***Common Word Roots***

Expand Your Vocabulary by Studying Greek and Latin Word Roots

By Richard Nordquist

A **root**, as its name suggests, **is a word or word part from which other words grow**, usually through the addition of prefixes and suffixes. The root of the word vocabulary, for example, is voc, a Latin root meaning "word" or "name." This root also appears in the words advocacy, convocation, evocative, vocal, and vociferous.

Understanding the meanings of the common word roots can help us deduce the meanings of new words that we encounter. But be careful: root words can have more than one meaning and various shades of meaning. In addition, words that look similar may derive from different roots. So when you meet up with a new word, be sure to rely on a dictionary to check its definition.

The table below defines and illustrates 30 of the most common Greek and Latin roots. The letter in parentheses indicates whether the root word is Greek (G) or Latin (L).

Word Roots

ROOT MEANING EXAMPLES

-ast(er)-(G) star asteroid, astronomy terr- (L) earth, terrain, territory

-audi- (L) hear audible, audience vac- (L) empty, evacuate, vacate

-auto- (G) self automatic, autopsy vid/vis- (L) see, visible, video

-bene- (L) good benefit, benign tele- (G) far off telecast, telephone

-bio- (G) life biography, biology

-chrono- (G) time chronic, synchronize

-dict- (L) say dictate, diction

-duc- (L) lead, make deduce, produce

-gen- (L) give birth gene, generate

-geo- (G) earth geography, geology

-graph- (G) write autograph, graph

-jur-, -jus- (L) law jury, justice

-log-, -logue- (L) thought logic, obloquy

-luc- (L) light lucid, translucent

-man(u)- (L) hand manual, manure

-mand-, -mend- (L) order demand, recommend

-mis-, -mit- (L) send missile, transmission

-omni- (L) all omnivorous

-path- (G) feel empathy, pathetic

-phil- (G) love philosophy, bibliophile

-phon- (G) sound phonics, telephone

-photo- (G) light photograph, photon

-port- (L) carry export, portable

-qui(t)- (L) quiet, rest acquit, tranquil

-scrib-, -script- (L) write ascribe, script

-sens-, -sent- (L) feel resent, sensitive