Know (10) More Words

DIGGING UP THE ROOTS  By Suzanne Bilyeu

For standardized tests and research papers, it’s important to know how to spell and use words correctly. But why should you care about the origin and history of a word? Knowing such “word trivia” might help if you ever appear on Jeopardy! But what practical, everyday use does it have? Consider this: More than 60 percent of English words have roots derived from Latin and Greek words. Throughout the English language, Latin and Greek roots, suffixes, and prefixes appear again and again, and in different combinations. Once you know what the roots mean, it will be easier to learn and remember the meanings of new words. Check out the 10 words below, which are rooted in Latin and/or Greek. Each is followed by a list of words that have a “shared root.”

antecedent (an-tuh-SEE-duhnt) noun 1. a preceding event, condition, or cause 2. a predecessor, especially a model for later developments

The Root: When you see ante-, think “before” or “in front of.” The Latin word antecedere combines ante (before) with cedere (to go).

Sharing a Root: antechamber, antebellum, antedate, anteroom; precede, recede, secede

audible (AW-duh-buhl) adjective heard, or capable of being heard

The Root: The Latin audire means “to hear.”

Sharing a Root: audience, audio, audit, audition, auditory

bellicose (BEH-ih-cohs) adjective inclined to start quarrels or wars; warlike

The Root: Ancient Romans had a strikingly similar word: bellicosus. The root is bellum—the Latin word for “war.”

Sharing a Root: antebellum, belligerence, belligerent

benevolent (buh-NEH-vuh-luhnt) adjective characterized by good will; doing good

The Roots: If you are benevolent toward others, you could be considered a well-wisher. The word comes from the Latin bene (good/well) plus volens (wishing).

Sharing a Root: benediction, benefactor, beneficent, beneficial; malevolent

chronicle (KRAH-nih-kuhl) noun 1. a continuous historical account of events arranged in order of time without commentary or analysis 2. a narrative

The Root: It’s about time—or chronos, in Greek.

Sharing a Root: chronograph, chronic, chronology, chronometer, synchronous

circumscribe (SIR-cum-skryb) verb 1. to constrict range or activity clearly and definitely 2. to define or mark off clearly 3. to draw a circle around

The Roots: This word combines the Latin roots circum (around) and scribere (to write or draw).

Sharing a Root: circumference, circumlocution, circumspect, circumstance, circumvent; inscribe, prescribe, proscribe, scribe, scribble, script, scripture, scrivener

dictum (DIK-tuhm) noun 1. a noteworthy statement or pronouncement 2. an observation regarded as authoritative

The Root: The Latin verb dicere (to say) gives us several words that have to do with speaking or telling.

Sharing a Root: benediction, contradic, dictate, dictator, dictum, dictionary, malediction, predict

epilogue (EH-puh-log) noun 1. concluding section of a literary work or musical composition 2. a final speech or scene of a play, commenting on the main action

The Roots: The Greek epi is a catchall preposition that can mean on, at, besides, or after. The suffix –logue comes from logos, a form of the Greek legien (to speak).

Sharing a Root: epicenter, epidermis, epigram, epise; catalogue, dialogue, ideologue, monologue
**generic** (juh-NEHR-ik) adjective
1. relating to or characteristic of a whole group or class
2. having a nonproprietary name (as in a generic drug)

*The Root:* The Latin word genus can refer to birth, kind, or class. In English, genus refers to a class, kind, or group—especially of plants or animals.

*Sharing a Root:* degenerate, degenerative, gender, general, generate, generation, generous, genesis

**philanthropic** (fih-luhn-THRAH-pik) adjective
1. promoting human welfare; humanitarian
2. giving or receiving aid from funds set aside for humanitarian purposes

*The Roots:* The prefix phil– and the suffix -phile come from the Greek philos, which means “dear” or “friendly.” The Greek word philanthropos—“loving people”—incorporates the word anthropos, which means “human being.”

*Sharing a Root:* audiphile, bibliophile, philharmonic, philology, philosopher, philosophy, anthropoid, anthropology, misanthropic

### SKILL DRILL

**BELOW ARE SIX ADDITIONAL ROOTS/SUFFIXES/PREFIXES. USE THEM—ALONG WITH ROOTS YOU LEARNED IN THE VOCABULARY LESSON—TO DETERMINE THE CORRECT ANSWERS.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>biblio</th>
<th>contra</th>
<th>graph</th>
<th>meter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>book</td>
<td>against</td>
<td>written or drawn</td>
<td>measure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>contra</td>
<td>location</td>
<td>speech</td>
<td>ology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>location</td>
<td>speech</td>
<td>study of</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. A *bibliophile* collects ________.
   (A) cat figurines
   (B) baby bibs
   (C) books
   (D) old auto parts

2. An *audiometer* is used ________.
   (A) to measure applause
   (B) to test hearing
   (C) to test eyesight
   (D) to test car batteries

3. A *chronograph* tells you ________.
   (A) the temperature
   (B) the time
   (C) the barometric pressure
   (D) how fast you are going

4. *Circumlocution* means ________.
   (A) going around in circles
   (B) traveling around the world
   (C) evasive speech
   (D) a round-trip ticket

5. A *bibliography* is ________.
   (A) a list of complaints
   (B) a list of books and other written works
   (C) a handwriting analysis
   (D) a directory of librarians

6. Anthropology involves ________.
   (A) digging up ancient artifacts
   (B) studying human culture and social relations
   (C) studying spiders and their habitats
   (D) building and maintaining ant farms

7. An *audiophile* is most likely to have ________.
   (A) a state-of-the-art sound system
   (B) an aversion to music
   (C) a garbage compactor
   (D) a collection of antique cars

8. To *contradict* a statement is to ________.
   (A) state the opposite
   (B) agree with it
   (C) make fun of it
   (D) take a neutral position