

The Latin words for one to ten

one: *unus* (or *una* or *unum*) two: *duo* (or *duae* or *duo*)
three: *tres* (or *tria*) four: *quattuor* five: *quinque* six: *sex*
seven: *septem* eight: *octem* nine: *novem* ten: *decem*

Note these are cardinal numbers. We will look at ordinal numbers (first, second, third, and so on) in a later exercise.

Knowing the origin of these words may help you to spell them correctly.

Exercise 1

Write sentences to show the meaning of the following words, which have all come into English from the Latin words for the first ten ordinal numbers:

1 unite

(2)

2 triangular

(2)

3 decade

(2)

4 septet

(2)

5 octagon

(2)

6 quins

(2)

Exercise 2

These five words all come from *unus* (or *una* or *unum*), the Latin word for one. Make notes on what they mean and work out how they relate to 'oneness', using a good dictionary if you need to. Finally check that you can spell them all.

1 union

(2)

2 unit

(2)

3 unison

(2)

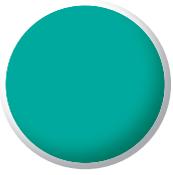
4 unique

(2)

5 unisex

(2)

September, October, November and December were originally the seventh, eighth, ninth and tenth months, hence their names. Then Roman emperors Julius Caesar and Caesar Augustus put July and August, named after themselves, into the summer. That pushed the last four months of the year back to ninth, tenth, eleventh and twelfth positions.



Latin prepositions and adverbs

Many English words have their roots in Latin, the language used by the Romans.

A prefix is a letter or group of letters that forms the beginning of a word.

Knowing some Latin prefixes – which are often prepositions or adverbs – will help you to unravel the meaning and spelling of many English words.

Trans is the Latin word for across. Translate means to move meaning *across* to another language. A transatlantic airline carries passengers *across* the ocean to and from America.

Super is the Latin word for above or over. A supervisor has a position of responsibility *over* others. A supersized chocolate bar is *above* all the others because it is large.

Ante is the Latin word for before. An antenatal class helps parents *before* the birth of their baby. An anteroom is an area that you wait in *before* you go into a more important room.

Exercise

1 Write the meaning of these words as briefly and clearly as you can.

transfusion: _____ (1)

transfer: _____ (1)

transit: _____ (1)

insuperable: _____ (1)

superfluous: _____ (1)

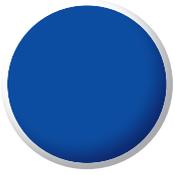
superimpose: _____ (1)

antepenultimate: _____ (1)

anterior: _____ (1)

2 Learn the spellings of these eight words. Then, working with a partner, take it in turns to test each other, or ask an adult to test you.

The prefix ante- means *before* (anteroom, antenatal). Do not confuse it with anti- which means *against* (antibiotics, anti-foxhunting).



Words starting with gn-

Some (gnat, gnash, gnaw) of the small group of English words that begin with a silent g- date back to Old English, the language spoken in Britain before the Norman invasion of 1066 which, eventually, merged Old English with Latin-based French.

Others come from Greek. Gnosis, for example, means knowledge about spiritual truths.

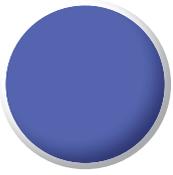
The word gnocchi – potato dumplings – comes from Italian and gnu – another word for a wildebeest – comes from Xhosa, which is an African language.

Exercise

Using a dictionary to help you, fill in the gaps in the following sentences. Each answer is a word beginning with gn-.

- 1 We watched the shadow created by the _____ on the sundial as our watches crept towards midday. (1)
- 2 My granny collects colourful plastic _____ which sit in groups in her garden as if they were chatting. (1)
- 3 We took our bird books when we went to America and were delighted to spot lots of _____. (1)
- 4 Very elderly people sometimes have _____ hands, especially if they suffer from arthritis. (1)
- 5 The lowest point in your jaw is known to doctors and anatomists as the _____. (1)
- 6 _____ anxiety is common before exams and tests, especially if you should have revised but haven't! (1)

A metre is a unit of measurement (100 centimetres or 1000 millimetres) or another name for rhythm in, for example, poetry. (American English spells it meter.) In British English a meter is a measuring device such as a water meter.



Words ending in -mn

A handful of English words end with **mn** – but the **n** is silent. Autumn and column are examples.

However, when these words become another part of speech or take another form – autumnal or columnist, for instance – you can often hear the **n**, which might help you to remember that it's there.

Exercise 1

Write the words ending in **-mn** that match these definitions:

- 1 A song used in churches and school assemblies: _____ (1)
- 2 To express strong disapproval: _____ (1)
- 3 To send to hell or write something or someone off: _____ (1)
- 4 Very serious: _____ (1)
- 5 Paint or draw: _____ (1)
- 6 To regard scornfully: _____ (1)

Exercise 2

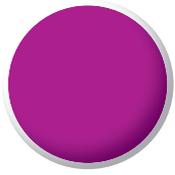
Now write your own definitions for these words:

- 1 solemnity

- 2 damnation

- 3 hymnal

- 4 condemnatory



Words ending in -cious

Many English adjectives end in **c-i-o-u-s**, which sounds like 'sherss' in speech: precious, gracious, vicious, for example. If you can learn the sequence of letters (remember: **Call In On Uncle Sam** – if it helps) it will ensure that you can spell quite a lot of tricky words correctly.

Exercise 1

Fill in the gaps in these sentences with words ending in **-cious**. The words you need are listed below.

suspicious audacious ferocious atrocious fallacious capacious

- 1 That _____ dog has bitten so many postmen that now no one will deliver to the house. (1)
- 2 It is _____ to assume that everything you see in the night sky is a star. (1)
- 3 _____ weather for the whole of the Christmas holiday meant that we spent a lot of time indoors reading books. (1)
- 4 I knew the policeman was _____ because he questioned the girl who lives on the corner three times. (1)
- 5 The boot in our new car is much less _____ than the one in our old car, which was generally bigger. (1)
- 6 Professional divers have to be much more _____ than most of us are. (1)

Exercise 2

Find six more words ending in **-cious** and put them in sentences of your own to show that you understand their meaning.

- 1 _____ (2)
- 2 _____ (2)
- 3 _____ (2)
- 4 _____ (2)
- 5 _____ (2)
- 6 _____ (2)