

THE FLATMATES

Language point:
Prefixes 2



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BBC Learning English – The Flatmates

The Flatmates – Prefixes 2

You can see this language point online at:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/flatmates/episode105/languagepoint.shtml>

You can change the meaning of some words by adding **prefixes** (extra letters at the beginning of words). For example, you can change the meaning of **'excited'** to mean **'too excited'** by adding **'over'** to the beginning of it to make **'overexcited'**. When Alice said 'I **overreacted**' she meant that she had **acted** or responded **too strongly** to the situation.

Here are some common prefixes and their meanings:

Too much, very, extreme:

over - too much

protective – **overprotective (adj)**: wanting to protect someone too much, especially a child

spend – **overspend (v)**: spend more money than you should

due – **overdue (adj)**: very late or not done when it was expected

hyper - very, extremely

active – **hyperactive (adj)**: very excitable, or having more energy than is usual

sensitive – **hypersensitive (adj)**: very sensitive, easily upset by things people say or do to you

market – **hypermarket (n)**: very large supermarket

ultra - extreme, beyond

conservative – **ultra-conservative (adj)**: extremely conventional or old-fashioned

modern – **ultra-modern (adj)**: very modern or contemporary

trendy – **ultra-trendy (adj)**: extremely fashionable

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One, two, three, four:

mono – one

monolingual (adj): speak or write in only one language

monotone (n): a way of speaking that is very boring because your voice doesn't go up or down or get louder or quieter but just stays at the same pitch and volume all the time

monopoly (n): business that has complete control of a product or service because it is the only company that provides that product or service

bi - two

bilingual (adj): able to speak two languages

bicentenary (n): the day two hundred years after an important event

bisexual (n, adj): someone who is sexually attracted to both men and women

tri - three

triangle (n): three-sided shape

triathlon (n): race with three sporting aspects – running, swimming and biking

tricolour (n): flag with three colours

triplet (n): one of three babies born at the same time to the same mother

quad – four

quadrilateral (n): four-sided shape

quadruple (v): become four times as big, or to multiply a number or amount by four

quadruplet (n): one of four babies born at the same time to the same mother

Using hyphens:

Most words which are created with prefixes **don't use hyphens**. However, some do, for example, **co** (co-operate), **pro** (pro-government) and **non** (non-starter).

Some words with prefixes are hyphenated and other words with the same prefix aren't. For example, **co-star** and **coexist** or **multilayered** and **multi-purpose**. There's no hard and fast rule why this is the case. Use a good English-English dictionary to help you.

Vocabulary:

I flew off the handle

I got very angry

overreacted

responded with too much, unnecessary or inappropriate emotion

badly shaken

very upset about or affected by something

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