>) water
hydrant	a water outlet
hydraulic	water-powered
hydroelectric	water electricity
hydroponics	growing plants in water

chron (Greek: time)

Word	How it works
chronological	in order of time
anachronism	wrong time (<i>ana</i> = against)
synchronise	same time (<i>syn</i> = same)
chronicle	a record of events in time
chronic	lasting a long time

micro/macro (Greek: small/large)

Word	How it works
microscope	see tiny things (<i>scope</i> = see)
microphone	tiny sound-carrier
microorganism	tiny living thing
microchip	tiny chip
macroscopic	large enough to see
macroeconomics	large-scale economics

scope (Greek: see, watch)

Word	How it works
telescope	see from far (<i>tele</i> = far)
microscope	see small things
periscope	see around (<i>peri</i> = around)
stethoscope	listen to the chest (<i>stetho</i> = chest)
horoscope	see the hour/time (<i>horo</i> = time)

***bene/bon* (Latin: good)**

Word	How it works
benefit	a good thing done (<i>facio</i> = do)
beneficial	producing good
benevolent	wishing good (<i>vol</i> = wish)
bonus	something good/extra
boon	a good gift (from Old Norse)
benign	kind; not harmful

***phil* (Greek: love)**

Word	How it works
philosophy	love of wisdom (<i>sophi</i> = wisdom)
bibliophile	lover of books (<i>biblio</i> = book)
philanthropist	lover of people (<i>anthrop</i> = human)
Philadelphia	city of brotherly love (<i>adelphos</i> = brother)

aqua (Latin: water)

Word	How it works
aquatic	of the water
aquarium	a water container
aqueduct	a water channel (<i>duct</i> = lead)
aquifer	a water-carrying rock layer

Morpheme matrix – creating a class chart

Use this blank matrix to build word families from any root.

	<i>re-</i>	<i>un-/in-</i>	<i>de-</i>	<i>con-/com-</i>	<i>ex-</i>	<i>-ion</i>
PORT	report	–	–	–	export	
RUPT	–	–	–	–	erupt	ru
STRUCT	reconstruct	–	destroy	construct	–	dest
DICT	–	–	–	–	–	di
SCRIB	–	–	describe	–	–	des
VIS	revision	invisible	–	–	–	v

Add more roots and suffixes as pupils suggest them.

Sources:

Kieffer, M.J. & Lesaux, N.K. (2007, 2011). Multiple studies on morphological awareness and literacy outcomes.

Rasinski, T. et al. (2008). The Latin-Greek connection. *The Reading Teacher*.

Etymology verified against Oxford English Dictionary and Online Etymology Dictionary (etymonline.com).

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