

Prefixes

General guidance on the use of prefixes

Prefix	Guidance	Example
anti-	Use a hyphen with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • letters; • names; • words beginning with 'i'; • two-word compounds used as adjectives. 	anti-HBs, anti-Bitis-Echis-Naja serum, anti-icteric, anti-gas gangrene serum
co-	A hyphen can be used as an aid to reading if the following word starts with a vowel. Do not insert a hyphen into well-established words. See examples.	co-ordinate, co-author, co-exist, co-intervention comorbidity, coincidence, coalesce, coercion
inter-	Use a hyphen for compounds that are not used commonly. Otherwise, do not use a hyphen, even if the following word starts with 'r'.	inter-group, international, interrelate
intra-	Use a hyphen if following word starts with 'a'.	intra-abdominal, intra-acinar
meta-	Use a hyphen if following word starts with a vowel.	meta-analysis, metastasis
micro-	Either joined to the word it modifies or uses a hyphen (it does not stand alone)	microbiology, microcirculation, microfilaria, micro-organism (UK spelling), microorganism (US spelling)
mid-	Use a hyphen for all words that have 'mid-' as a prefix, except for common words that are never hyphenated (e.g. midnight).	mid-urethral, mid-term, mid-treatment midnight, midwife
mini-	Either joined to the word it modifies or uses a hyphen (it does not stand alone)	minitracheostomy, mini-mental state examination
multi-	Either joined to the word it modifies or uses a hyphen (it does not stand alone)	multicentre, multi-agency
non-	Hyphenate if 'non' qualifies more than one word. Use of hyphen is optional if 'non' qualifies only one word. Do not use a hyphen with Latin phrases. Note: Latin phrases should be avoided where possible.	non-insulin dependent, non-profit making non-smoker, nonviolent materia non medica, non sequitur
post-	Either joined to the word it modifies or uses a hyphen if the following word starts with 't' (it does not stand alone)	postgraduate, postorbital, postoperative, post-treatment
pre-	A hyphen is normally used when the	pre-eclampsia, pre-embryo, pre-exist, pre-exposure, pre-install, pre-industrial

Prefix	Guidance	Example
	<p>following word starts with 'e' or 'i'.</p> <p>Established combinations are generally one word (except when the word begins with an 'e' or an 'i').</p> <p>In other combinations, the hyphen is not necessary but is freely used if the compound is one made for the occasion (might be better to rephrase), or if any peculiarity in its form might prevent its elements from being instantly recognized.</p>	<p>prearranged, prenatal, preoccupy, preschool, pre-empt</p> <p>pre-medication, pre-tax, pre-war</p>
re-	<p>Use a hyphen if the following word starts with 'e'.</p> <p>Rephrase when there would be confusion with another word.</p>	<p>re-edit, re-educate, re-establish, re-enter, re-enlist</p> <p>re-cover (cover again) and recover (get better)</p>
self-	<p>All compound words with 'self' as a prefix should be hyphenated.</p>	<p>self-limited self-confidence</p>
semi-	<p>Use a hyphen if the following word starts with 'i'.</p>	<p>semi-independent, semicolon</p>
sub-	<p>Use a hyphen if the following word starts with 'b'.</p>	<p>sub-basal, sub-breed (note: sub-Saharan is one exception)</p>
un-	<p>Words starting with 'un-' are generally one word.</p> <p>Rephrase or use a hyphen when there would be confusion with another word.</p>	<p>unnoticeable, unopened, unpaid, unpick</p> <p>unionized (with a union) and un-ionized (without ions)</p>