**Negative prefixes**

Negative statements are the opposite of affirmative statements. In English, one way to make negative statements is by adding negative prefixes to nouns, adjectives, and verbs. Here are some English negative prefixes: *a*-, *dis*-, *il*-, im-, *in-*, *ir*-, *non*-, *un*-.

Words that take *a-* as a negative prefix always begin with a [consonant](http://www.elearnenglishlanguage.com/blog/learn-english/pronunciation/consonants/).

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **affirmative** |  | **negative** |
| political | apolitical |
| sexual | asexual |
| theist | atheist |

Words that take *dis*- as a negative prefix may begin with a [vowel](http://www.elearnenglishlanguage.com/blog/learn-english/pronunciation/vowels/) or a consonant.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **affirmative** |  | **negative** |
| agree | disagree |
| comfort | discomfort |
| mount | dismount |
| orient | disorient |

Words that take *il*- as a negative prefix always begin with the letter *l*.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **affirmative** |  | **negative** |
| legal | illegal |
| legible | illegible |
| literate | illiterate |
| logical | illogical |

Words that take *im*- as a negative prefix always begin with the letter *m* or *p*.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **affirmative** |  | **negative** |
| mobile | immobile |
| moral | immoral |
| perfect | imperfect |
| possible | impossible |

Words that take *in*- as a negative prefix can begin with a vowel (except *i* or *u*) or a consonant.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **affirmative** |  | **negative** |
| accurate | inaccurate |
| eligible | ineligible |
| organic | inorganic |
| decent | indecent |
| sane | insane |

**Note:** There are many words that begin with in- that are not words with a negative prefix. For example:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **word** |  | **does not mean** |
| incline | ~~not cline~~ |
| indulge | ~~not dulge~~ |
| insist | ~~not sist~~ |
| invoke | ~~not voke~~ |

Words that take *ir*- as a negative prefix always begin with the letter *r*.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **affirmative** |  | **negative** |
| rational | irrational |
| reconcilable | irreconcilable |
| regular | irregular |
| resistible | irresistible |

Words that take *non*- as a negative prefix may begin with a vowel or a consonant.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **affirmative** |  | **negative** |
| conformist | nonconformist |
| essential | nonessential |
| fiction | nonfiction |
| sense | nonsense |

Words that take *un*- as a negative prefix may begin with a vowel or consonant.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **affirmative** |  | **negative** |
| able | unable |
| interesting | uninteresting |
| usual | unusual |
| comfortable | uncomfortable |
| helpful | unhelpful |
| prepared | unprepared |

**Note:** Remember, not all words that appear to have a negative prefix are negative.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **word** |  | **does not mean** |
| alike | ~~not like~~ |
| discuss | ~~not cuss~~ |
| universe | ~~not iverse~~ |
| illuminate | ~~not luminate~~ |
| important | ~~not portant~~ |
| involve | ~~not volve~~ |
| irrigate | ~~not rigate~~ |