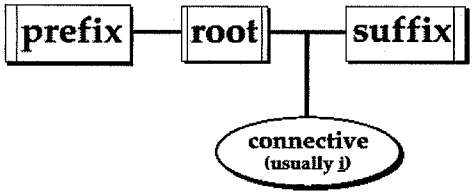
Tracking Word Origins

Latin Words: 55%

General Trends



usually multisyllabic words

few vowel teams besides ai: assail, retain

Common Structures

connectives i, u, and ul: mediate, monument, muscular, solitude

ti, si, and ci = /sh/: notation, racial

tu = /choo/: eventual, fortunate, spatula

ture = /cher/: adventure, furniture, nature

chameleon prefixes: attention, collapse, difference, illegal

ct, pt: act, tempt

soft c before e or i: certain, city

Anglo-Saxon Words: 20%

General Trends

usually one syllable words

numbers 1-1000: one, twenty

basic color words: brown, green

simple body parts: arm, throat

most sight words: could, do

most vowel teams: boat, toil

short words with silent letters: doubt, know

Common Structures

ff-ll-ss words: cliff, tall, grass

ch = /ch/: chair, chin, church

ck, tch, and dge: trick, witch, grudge

th in short words: than, thin, thick

k in short words: kelp, kill, kind

wh: when, whisper

ng: hang, song, sting

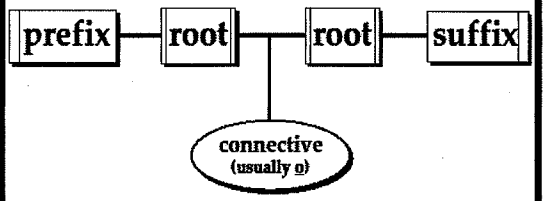
wr: wrist, write

wild/old words: child, pint, post, told

2 syllable consonant-le words: bubble, fizzle, trickle

Greek Words: 11%

General Trends



often involve science, school, or the arts

Common Structures

connective o: democrat, photograph

y = i: cyclone, gym, myth, type

ph = /f/: phobia, phonics, typhoon

ch = /k/: monarch, orchid, school

k in longer words: kilometer, kinesthetic

th in longer words: athlete, thyroid

silent initial p: pneumonia, psychology

ending -ology: archaeology, biology

ending -ic: charismatic, chronic, music

Common Prefixes			
PREFIX	% of All Prefixed Words	MEANING	EXAMPLES
Un-	26	Not, opposite of	unaware, unbelievable, unsure
Re-	14	Again	redo, replay
Im-, in-, il-, ir-	11	Not	impossible, incapable, illogical, irregular
Dis-	7	Not, opposite of	dishonest, disgraceful, discover
En-, em-	4	Cause to	enable, emblaze
Non-	4	Not	nonstick, nonfiction, nonexistent
In-, im-	3	In, into	inject
Over-	3	Too much	overtime, overeat
Mis-	3	Wrongly	misunderstand, misuse
Sub-	3	Under	subsurface, subway
Pre-	3	Before	prepay, preschool
Inter-	3	Between	international, interact
Fore-	3	Before	forethought
De-	2	Opposite of	decaffeinated, dehydrate
Trans-	2	Across	transatlantic
Super-	1	Above	superhero, supermodel
Semi-	1	Half	semiannual, semicolon
Anti-	1	Against	antiwar, antisocial
Mid-	1	Middle	midyear, midnight
Under-	1	Too little	underweight, underpaid
All others	3		

Top 20 prefixes from Carroll, J. B., Davies, P., & Richman, B. (1971). The American heritage world frequency book. *Boston: Houghten Mifflin; as cited in White, Sowell, & Yanagihara, 1989.*

Common Suffixes			
SUFFIX	% OF ALL SUFFIXED WORDS	PART OF SPEECH	EXAMPLES
-s, -es	31	Plural of noun	cats, boxes
-ed	20	Past tense of verb	sailed
-ing	14	Progressive tense of verb	jumping, racing
-ly	7	Usually an adverb; sometimes an adjective	slowly, lovely
-er, -or (agent)	4	Noun (agent)	runner, professor
-ion, -tion, -ation, -ition	4	Noun	action, transition, vacation
-able, -ible	2	Adjective	lovable, incredible
-al, -ial	1	Adjective	global, logical, partial
-y	1	Adjective	funny
-ness	1	Abstract noun	kindness
-ity, -ty	1	Noun	activity
-ment	1	Noun	merriment
-ic	1	Adjective	historic
-ous, -eous, -ious	1	Adjective	hideous, spacious
-en	1	Verb	quicken, thicken
-er (comparative)	1	Adjective	bigger
-ive, -ative, -tive	1	Adjective	alternative, pensive
-ful	1	Adjective	wonderful
-less	1	Adjective	effortless
-est	1	Adjective	strongest
All others	7		

Top 20 suffixes from Carroll, J. B., Davies, P., & Richman, B. (1971). The American heritage world frequency book. ***Boston:*** *Houghten Mifflin; as cited in White, Sowell, & Yanagihara, 1989.*

Common Greek and Latin Roots			
ROOT	ORIGIN	MEANING	EXAMPLES
aud	Latin	Hear	Auditorium, audition, audience, audible, audiovisual
astro	Greek	Star	Astronaut, astronomy, asterisk, asteroid, astrology
bio	Greek	Life	Biology, biography, biochemistry
cept	Latin	Take	Intercept, accept, reception
dict	Latin	Speak or tell	Dictation, dictate, predict, contradict, dictator
duct	Latin	Lead	Conduct, induct
geo	Greek	Earth	Geography, geology, geometry, geophysics
graph	Greek	Write	Autograph, biography, photograph
ject	Latin	Throw	Eject, reject, projectile, inject
meter	Greek	Measure	Thermometer, barometer, centimeter, diameter
min	Latin	Little or small	Miniature, minimum, minimal
mit or mis	Latin	Send	Mission, transmit, missile, dismiss, submit
ped	Latin	Foot	Pedal, pedestal, pedestrian
phon	Greek	Sound	Telephone, symphony, microphone, phonics, phoneme, phonograph
port	Latin	Carry	Transport, portable, import, export, porter
rupt	Latin	Break	Disrupt, erupt, rupture, interrupt, bankrupt
scrib or script	Latin	Write	Scribble, scribe, inscribe, describe, prescribe
spect	Latin	See	Inspect, suspect, respect, spectacle, spectator
struct	Latin	Build or form	Construct, destruct, instruct, structure
tele	Greek	From afar	Telephone, telegraph, teleport
tract	Latin	Pull	Traction, tractor, attract, subtract, extract
vers	Latin	Turn	Reverse, inverse

Diamond, L., & Gutlohn, L. (2006). Vocabulary handbook. *Berkeley, CA: Consortium on Reading Excellence; Ebbers, S. (2005).* Language links to Latin, Greek, and Anglo-Saxon: Increasing spelling, word recognition, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension through roots and affixes. *Presented at The University of Texas, Austin, TX; and Stahl, S., & Kapinus, B. (2001).* Word power: What every educator needs to know about teaching vocabulary. *Washington, DC: National Education Association.*