

LANGUAGE COURSE

Esperanto Word-Building

Roots, endings, prefixes, suffixes and compounds: how Esperanto words are built, taken apart and checked.

10 Chapters

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Generated with Claude

ESPERANTO WORD-BUILDING

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🧱 Roots and Endings — Radikoj kaj finaĵoj

Esperanto Grammar 1 gave you the idea in one chapter: you learn a root once and make the rest. This course is the training for it. This first chapter lays the foundation: what a root is, what an ending does to it, how to read a dictionary entry, and which words are not built at all.

THE IDEA IN A BOX

A word is **root + ending**, and affixes go in between. The root carries the meaning; the ending says how the word is used in a sentence. Learn the root, and every ending gives you a new word.

One root, four jobs

Take the root **dank-**. On its own it means *thanks*. Add an ending and it takes a job:

WORD	PARTS	JOB	MEANING (REVO)
danko	**dank** + **-o**	noun	a word or gesture of thanks (**dankon!** thank you!)
danki	**dank** + **-i**	verb (infinitive)	to thank
danka	**dank** + **-a**	adjective	thankful, grateful
danke	**dank** + **-e**	adverb	thankfully; because of

The verb then takes its tense ending in place of **-i**: **dankas** (thanks), **dankis** (thanked), **dankos** (will thank). The noun takes **-j** and **-n**: **dankoj** (thanks, plural), **dankon** (thanks, as an object). Nothing else changes: the root stays the same.

Why this matters

In English, "thank", "thanks", "thankful" and "thankfully" have to be learned as four items. In Esperanto, you learn **dank-** once and the endings do the rest. The skill this course builds is doing

the same with the dozens of affixes and with new roots.

Reading a dictionary entry

The online dictionary **Reta Vortaro** (ReVo) organises its entries by root. Its headword shows the root and the ending of the main form separated by a slash, so the entry for *to work* appears as **labor/i**. The root is **labor-**, and the entry then lists its family:

WORD	MEANING
labori	to work
laboro	work, a task
laboristo, laborulo	a manual worker, a labourer
laborema	hardworking
mallaborema	lazy
kunlabori, kunlaboro	to collaborate, collaboration
senlabora	idle, unemployed

You cannot yet make all of these. By the end of the course you will be able to build every one of them from **labor-** and take them apart again. For now, notice how the dictionary groups them: you look up the root, not each separate word.

The asterisk

In ReVo some headwords begin with an asterisk (***danki**, ***ripozi**). In the entries I read, **ripoz-** pointed to a reference called UV, which looks like the core vocabulary list in the *Fundamento*. I did not find ReVo's own explanation of the asterisk, so check its help page before relying on this reading.

Not every form is listed

The rule of Esperanto is that you may put any ending on any root. A dictionary does not list every possible result. ReVo's entry for **ripoz-** (rest) lists **ripozi** (to rest), **ripozo** (a rest, a break) and **ripozejo** (a place of rest), among others, but no separate **ripoza** or **ripoze**. A reader would still understand them as "of rest" and "at rest", but a careful writer asks whether a form is established before using it.

YOU FIND	WHAT TO DO
The form is listed	Use the dictionary's meaning.
The form is not listed but the root and ending are clear	You can usually understand it. Before writing it yourself, check whether a listed word already says what you mean.
The meaning seems different from the root + ending	Look it up, because it may be a fixed word with its own sense.

Words with no ending

A few small words are complete as they stand and take no ending: the article **la**, conjunctions like **kaj** (and) and **sed** (but), the negative **ne**, and most prepositions, such as **al** (to) and **en** (in). These are not built and cannot be taken apart. Some can still be used as building material: **kunlabori** (to collaborate) is made with **kun** (with) and **senlabora** (idle) with **sen** (without). Chapter 8 returns to this.

Note also **danke al** (thanks to), a preposition made from the adverb **danke**, and **ne dankinde** ("don't mention it"), where **dankinda** means *deserving thanks*.

📖 A Tiny Dialogue — Mallonga dialogo

*Read it, then find the root **dank-** and **help-** in each line.*

Dankon pro la helpo

— Dankon pro la helpo!

— Ne dankinde. Mi ĝoje helpas.

— Vi estas tre helpema. Mi dankas vin.

▼ Show a translation

"Thank you for the help!" "Not at all. I'm glad to help." "You are very helpful. I thank you."

Here **helpema** is built from **help-** with the suffix **-em-** (inclined to), which Chapter 5 teaches. Try to guess it from the context first.

🖍️ Try It Yourself — Ekzercoj

Say the answer first, then click to check.

1. Give the root and the part of speech: *danko, danki, danka, danke*.

▼ Show answer

The root is **dank-** in all four. **danko** noun, **danki** verb (infinitive), **danka** adjective, **danke** adverb.

2. Give the root of each: *dankas, dankoj, dankan, dankajn*.

▼ Show answer

dank- each time. The extra letters are the verb ending **-as**, the plural **-j**, the object **-n**, and both together.

3. From the root **help-**, make the verb "to help" and the noun "help".

▼ Show answer

helpi and **helpo**.

4. From the root **kant-** (sing), make "to sing" and "a song". Then say "I sang" and "I will sing".

▼ Show answer

kanti (to sing), **kanto** (a song); **Mi kantis** (I sang), **Mi kantos** (I will sing).

5. How does ReVo show the root of *to work* in its headword?

▼ Show answer

With a slash between the root and the ending: **labor/i**.

6. Which of these needs no ending, and why: *kaj, libro, al, vidi*?

▼ Show answer

kaj and **al** are small words (a conjunction and a preposition) that stand as they are. **libro** and **vidi** are root + ending.

7. sen means "without". Guess the meaning of **senlabora**.

▼ Show answer

"Without work": idle or unemployed.

8. In *Mi dankas vin*, find the verb, its root, and the object.

▼ Show answer

The verb is **dankas** (root **dank-**, present tense **-as**); the object is **vin**, marked with **-n**.

9. dankinda means "deserving thanks". What does **ne dankinde** say to someone who thanks you?

▼ Show answer

It is a polite reply meaning "not worth thanking", that is, "don't mention it" or "you're welcome".

10. You meet a new word, **ripozejo**. Write the three steps you follow to understand it.

▼ Show answer

Remove the ending (**-o**, a noun); find the root and any affix (**ripoz-** rest + **-ej-** place); then check the dictionary: ReVo gives "a place where one rests", and also "a grave".

Words used in this chapter

radiko root · **finaĵo** ending · **danki** thank · **helpi** help · **labori** work · **ripozi** rest · **kanti** sing · **vortaro** dictionary · **ĝoje** gladly · **sen** without · **kun** with

Coming up in Chapter 2: Opposites and Reversals. The prefix **mal-** and its relatives **re-**, **for-** and **ek-**.

↔️ Opposites and Reversals — Kontraŭaĵoj

Four prefixes change a word's direction rather than its type. ***mal-*** *turns a word into its opposite,* ***re-*** *sends it back or does it again,* ***for-*** *sends it away and* ***ek-*** *starts it. They go at the front of a root, ahead of everything else.*

THE IDEA IN A BOX

A prefix goes before the root and changes its meaning, not its part of speech. The ending still decides the job: **longa** and **mallonga** are both adjectives, **fermi** and **malfermi** are both verbs.

mal-: the logical opposite

The Reta Vortaro defines **mal-** as giving the idea that is logically opposite to the root. It works on words of every kind:

WORD	OPPOSITE	PARTS
longa long	**mallonga** short	**mal** + **long** + **a**
plena full	**malplena** empty	**mal** + **plen** + **a**
utila useful	**malutila** useless	**mal** + **util** + **a**
dekstre on the right	**maldekstre** on the left	**mal** + **dekstr** + **e**
supre above	**malsupre** below	**mal** + **supr** + **e**
lumo light	**mallumo** darkness	**mal** + **lum** + **o**
fermi close	**malfermi** open	**mal** + **ferm** + **i**
kovri cover	**malkovri** uncover	**mal** + **kovr** + **i**

WORD	OPPOSITE	PARTS
aperi appear	**malaperi** disappear	**mal** + **aper** + **i**

These pairs all come from the dictionary's own list. The everyday adjectives work the same way: **bona / malbona** (good / bad), **granda / malgranda** (big / small), **juna / maljuna** (young / old), **varma / malvarma** (warm / cold). A person you like is an **amiko**; the opposite, an enemy, is a **malamiko**.

> **mal- is not the same as ne**
>
> ReVo says **mal-** generally expresses a positive idea in the opposite direction, not a plain negation. Compare **ne bona** (not good) with **malbona** (bad). The two are different: **ne malbona**, "not bad", is a mild compliment, because it denies the opposite without claiming the positive.

When the opposite is a different root

Not every pair is built with **mal-**. Many opposites are separate roots, and you simply learn them:

WORD	OPPOSITE
vivi to live	**morti** to die
doni to give	**preni** to take
komenci to begin	**fini** to finish

So when you want an opposite, first ask whether the language already has a word for it. **malvivi** is not the normal way to say "to die"; use **morti**.

re-: back, and again

ReVo gives **re-** two senses: returning to a previous place or state, and repeating.

SENSE	WORD	PARTS	MEANING
back	**reveni**	re + ven + i	to come back
back	**redoni**	re + don + i	to give back
again	**revidi**	re + vid + i	to see again
again	**relegi**	re + leg + i	to read again
again	**refoje**	re + foj + e	once more

> **Watch out: re- that is not a prefix**
>
> ReVo notes that **reprezenti** (represent) and **resumi** (summarise) appear in the core vocabulary list as compounds, but many dictionaries now treat them as separate roots, because their meanings have moved away from "again". Do not analyse them as **re-** + **prezenti**.

for-: away

The adverb **for** means *away*. As a prefix it usually keeps that sense: movement or disappearance into the distance.

WORD	PARTS	MEANING
forveturi	for + vetur + i	to travel away, to drive off
forpafi	for + paf + i	to shoot away
foriri	for + ir + i	to go away

The word **forigi** is a separate entry in ReVo: *to remove*, as in **forigi eraron** (remove a mistake). It is built from the adverb **for** plus the suffix **-ig-** (Chapter 6).

ek-: the start of an action

ReVo describes **ek-** as an aspect prefix: a process begins suddenly, at a precise moment. It has two uses.

USE	EXAMPLE	MEANING
starts, and may continue	**ekparoli**	to begin to speak
starts, and may continue	**eksoni**	to begin to ring (bells)
starts, and may continue	**eksidi**	to sit down (roughly **sidiĝi**)
a single brief event	**ekkrii**	to cry out
a single brief event	**eksalti**	to jump (from surprise)

Compare **komenci**, "to begin", which names a deliberate start of something that takes time. **ek-** is the sudden version: **ekvidi** is "to catch sight of". Use **ek-** for a moment, **komenci** for a project.

Stacking prefixes

Prefixes can combine, and each one acts on everything to its right. ReVo has **remalsaniĝo**, a relapse into illness. Take it apart:

PART	JOB
san	root: healthy
mal-	opposite: ill (**malsana**)
-iĝ-	to become: to fall ill (**malsaniĝi**)
re-	again: to fall ill again
-o	noun: a relapse

📖 A Short Text — Mallonga teksto

Find every prefix and say what it does.

La fenestro

> Hieraŭ mi malfermis la fenestron kaj la malvarma vento eniris. Mi ektremis, do mi refermis ĝin. Poste mi relegis la leteron kaj forigis kelkajn erarojn.

▼ Show a translation

Yesterday I opened the window and the cold wind came in. I shivered suddenly, so I closed it again. Then I reread the letter and removed a few mistakes.

🖍️ Try It Yourself — Ekzercoj

Say the answer first, then click to check.

1. Give the opposite of: *granda, juna, varma, fermi*.

▼ Show answer

malgranda, **maljuna**, **malvarma**, **malfermi**.

2. Take apart *malplena* and *malaperi*.

▼ Show answer

mal + **plen** + **a** (empty); **mal** + **aper** + **i** (to disappear).

3. What is the difference between *ne bona* and *malbona*?

▼ Show answer

ne bona only denies "good" (not good); **malbona** is the positive opposite: bad.

4. Which of these is built with **mal-**, and which has its own root: *maldormi, mortis, preni*?

▼ Show answer

maldormi is built with **mal-** (ReVo lists it as the opposite of **dormi**, to be awake), while **mortis** (died) and **preni** (to take) are separate roots.

5. Say in Esperanto: "to come back", "to give back", "to see again".

▼ Show answer

reveni, **redoni**, **revidi**.

6. Why should you not read *reprezenti* as "present again"?

▼ Show answer

Because its meaning (to represent) has moved away from "again"; many dictionaries treat it as a separate root, not **re-** + **prezenti**.

7. What does the prefix **for-** add to *iri* and *veturi*?

▼ Show answer

"Away": **foriri** (go away) and **forveturi** (travel away).

8. Which suits "he cried out in surprise", *li komencis krii* or *li ekkriis*, and why?

▼ Show answer

li ekkriis: a single sudden event. **komenci** suggests a deliberate start of something that continues.

9. Take apart *remalsaniĝo* in the order the prefixes act.

▼ Show answer

san (healthy), **malsan** (ill), **malsaniĝ** (fall ill), **remalsaniĝ** (fall ill again), plus **-o**: a relapse.

10. Write one sentence about your morning using at least one of **mal-**, **re-** and **ek-**.

▼ Show answer

One possibility: **Matene mi malfermis la fenestron kaj ekvidis la sunon.** (In the morning I opened the window and caught sight of the sun.)

Words used in this chapter

malfermi open · **malkovri** uncover · **malaperi** disappear · **malamiko** enemy · **reveni** come back · **relegi** reread · **foriri** go away · **forigi** remove · **ekparoli** begin to speak · **ekkrii** cry out · **erari** make a mistake · **fenestro** window · **vento** wind · **tremi** tremble

Coming up in Chapter 3: People and Groups. The suffixes **-ul-**, **-in-**, **-ist-**, **-an-**, **-estr-**, **-id-** and the prefixes **ge-** and **bo-**.

👥 People and Groups — Homoj kaj grupoj

One root can name an idea, and a handful of suffixes turn it into the people connected with it: who has it, who does it for a living, who belongs to it, who leads it, who descends from it. This chapter covers nine of them and, more importantly, how to choose between the ones that sound alike.

THE IDEA IN A BOX

Add a person suffix after the root, then the noun ending: **riĉ** + **-ul-** + **-o** is a rich person. Each suffix answers a different question: *who has the quality? who works at it? who belongs to it? who runs it?*

The person suffixes

SUFFIX	MEANING (REVO)	EXAMPLES
-ul-	a being characterised by what the root expresses	**riĉulo** rich person, **timulo** coward, **fiulo** villain
-in-	female	**fratino** sister, **heroino** heroine, **ĉevalino** mare
-ist-	a person whose regular activity it is; or an adherent of a doctrine	**dentisto** dentist, **ĝardenisto** gardener, **esperantisto**
-an-	a member of a group; an inhabitant of a country	**urbano** townsman, **kursano** course member, **kanadano** Canadian
-estr-	the one who actually directs	**ŝipestro** captain, **urbestro** mayor, **vilaĝestro** village head
-id-	offspring, descendant	**hundido** a dog's offspring, **ĉevalido** young horse, **reĝido** prince

SUFFIX	MEANING (REVO)	EXAMPLES
-ar-	a collection of the same kind of beings or things	**homaro** humankind, **arbaro** forest, **tendaro** camp, **militistaro** army

Two prefixes for family

PREFIX	MEANING	EXAMPLES
ge-	both sexes together, in the plural	**gepatroj** parents, **geedzoj** husband and wife, **gefratoj** brothers and sisters, **gesinjoroj** Mr. and Mrs.
bo-	related by marriage	**bofrato** brother-in-law, **bogepatroj** parents-in-law

When both are used, **bo-** comes first: **bogepatroj**. ReVo says this is the order in the *Fundamento*, and notes that the later dictionary PIV2 prefers the reverse.

-ul-, -ist- and -an-: which one?

These three overlap, and learners confuse them. A working rule:

ASK	USE	EXAMPLE
Is the root a **quality**?	-ul-	**riĉa** rich → **riĉulo** a rich person
Is the root an **activity** or doctrine, and is it this person's regular work or cause?	-ist-	**ĝardeno** garden → **ĝardenisto** gardener
Is the root a **group, place or country** that the person belongs to?	-an-	**Kanado** → **kanadano**

Subtle differences in ReVo

ReVo says **-an-** and **-ist-** are often, but not always and not entirely, synonyms. Where both exist, the **-ist-** form can sound more active or militant: **islamano** beside **islamisto**. And **-ul-** can suggest a claimed identity: **scienculo** (someone who passes as a scientist) beside the neutral **sciencisto**

(scientist). When the word for the person already exists, such as **kirurgo** (surgeon), do not add **-ist-**.

Stacking suffixes

The suffixes combine from left to right, each acting on everything before it. ReVo has **ŝipanaro** (a ship's crew), and **estrarano** (a board member):

WORD	PARTS	READING
ŝipanaro	ŝip + an + ar + o	ship + member + collection: all the members of the ship, the crew
estrarano	estr + ar + an + o	leader + group + member: a member of the leadership body, a board member
multinfanulino	mult + infan + ul + in + o	many + child + person + female: a mother of many children

Order changes the meaning. **ŝipanaro** and **estrarano** use the same two suffixes but name different things.

The ge- question

ReVo records a dispute. Some speakers use **ge-** for "either sex" (**gepatro**, one parent), but the traditional sense is "both together", so **gepatra decido** would traditionally be a decision of both parents. ReVo suggests **-an-** as an alternative (**gepatrano**, one of the parents) and advises against singular or playful uses like **geknabo**. So use **ge-** in the plural, for both sexes together.

📖 A Short Text — Mallonga teksto

Find the suffixes and say what each one adds.

Mia familio

Mia fratino estas dentistino. Ŝia edzo estas kanadano, kaj ŝiaj gepatroj loĝas en vilaĝo. La vilaĝestro estas ilia amiko.

▼ Show a translation

My sister is a dentist. Her husband is a Canadian, and her parents live in a village. The village head is their friend.

🖍️ Try It Yourself — Ekzercoj

Say the answer first, then click to check.

1. Choose *-ul-*, *-ist-* or *-an-* for: a person who is rich; a person who works with gardens; a person from Canada.

▼ Show answer

riĉulo (quality), **ĝardenisto** (regular work), **kanadano** (belongs to a country).

2. Make the female forms of *frato, heroo, ĉevalo*.

▼ Show answer

fratino, **heroino**, **ĉevalino**.

3. Take apart *urbestro*, *militistaro* and *reĝido*.

▼ Show answer

urb + **estr** + **o** (town leader, mayor); **milit** + **ist** + **ar** + **o** (soldiers collectively, an army); **reĝ** + **id** + **o** (a king's child, a prince).

4. What do **gepatroj** and **patroj** mean? How do they differ?

▼ Show answer

gepatroj is a father and a mother together (parents); **patroj** is several fathers.

5. Build the word for "parents-in-law", and say why the prefixes are in that order.

▼ Show answer

bogepatroj. The *Fundamento* puts **bo-** first, which is also the order ReVo gives (the later dictionary PIV2 prefers the reverse).

6. Why is *kirurgisto* not preferred over *kirurgo*?

▼ Show answer

Because **kirurgo** already names the person. ReVo says not to add **-ist-** to such words.

7. What is the difference in order between *ŝipanaro* and *estrarano*?

▼ Show answer

ŝipanaro is member then collection: the whole crew. **estrarano** is collection then member: one member of the board. The suffixes act in order, so the result differs.

8. Which suffix would you use for "a group of trees"? Give the word.

▼ Show answer

-ar-: **arbaro** (a forest).

9. Is **gepatro** (singular) a good word for "one parent"? What does ReVo suggest?

▼ Show answer

It is disputed. The traditional sense of **ge-** is "both together", so ReVo suggests **gepatrano** (one of the parents) and advises against singular uses like **geknabo**.

10. Write one sentence of your own about a family member, a job and a place, using at least two suffixes from this chapter.

▼ Show answer

One possibility: **Mia onklino estas instruistino kaj loĝas en urbo.** (My aunt is a teacher and lives in a town.) Here **-in-** marks female and **-ist-** the profession.

Words used in this chapter

riĉulo rich person · **dentisto** dentist · **kanadano** Canadian · **vilaĝestro** village head · **hundido** young dog · **homaro** humankind · **gepatroj** parents · **bofrato** brother-in-law · **ŝipanaro** crew · **edzo** husband · **onklino** aunt

Coming up in Chapter 4: Places and Containers. The suffixes **-ej-**, **-uj-** and **-ing-**, and the pet-name endings **-ĉj-** and **-nj-**.

🏠 Places and Containers — Lokoj kaj ujoj

*Three suffixes name things that hold something: **-ej-** for places, **-uj-** for containers and **-ing-** for holders that grip an object by one end. The last section adds two affectionate endings, **-ĉj-** and **-nj-**, used for family words and pet names.*

THE IDEA IN A BOX

A **place** is **-ej-**, a **container** is **-uj-**, a **holder** is **-ing-**. A place is not an object; a container is. Add the suffix to a root for what is done or kept there: **kuir** + **-ej-** + **-o** is where cooking is done.

-ej-: a place for something

ReVo defines **-ej-** as a place defined for something, or characterised by it:

WORD	PARTS	MEANING
lernejo	lern + ej + o	school
kuirejo	kuir + ej + o	kitchen
dormejo	dorm + ej + o	sleeping place
oficejo	ofic + ej + o	office
malliberejo	mal + liber + ej + o	prison
herbejo	herb + ej + o	grassy area

Notice **malliberejo**: the prefix **mal-** from Chapter 2 acts on **liber-** first (not free), then **-ej-** makes a place of it.

ReVo adds that the *Fundamento* restricts the suffix to this "place for" sense. Not every place word is built with it: you say **ĝardeno** for a garden, which is a root in itself.

-uj-: a container

For a thing that holds objects of the kind named by the root, the suffix is **-uj-**:

WORD	PARTS	MEANING
sukerujo	suker + uj + o	sugar bowl
cigarujo	cigar + uj + o	cigar box
fridujo	frid + uj + o	refrigerator

> **Place or container?**
>
> ReVo contrasts the bare word **ejo** (a place or space, never a physical object) with **ujo** (a vessel or case that holds whole objects). So **kuirejo** is a room, and **sukerujo** is a thing you pick up.

The other two jobs of -uj-

ReVo records two further uses and is cautious about both.

- **Fruit trees.** A plant bearing the named fruit: **pomujo** (apple tree), **pirujo** (pear tree). Because this sense can be confused with the container, ReVo suggests alternatives such as **fruktarbo** (fruit tree). Compounds with **arbo** (tree), such as **pomarbo** (apple tree), are another way round it; Chapter 8 returns to compounds.
- **Lands.** A land named after its people or language: **Francujo**, **Germanujo**, and the imagined land **Esperantujo** (the world of Esperanto speakers).

For countries, ReVo limits this use to the lands of the ancient civilised world, with several exceptions, and says not to add **-uj-** to a name that already ends in **-lando**. In practice, the modern names are mostly formed with **-io** or **-lando**: **Skotlando** (not **Skotlandujo**).

-ing-: a holder

The suffix **-ing-** names an object into which another object is partly inserted and held in place, usually by its end. ReVo's examples:

WORD	PARTS	MEANING
kandelingo	**kandel** + **ing** + **o**	candlestick
plumingo	**plum** + **ing** + **o**	pen holder
cigaringo	**cigar** + **ing** + **o**	cigar holder

Compare **cigarujo** (a box that holds cigars) with **cigaringo** (a holder that grips one cigar). The related word **ingo** also means a sheath or cover, such as a scabbard.

-ĉj- and -nj-: affection

Two endings make pet names. **-ĉj-** is used for a man, **-nj-** for a woman, and each attaches to the first syllable or syllables of the name:

ENDING	FAMILY WORDS (REVO)	NAMES
-ĉj-	**paĉjo** dad, **avĉjo** grandpa, **oĉjo** uncle	**Peĉjo** (from Petro), **Joĉjo**, **Ivaĉjo**
-nj-	**panjo** mum, **avinjo** granny, **onjo** aunt	**Manjo** (from Marion), **Klanjo** (from Klara), **Sonjo** (from Sofio)

The pet names cut the original word short: **patro** becomes **paĉjo**, not **patroĉjo**. Use them only for people you can be affectionate with.

📖 A Short Text — Mallonga teksto

Find the suffixes and say what each one adds.

Mia familio

Mia paĉjo laboras en oficejo apud la lernejo. Mia panjo ŝatas kuiri en la kuirejo kaj meti sukeron el la sukerujo en la teon.

▼ Show a translation

My dad works in an office next to the school. My mum likes to cook in the kitchen and to put sugar from the sugar bowl into the tea.

🖍️ Try It Yourself — Ekzercoj

Say the answer first, then click to check.

1. Build the word for: a place where one sleeps; a place where one cooks; a place where one learns.

▼ Show answer

dormejo, **kuirejo**, **lernejo**.

2. Take apart *malliberejo* in the order the pieces act.

▼ Show answer

liber (free), **malliber** (not free), **malliberej** (a place of captivity), plus **-o**: a prison.

3. What is the difference between *kuirejo* and *sukerujo*?

▼ Show answer

-ej- marks a place (a room), while **-uj-** marks a container (an object that holds things).

4. Which is a box that holds cigars, and which grips one: *cigarujo* or *cigaringo*?

▼ Show answer

cigarujo is the box; **cigaringo** is the holder that grips one cigar.

5. Why does ReVo suggest *fruktarbo* rather than *pomujo* for a fruit tree in some contexts?

▼ Show answer

Because **-uj-** for a plant can be confused with **-uj-** for a container: **pomujo** could be taken as an apple container.

6. Why is *Skotlando* not written *Skotlandujo*?

▼ Show answer

ReVo says not to add **-uj-** to a name that already ends in **-lando**.

7. What does *Esperantujo* mean?

▼ Show answer

The imagined land of Esperanto speakers: the whole community, wherever its members live.

8. Give the pet names for: *patro* (father), *patrino* (mother), *avo* (grandfather), *onklo* (uncle).

▼ Show answer

paĉjo, **panjo**, **avĉjo**, **oĉjo**.

9. Why is *paĉjo* not built as *patro* + *-ĉj-*?

▼ Show answer

ReVo says **-ĉj-** attaches to the first syllable or syllables of the word, which are cut short: **pa-** + **-ĉj-** + **-o**. The same goes for **Peĉjo** from **Petro**.

10. Write one sentence about a room in your home and a container you keep in it.

▼ Show answer

One possibility: **En la kuirejo mi havas grandan sukerujon.** (In the kitchen I have a big sugar bowl.)

Words used in this chapter

lernejo school · **kuirejo** kitchen · **oficejo** office · **malliberejo** prison · **sukerujo** sugar bowl · **fridujo** refrigerator · **plumingo** pen holder · **Esperantujo** the world of Esperanto · **paĉjo** dad · **panjo** mum · **kuiri** cook · **meti** put · **sukero** sugar

Coming up in Chapter 5: Size, Quality and Degree. The suffixes **-et-**, **-eg-**, **-aĉ-**, **-ec-**, **-em-**, **-ind-** and **-ebl-**.

📏 Size, Quality and Degree — Grando kaj eco

*Eight suffixes adjust a word without changing what it is about. Three change the degree (**-et-** smaller, **-eg-** larger, **-aĉ-** worse), one makes a quality into a noun (**-ec-**), and one gives a tendency (**-em-**). The last three, **-ind-**, **-ebl-** and **-end-**, are the passive trio: worth doing, can be done, must be done.*

THE IDEA IN A BOX

The degree suffixes change how big, strong or good a thing is. The last five say what kind of quality or tendency it has. Each acts on the root before it, and the final ending sets the part of speech.

Degree: -et-, -eg-, -aĉ-

SUFFIX	MEANING (REVO)	EXAMPLES
-et-	a noticeably low degree of size or intensity	**monteto** small hill, **seĝeto** small chair, **verdeta** greenish
-eg-	a very high degree of size or intensity	**pluvego** downpour, **belega** very beautiful, **pordego** large gate, **kriegi** to shout loudly
-aĉ-	contemptuous: bad quality, unsuitable, ugly	**domaĉo** shabby house, **ĉevalaĉo** nag, **babilaĉi** to chatter foolishly

These are not "small" and "very"

ReVo stresses that **-eg-** is not a simple substitute for "big" or "very". It often makes a word with its own meaning: **pluvego** is a downpour, **ventego** a gale, **pafilego** an artillery piece. For plain "big" and "very", use **granda** and **tre**. Likewise **-et-** often narrows a meaning: **seĝeto** is a small chair, a stool.

Affection with -et-, and a slang twist

ReVo notes that **-et-** is often used affectionately, as in **patreto**, though **-ĉj-** or **-nj-** (Chapter 4) would be more precise. And **malaĉa** is an exception to the contemptuous sense: since the late 2010s, ReVo says, it has been youth slang for "cool", linked to a popular song of that title. A learner reading a text should expect **aĉa** (bad, nasty) in most places, with **malaĉa** as the slang exception.

Quality and tendency: -ec-, -em-

SUFFIX	MEANING (REVO)	EXAMPLES
-ec-	the abstract quality or state	**boneco** goodness, **beleco** beauty, **certeco** certainty
-em-	inclination or tendency	**laborema** hardworking, **malsanema** prone to illness, **ŝparema** thrifty

ReVo gives **-em-** three senses: a wish that drives the tendency (**laborema**), a natural or acquired tendency (**malsanema**), and a capacity to produce an effect (**brulema**, flammable). It adds two small distinctions:

- With **-a** or **-ec-** the tendency is lasting: **ŝparema**, **kredemeco** (credulity).
- With **-o** it is passing: **dormemo** (sleepiness), **vomemo** (nausea).

Replacing **-em-** with **-am-** softens the sense of will: **verama** (truthful), **gastama** (hospitable).

The passive trio: -ind-, -ebl-, -end-

All three are used with transitive verb roots and give a passive sense. They differ in what they claim:

SUFFIX	CLAIM	EXAMPLES (REVO)
-ind-	deserves it, is worth it	**laŭdinda** praiseworthy, **leginda** worth reading, **memorinda** memorable

SUFFIX	CLAIM	EXAMPLES (REVO)
-ebl-	can be done, is suitable for it	**manĝebla** edible, **nealirebla** inaccessible, **nememorebla** unforgettable
-end-	must be done	**uzenda** to be used, **rekonsiderenda** in need of reconsidering, **forigenda** to be removed

Put them on one root and the difference is clear. With **leg-** (read): **leginda** is worth reading, **legebla** can be read (legible), and **legenda** is to be read (a must). ReVo warns against confusing **legenda** ("to be read") with **legenda** (legendary, from the root **legend-**): the same spelling, different words, so context decides.

> **Does -ind- mean "must"?**
>
> ReVo says **-ind-** does not itself express obligation, although in its passive sense it can come close, as in **kaŝinda** (to be hidden). **-end-**, which ReVo calls a non-fundamental suffix whose only sense is obligation, is the clearer choice when you mean "must".

Stacking

These suffixes combine. **kredemeco** is **kred** + **em** + **ec** + **o**: believe + tendency + quality + noun, which is credulity. Reverse the middle and you get nonsense, so keep the order the meaning needs.

📖 A Short Text — Mallonga teksto

Find each suffix and say what it adds.

La filmo

Hieraŭ mi vidis belegan filmon. La muziko estis tre bela, kaj la fino estis memorinda. Tiu filmo estas vere vidinda!

▼ Show a translation

Yesterday I saw a wonderful film. The music was very beautiful, and the ending was memorable. That film is really worth seeing!

🖍️ Try It Yourself — Ekzercoj

Say the answer first, then click to check.

1. Which suffix means a very high degree, and which a noticeably low one?

▼ Show answer

-eg- is very high; **-et-** is low.

2. Build: a small chair; a large gate; a heavy downpour.

▼ Show answer

seĝeto, **pordego**, **pluvego**.

3. Why is *pluvego* not just "more rain"?

▼ Show answer

Because ReVo says **-eg-** often creates a word with its own sense, not just a bigger version: **pluvego** is a downpour. For plain intensity use **tre**.

4. What does *-aĉ-* add to *domo*, and what does *malaĉa* mean in today's slang?

▼ Show answer

domaĉo is a shabby, ugly house. **malaĉa** is slang for "cool", according to ReVo.

5. Make the quality noun from *bela, bona, certa*.

▼ Show answer

beleco, **boneco**, **certeco**.

6. Explain the difference between *dormema* and *dormemo*.

▼ Show answer

ReVo: with **-a**, **-em-** suggests a lasting tendency (a sleepy type); with **-o** a passing one (**dormemo**, drowsiness).

7. Take apart *kredemeco* and say what it means.

▼ Show answer

kred + **em** + **ec** + **o**: credulity.

8. Which suffix would you use in each, with *leg-*: "worth reading", "can be read", "must be read"?

▼ Show answer

leginda (**-ind-**), **legebla** (**-ebl-**), **legenda** (**-end-**).

9. A sign says *Manĝebla* next to a plant. Is it recommended or merely safe?

▼ Show answer

It says it can be eaten (**-ebl-**), that is, it is edible. For "worth eating" you would use **-ind-**.

10. Write one sentence recommending a book or film, using **-ind-** and one other suffix from this chapter.

▼ Show answer

One possibility: **Tiu libro estas belega kaj leginda.** (That book is wonderful and worth reading.)

Words used in this chapter

monteto small hill · **pluvego** downpour · **domaĉo** shabby house · **boneco** goodness · **laborema** hardworking · **dormemo** sleepiness · **leginda** worth reading · **manĝebla** edible · **uzenda** to be used · **filmo** film · **muziko** music · **fino** end

Coming up in Chapter 6: Tools and Actions. The suffixes **-il-**, **-ad-**, **-ig-** and **-iĝ-**.

🔧 Tools and Actions — Iloj kaj agoj

The suffixes in this chapter work on verbs and on the states of things. ***-il-*** *names the tool for an action,* ***-ad-*** *stretches or repeats it,* ***-ig-*** *makes something happen to someone, and* ***-iĝ-*** *says that something happens to itself. The last pair,* ***-ig-*** *and* ***-iĝ-****, is the most powerful device in Esperanto word-building.*

THE IDEA IN A BOX

-ig- means *to make (someone or something) be*; **-iĝ-** means *to become*. Together they turn one adjective into two verbs: **akra** (sharp) gives **akrigi** (to sharpen) and **akriĝi** (to become sharp).

-il-: the tool

ReVo defines **-il-** as the tool, instrument or device used for the action of the root, and it also marks a means or method when no object is obvious:

WORD	PARTS	MEANING
hakilo	**hak** + **il** + **o**	a tool for chopping (**haki**), an axe
pesilo	**pes** + **il** + **o**	an instrument for weighing
viŝilo	**viŝ** + **il** + **o**	something to wipe with
kuracilo	**kurac** + **il** + **o**	a remedy, a means of cure (**kuraci**)
transportilo	**transport** + **il** + **o**	a means of transport

The bare word **ilo** means a tool, instrument or machine, and **ilaro** a set of tools (**il** + **ar** + **o**, using **-ar-** from Chapter 3).

Be specific

> ReVo notes that one **-il-** word may cover several objects, so a more specific word is often clearer. **manĝilo** could be a plate, a spoon, a knife or a fork. It also discourages **-il-** for materials or substances, preferring **-aĵ-**, though **kuracilo** is an accepted exception.

-ad-: continued or repeated action

The suffix **-ad-** makes an action last or recur. On a noun it gives the activity itself; on a verb it shows the action unfolding over time or repeated. ReVo compares it with the Romance imperfect and the Slavic imperfective:

WORD	MEANING	NOTE
pafado	shooting (the activity)	**La pafado daŭris tre longe.** The shooting lasted a very long time.
kantado	singing	can also mean the art or skill of singing
brosado	brushing	action done with a tool (**broso**)
vizitadi	to visit repeatedly	**Ili vizitadis ŝin ĉiun nokton.** They visited her every night.

ReVo gives a useful warning about tool verbs: the noun **martelado** (hammering) is formed with **-ad-**, but the verb is simply **marteli**, not **marteladi**. Add **-ad-** to a verb only when you want to stress the duration or the repetition.

-ig-: to make, to cause

ReVo says **-ig-** can attach to any root and means that someone or something causes the action or state, without saying how: by request, order, force or necessity.

FROM	WORD	MEANING
adjective **akra**	**akrigi**	to make sharp, to sharpen
numeral **du**	**duigi**	to double

FROM	WORD	MEANING
noun **flamo**	**flamigi**	to set on fire
intransitive verb **dormi**	**dormigi**	to make (someone) sleep
intransitive verb **morti**	**mortigi**	to kill, to cause to die
transitive verb **scii**	**sciigi**	to inform

On an intransitive verb, **-ig-** makes it transitive: **dormi** (I sleep) becomes **dormigi** (I put someone to sleep). The adverb and preposition forms from Chapter 2 work the same way: **forigi** (to remove) is **for** + **-ig-**.

> **Do not add -ig- when the verb is already transitive**
> ReVo warns against unnecessary **-ig-** on plain transitive roots: **elekti** (choose), **konvinki** (convince) and **minaci** (threaten) are correct, while forms like **elektigi** are called errors. Add it only when you really want "cause to ...".

-iĝ-: to become

The suffix **-iĝ-** means to enter a state, without saying whether an outside force or the thing itself brings it about. It makes verbs that need no object:

FROM	WORD	MEANING
adjective **akra**	**akriĝi**	to become sharp
noun **paco**	**paciĝi**	to become peaceful
noun **amaso**	**amasiĝi**	to form a heap or crowd
verb **sidi**	**sidiĝi**	to sit down
verb **ĉesi**	**ĉesiĝi**	to stop
transitive **rompi**	**rompiĝi**	to break (of itself)

FROM	WORD	MEANING
mallumo	mallumiĝi	to lose its light, to grow dark

Note the pair **rompi** (to break something) and **rompiĝi** (to break, by itself). Where English uses one verb for both, Esperanto separates them. The related verb **iĝi** means "become" in general; unlike **fariĝi**, it does not suggest an outside cause.

The key pair

ROOT	-IG- (MAKE IT SO)	-IĜ- (IT BECOMES SO)
akra sharp	**akrigi** to sharpen	**akriĝi** to become sharp
dormi to sleep	**dormigi** to put to sleep	(the verb is already intransitive)
rompi to break	(already transitive)	**rompiĝi** to break by itself

📖 A Short Text — Mallonga teksto

Find the suffixes and say what each one adds.

Vespero

> Panjo dormigis la bebon kaj sidiĝis apud la fenestro. Longe ŝi legadis libron, kaj la ĉambro iom post iom mallumiĝis.

▼ Show a translation

Mum put the baby to sleep and sat down by the window. For a long time she read a book, and the room gradually grew dark.

🖍️ Try It Yourself — Ekzercoj

Say the answer first, then click to check.

1. What is the tool for *haki*, *pesi* and *viŝi*?

▼ Show answer

hakilo, **pesilo**, **viŝilo**.

2. Why is *manĝilo* unclear?

▼ Show answer

It could mean a plate, spoon, knife or fork. A specific word is clearer.

3. What is the verb for hammering, and why not *marteladi*?

▼ Show answer

marteli. **-ad-** is needed only for the noun **martelado** (the activity) or when you stress duration.

4. Say "They visited her every night" using the suffix that shows repetition.

▼ Show answer

Ili vizitadis ŝin ĉiun nokton.

5. Make verbs meaning "to make sharp" and "to become sharp".

▼ Show answer

akrigi and **akriĝi**.

6. Which is right: *Li sidigis* or *Li sidiĝis* for "He sat down"?

▼ Show answer

Li sidiĝis. (**Li sidigis la infanon** would mean "he sat the child down".)

7. What is the difference between *rompi* and *rompiĝi*?

▼ Show answer

rompi takes an object: **Mi rompis la glason** (I broke the glass). **rompiĝi** does not: **La glaso rompiĝis** (the glass broke).

8. Why does ReVo call *elektigi* an error?

▼ Show answer

Because **elekti** is already transitive, and **-ig-** adds nothing. Use **-ig-** only to add "cause to".

9. Take apart *mortigo* and *forigi*.

▼ Show answer

mort + **ig** + **o** (a killing); **for** + **ig** + **i** (to remove).

10. Write two sentences about a room at night, using **-iĝ-** in one and any other word from the chapter in the other.

▼ Show answer

One possibility: **La ĉambro mallumiĝis. Mi ŝaltis la lampon.** (The room grew dark. I switched on the lamp.) The second sentence uses **ŝalti**, a separate root, because "switch on" has its own word.

Words used in this chapter

hakilo axe · **pesilo** scale · **ilaro** set of tools · **kantado** singing · **akrigi** sharpen · **dormigi** put to sleep · **mortigi** kill · **sciigi** inform · **sidiĝi** sit down · **rompiĝi** break · **mallumiĝi** grow dark · **bebo** baby · **fenestro** window · **iom post iom** gradually

Coming up in Chapter 7: Parts, Numbers and Fractions. The suffixes **-er-**, **-on-**, **-op-** and **-obl-**, with the number words.

➗ Parts and Numbers — Partoj kaj nombroj

*Esperanto builds its number words the same way it builds everything else. One suffix gives a piece of a whole, three attach to numerals to make fractions, groups and multiples, and one, **-um-**, has no fixed meaning at all. The chapter shows what each does, and where the dictionary tells you to use a different word instead.*

> THE IDEA IN A BOX
>
> Learn the numerals once (**unu, du, tri, kvar, kvin, ses, sep, ok, naŭ, dek, cent, mil**) and add a suffix: **-on-** for a fraction, **-op-** for a group, **-obl-** for a multiple, **-a** for the ordinal (**dua**, second).

-er-: one piece of a whole

ReVo defines **-er-** as one of the constituent elements of a whole:

WORD	PARTS	MEANING
akvero	akv + er + o	a drop of water
lignero	lign + er + o	a wood chip
foliero	foli + er + o	a single leaf

The bare word **ero** means an element or particle. ReVo also records a rare sense of something happening once, briefly or unexpectedly, as in **tremeri** (to shiver briefly), which it links to the prefix **ek-** from Chapter 2.

-on-: fractions

The suffix **-on-** attaches only to numerals. The number of equal parts is the base numeral:

WORD	PARTS	MEANING
duono	du + on + o	a half
kvarono	kvar + on + o	a quarter
kvinono	kvin + on + o	a fifth
seponoj	sep + on + oj	sevenths

A fraction with a numerator is written with the numerator first: ReVo's example is **ok estas kvar kvinonoj de dek** (eight is four fifths of ten). So three quarters is **tri kvaronoj**. A long numeral can carry the suffix too: **tricent-sesdek-kvinono** is one 365th, a day's share of a year.

-op-: a group of that many

On a numeral, **-op-** makes a collective: **duope** (two together), **triope** (three together), **kvarope** (four together). With other endings the same stem gives adjectives and adverbs meaning "in a group" or "collectively".

> **"In groups of": use po**
>
> ReVo notes that some dictionaries give **-op-** the sense "in groups of", but its editors consider that an error. For the distributive meaning, use the preposition **po**: **pasi po unu** (pass one at a time), **viciri po kvar** (line up in fours).

-obl-: times as much

The suffix **-obl-** means "-fold", or exactly so many times the quantity of the root:

WORD	MEANING
duobla	double, twofold
duoble	twice (as much)

WORD	MEANING
kvaroblo	a quadruple, four times a number
centoble	a hundred times

The ReVo examples are mathematical: **dudek estas la kvaroblo de kvin** (twenty is four times five) and **sepoble tri estas dudek unu** (seven times three is twenty-one). Note the difference from **-foje** (times, occasions): **dufoje** is "twice, on two occasions", **duoble** is "twice as much".

-um-: the suffix with no fixed meaning

ReVo says Zamenhof noted that **-um-** has no defined meaning, so its words have to be learned one at a time. The dictionary lists several areas where it appears:

AREA	EXAMPLES
an extension or special sense of a root	**foliumi** (to leaf through), **ventumi** (to fan)
a covering for a part of the body	**kolumo** (a collar), **manumo** (a cuff)
an action with a body part	**brakumi** (to embrace)
supplying or treating with a substance	**akvumi** (to water)

> **Use sparingly**
>
> ReVo cautions against overusing **-um-**, because it can blur the sense that **-ec-** or **-ig-** would state precisely. Many verbs work without it. Treat each **-um-** word as a separate vocabulary item, and prefer a clearer affix when one fits.

📖 A Short Text — Mallonga teksto

Find each number suffix and say what it adds.

Ĉe la tablo

> Mi manĝis duonon de la pano kaj kvaronon de la fromaĝo. Duoble pli da homoj venis ol mi atendis, kaj ni sidis kvarope ĉe la tablo.

▼ Show a translation

I ate half of the bread and a quarter of the cheese. Twice as many people came as I expected, and four of us sat together at the table.

🖍️ Try It Yourself — Ekzercoj

Say the answer first, then click to check.

1. What is the suffix for a single piece of a whole? Give two examples.

▼ Show answer

-er-: **akvero** (a drop of water), **foliero** (a leaf).

2. Say in Esperanto: a half, a quarter, a fifth.

▼ Show answer

duono, **kvarono**, **kvinono**.

3. Say "three quarters" and "four fifths".

▼ Show answer

tri kvaronoj and **kvar kvinonoj**.

4. What does *triope* mean, and what should you use for "in threes"?

▼ Show answer

triope means "three together". For "in threes" ReVo recommends **po tri**.

5. Translate: "Twenty is four times five."

▼ Show answer

Dudek estas la kvaroblo de kvin.

6. What is the difference between *dufoje* and *duoble*?

▼ Show answer

dufoje is twice, on two occasions; **duoble** is twice as much.

7. Why is it unsafe to build your own word with *-um-*?

▼ Show answer

Because it has no fixed meaning (ReVo, citing Zamenhof): each **-um-** word must be learned separately, and overuse blurs clearer suffixes.

8. Match the meaning to the word: collar, to embrace, to leaf through.

▼ Show answer

kolumo, **brakumi**, **foliumi**.

9. Take apart *kvarono* and *duobla*.

▼ Show answer

kvar + **on** + **o** (a quarter); **du** + **obl** + **a** (double).

10. Write two sentences about sharing food, using one fraction and one multiple.

▼ Show answer

One possibility: **Mi donis duonon de la kuko al Maria. Ŝi manĝis duoble pli ol mi.** (I gave half of the cake to Maria. She ate twice as much as I did.)

Words used in this chapter

akvero drop · **duono** half · **kvarono** quarter · **duope** two together · **duoble** twice as much · **kolumo** collar · **brakumi** embrace · **po** each · **pano** bread · **fromaĝo** cheese · **atendi**

expect · **tablo** table · **kuko** cake

Coming up in Chapter 8: Compounds. Joining two roots, the main-word-last rule, linking vowels and hyphens, and how to avoid ambiguity.

🔗 Compounds — Kunmetaĵoj

Affixes change a root. Compounds join two. In Esperanto you can put roots side by side and get a new word, as long as the reader can tell what you mean. This chapter gives the main rule, the small choices about the joining vowel, and the cases where the result is ambiguous.

THE IDEA IN A BOX

In a compound the **last** part is the main word and the earlier parts describe it. **kantobirdo** is a kind of bird (a songbird); **birdokanto** is a kind of song (birdsong). Swap the parts and you change the meaning.

The main part comes last

COMPOUND	PARTS	MEANING
kantobirdo	kant + o + bird + o	songbird
birdokanto	bird + o + kant + o	birdsong
velŝipo	vel + ŝip + o	sailing ship
ŝipvelo	ŝip + vel + o	a ship's sail
centjaro	cent + jar + o	a period of a hundred years
jarcento	jar + cent + o	a century

The order is set by meaning, not by grammar. A useful test: say the compound as a phrase with the last part first. **orminejo** comes from **minejo de oro** (a mine of gold), and **sunleviĝo** from **leviĝo de la suno** (the rising of the sun).

The joining vowel

Roots can be joined directly or with a linking vowel, most often **-o-**. The choice is mostly about ease of pronunciation. These are the patterns reported in the sources I read:

SITUATION	EXAMPLE
The **-o-** is often omitted, especially when keeping it would not help the sound	**velŝipo**, **sunleviĝo**
It is kept when the two consonants differ in voicing	**rozokolora** (rose-coloured)
It is kept when the two consonants are identical	**vivovespero**
It is kept when the first part is very short	**diosimila** (godlike)
It is kept to avoid matching another word	**konkoludo** (not **konkludo**)
Another ending replaces it when the first part must change its part of speech	**multekosta** (expensive)

One teaching page puts it plainly: the **-o-** is optional, "usually omitted unless its presence eases pronunciation (in the opinion of the speaker)". So both **skribotablo** and **skribtablo** (writing desk) occur.

Hyphens

A hyphen may optionally join the parts. One teaching page notes that a string of free-standing nouns cannot modify the noun after it, as English allows ("the garden furniture shop"), and that hyphenating the whole string is possible but, in its words, "silly". Rewrite such a phrase instead, with **de**, **por** or **el**.

Adjective plus noun: a new word, or not

Adjectives are normally kept apart from the noun they describe: **bona tago** (a good day), **bela infano** (a beautiful child). Fusing the two makes a new word with a new meaning, so do it only for a fixed idea:

FUSED	MEANING	COMPARE
bonveno	welcome (good + coming)	**bona veno** a good arrival
belarto	the fine arts (beautiful + art)	**bela arto** a beautiful art
orminejo	gold mine	**ora minejo** a golden mine

Prepositions as prefixes

Prepositions also join roots, acting like prefixes. You met two in Chapter 1: **kun-** (with) in **kunlabori** and **sen-** (without) in **senlabora**. The same idea gives **pri-**: **pripensi ion** (to think over something) beside **pensi pri io** (to think about something).

Ambiguity: when a compound is not clear

A compound is acceptable only if the context makes the relationship clear. The same teaching page shows three phrases that a compound would blur:

PHRASE	MEANING
skatolo da oro	a boxful of gold
skatolo por oro	a box for gold
skatolo el oro	a box made of gold

The compound **orskatolo** could mean either of the last two. When the relationship matters, write the phrase out with the right preposition.

> **A check before you coin a compound**
>
> 1. Put the last part first and the first part after **de, por** or **el**. 2. Ask whether a reader could take the relationship another way. 3. Look in the dictionary: the word may already exist with a different meaning, as **bonveno** shows.

About my sources

I could not reach the compounding chapter of the *Plena Manlibro de Esperanta Gramatiko*, the standard reference, so this chapter uses Wikipedia's article on Esperanto vocabulary, a teaching page on the language and an article in the US Esperanto magazine. For rules on borderline cases, read the PMEG chapter on compounds.

📖 A Short Text — Mallonga teksto

Find the compounds and say how each is built.

Matene

Mi loĝas apud arbaro. Matene la birdokanto vekas min, kaj mi rigardas la sunleviĝon el la fenestro.

▼ Show a translation

I live next to a forest. In the morning the birdsong wakes me, and I watch the sunrise from the window.

🖍️ Try It Yourself — Ekzercoj

Say the answer first, then click to check.

1. What is the difference between *kantobirdo* and *birdokanto*?

▼ Show answer

The last part is the main word: **kantobirdo** is a kind of bird (songbird); **birdokanto** is a kind of song (birdsong).

2. Which is a ship that sails, and which is a part of a ship: *velŝipo* or *ŝipvelo*?

▼ Show answer

velŝipo is a sailing ship; **ŝipvelo** is a ship's sail.

3. Say *orminejo* as a phrase with *de*.

▼ Show answer

minejo de oro: a mine of gold.

4. Why is *orminejo* different from *ora minejo*?

▼ Show answer

orminejo is a gold mine; **ora minejo** is a mine that is golden (made of, or coloured like, gold).

5. Why is *bonveno* not just "a good coming"?

▼ Show answer

Fusing an adjective and a noun makes a new word with a new meaning: **bonveno** is "welcome".

6. Why does *rozokolora* keep its *-o-*?

▼ Show answer

The consonants meeting at the join differ in voicing (**z** and **k**), so the linking vowel helps pronunciation.

7. Write the three phrases for "gold box" that *orskatolo* could replace.

▼ Show answer

skatolo da oro (a boxful of gold), **skatolo por oro** (a box for gold), **skatolo el oro** (a box made of gold). **orskatolo** could mean either of the last two.

8. Which prepositions are used as prefixes in *kunlabori* and *senlabora*?

▼ Show answer

kun- (with) and **sen-** (without).

9. Rewrite "the garden furniture shop" in Esperanto without piling up nouns.

▼ Show answer

One possibility: **vendejo de ĝardenaj mebloj** (a shop of garden furniture). The point is to use **de** or **por** rather than a string of nouns.

10. Invent a compound, then give the phrase it stands for and one other meaning a reader might give it.

▼ Show answer

For example **tetaso** (**taso por teo**, a cup for tea); a reader might also take it as "a cup of tea" (**taso da teo**). If the difference matters, write the phrase.

Words used in this chapter

kunmetaĵo compound · **kantobirdo** songbird · **birdokanto** birdsong · **velŝipo** sailing ship · **sunleviĝo** sunrise · **orminejo** gold mine · **bonveno** welcome · **belarto** fine art · **skatolo** box · **arbaro** forest · **veki** wake · **rigardi** look at

Coming up in Chapter 9: Word Families. Building and taking apart whole families from one root, which derivations are fixed and which are free, and the pitfalls.

🌳 Word Families — Vortfamilioj

Eight chapters have given you the pieces. This one shows them working together on two real families from the Reta Vortaro, ***san-*** *(health) and* ***lern-*** *(learn). You will read each word as a short sentence of parts, notice where a derived word has taken on a meaning of its own, and meet the pitfalls that catch learners.*

THE IDEA IN A BOX

A word family is a root and everything built on it. Most members mean exactly what their parts say; a few have settled into a particular meaning. Read each word from the root outward, one affix at a time, and check the dictionary for the ones that feel odd.

The san- family

WORD	BUILT FROM	MEANING (REVO)
sana	san + a	healthy
sano, saneco	san + o; san + ec + o	health
sanigi	san + ig + i	to cure, to heal someone
saniga	san + ig + a	healthful, salubrious
sanilo	san + il + o	a remedy, medicine
malsana	mal + san + a	ill, sick
malsano	mal + san + o	disease, illness
malsanema	mal + san + em + a	prone to frequent illness
malsaniĝi	mal + san + iĝ + i	to fall ill

WORD	BUILT FROM	MEANING (REVO)
malsanulo	mal + san + ul + o	a sick person, a patient
malsanulejo	mal + san + ul + ej + o	a hospital
resaniĝi	re + san + iĝ + i	to recover health
resanigi	re + san + ig + i	to cure someone; figuratively, to reform something

Look at **malsanulejo**: ill (**malsan**), person (**-ul-**, Chapter 3), place (**-ej-**, Chapter 4): a place for ill people, a hospital. Each affix works on everything before it. Compare **remalsaniĝo** from Chapter 2, which adds one more layer.

The lern- family

WORD	BUILT FROM	MEANING (REVO)
lerni	lern + i	to learn
lernejo	lern + ej + o	a school
lernejano	lern + ej + an + o	a schoolchild
lernanto	lern + ant + o	a learner, a student
lernantaĉo	lern + ant + aĉ + o	a poor, unmotivated learner
lernema	lern + em + a	eager to learn, studious
lernilo	lern + il + o	a learning aid, a tutorial
lernebleco	lern + ebl + ec + o	learnability
lernigi	lern + ig + i	to make someone learn; to teach
ellerni	el + lern + i	to learn thoroughly, to master
mallerni	mal + lern + i	to unlearn, to forget

WORD	BUILT FROM	MEANING (REVO)
bazlernejo, **mezlernejo**	**baz/mez** + **lern** + **ej** + **o**	primary school, secondary school (compounds, Chapter 8)
memlernanto	**mem** + **lern** + **ant** + **o**	a self-taught learner

The suffix **-ant-** in **lernanto** is the active present participle from Esperanto Grammar 1: someone who is learning. Chapter 5 gave you **-aĉ-** for **lernantaĉo**.

Fixed meanings and free building

Some words are exactly their parts. Others have a settled meaning that you could not predict.

FREE: YOU CAN PREDICT IT	SETTLED: CHECK THE DICTIONARY
lernejano (school + member)	**mallerni** is "unlearn, forget", not simply the opposite of learning
malsanulo (ill + person)	**resanigi** has a figurative sense, "to reform"
lernema (learn + tendency)	**lernigi** can mean "to teach", while a separate verb **instrui** also exists

Compare the family of **instru-** (teach): **instrui** (to teach), **instruisto** (a teacher), **instruejo** (a school or classroom), **instruiĝi** (to become educated) and **malinstrui**, which ReVo glosses as "to unlearn or break a habit". Here too the **mal-** word is a specialised sense.

Pitfalls

1. Overbuilding

If a word already exists, use it. Say **morti** (not **malvivi**) for "to die", and **kirurgo** (not **kirurgisto**) for a surgeon (Chapters 2 and 3). Do not add **-ig-** to a transitive verb that needs nothing: **elekti**, not **elektigi** (Chapter 6).

2. False analysis

Not every word that looks built is built. **reprezenti** is not **re-** + **prezenti** (Chapter 2), and **legenda** can be either "to be read" or "legendary" (Chapter 5). When the parts do not give the right sense, look the word up.

3. Stretched meaning

A derived word means what the dictionary says, not what you hope. **mallerni** is "unlearn, forget", not "learn badly" and not just "not learn". A fused word can also differ from the phrase you had in mind: **bonveno** means "welcome" (Chapter 8).

A method for any new word

1. Remove the ending and identify the part of speech.
2. Find the root, then read the affixes from the root outwards.
3. Say what the parts would mean together.
4. Check the dictionary: does the meaning match, or has it settled into something else?

📖 A Short Text — Mallonga teksto

*Find every member of the **san-** and **lern-** families.*

Mia frato

> Mia frato malsaniĝis kaj iris al la malsanulejo. Post unu semajno li resaniĝis, kaj nun li estas denove sana. Li revenis al la lernejo kaj estas tre lernema.

▼ Show a translation

My brother fell ill and went to the hospital. After a week he recovered, and now he is healthy again. He has gone back to school and is very studious.

🖍️ Try It Yourself — Ekzercoj

Say the answer first, then click to check.

1. Take apart *malsanulejo* one affix at a time.

▼ Show answer

san (healthy), **malsan** (ill), **malsanul** (an ill person), **malsanulej** (a place for ill people), plus **-o**: a hospital.

2. Which means "to fall ill" and which "to recover": *malsaniĝi*, *resaniĝi*?

▼ Show answer

malsaniĝi is to fall ill; **resaniĝi** is to recover (**re-** back + **san** + **iĝ**).

3. Build the word for "a place for learning" and for "a schoolchild".

▼ Show answer

lernejo and **lernejano**.

4. What does the participle ending add in *lernanto*? And *-aĉ-* in *lernantaĉo*?

▼ Show answer

-ant- makes a person who is learning; **-aĉ-** adds contempt: a poor, unmotivated learner.

5. Why does ReVo gloss *mallerni* as "unlearn, forget" instead of "the opposite of learn"?

▼ Show answer

Because the word has a specialised meaning: **mal-** gives a logical opposite, and the opposite of acquiring knowledge is losing it. Treat such words as separate items.

6. Choose the right word: "a medicine" is *sanilo* or *saniga*?

▼ Show answer

sanilo (tool for health). **saniga** is an adjective meaning healthful.

7. The root *instru-* gives *instruisto*. Take it apart and compare it with *lernanto*.

▼ Show answer

instru + **ist** + **o** (teacher by profession); **lern** + **ant** + **o** (someone learning right now). **-ist-** is regular work; **-ant-** is the participle.

8. A learner writes *Li elektigis libron* for "He chose a book". What is wrong?

▼ Show answer

elekti is already transitive, so **-ig-** adds nothing; it should be **Li elektis libron**.

9. Why can *reprezenti* not be read as "present again"?

▼ Show answer

Its meaning (to represent) has moved away from "again", and many dictionaries treat it as a separate root.

10. Pick a root you know and write five members of its family with a one-line gloss each. Check them in ReVo.

▼ Show answer

For example from **labor-**: **labori** (to work), **laboristo** (worker), **laborema** (hardworking), **mallaborema** (lazy), **kunlabori** (to collaborate).

Words used in this chapter

sana healthy · **malsano** illness · **malsanulejo** hospital · **resaniĝi** recover · **sanilo** remedy · **lernejo** school · **lernanto** learner · **lernema** studious · **mallerni** unlearn · **instruisto** teacher · **semajno** week · **denove** again

Coming up in Chapter 10: Coining, Checking and Review. How to coin a new word safely, how to check it, a review across every affix, and the Course Complete recap.

✅ Coining and Checking — Krei kaj kontroli

You can now take almost any Esperanto word apart. The last skill is the reverse: making a word you need, without making a mistake. This chapter gives a method for coining safely, a worked example, a table of every affix in the course and a review quiz.

THE IDEA IN A BOX

Coin a word only when no word exists. Then build it from roots you know, test it by turning it back into a phrase, ask whether a reader could take it another way, and check the dictionary. If a clearer word or phrase exists, use that.

A method for coining

1. **Look first.** Search the Esperanto dictionary for the meaning. The word may exist, perhaps as a separate root.
2. **Choose the root.** Pick the root that carries the central idea, not an English word you are translating.
3. **Choose the affix.** Decide what the new word is: a person, a place, a tool, a quality, a group, an action?
4. **Test by paraphrase.** Turn it back into a phrase: **abelisto** is *a person who works with bees*.
5. **Test for ambiguity.** Could a reader take another meaning (Chapter 8)? If so, write the phrase.
6. **Check the dictionary.** Is the derived word listed, and does the meaning match?

A worked example: the abel- family

ReVo lists a whole family of words on **abel-** (bee). Seeing them side by side shows how the affixes choose the meaning:

YOU WANT...	AFFIX	WORD (REVO)
a colony of bees	**-ar-**	**abelaro**
a box or basket housing bees	**-uj-**	**abelujo** (a beehive)
the place where hives are set up	**-ej-**	**abelejo** (an apiary)
a person who tends hives	**-ist-**	**abelisto** (a beekeeper)
a female bee	**-in-**	**abelino**
the queen	compound: **abel** + **reĝino**	**abelreĝino**
a worker bee	compound: **labor** + **abelo**	**laborabelo**

The affix tells you the category of thing: a group, a container, a place, a person, a female. The order in compounds tells you the main word: **laborabelo** is a kind of bee, a working one.

What if the word is not listed?

Take the English phrase "ticket office". The ReVo article on **bilet-** lists **biletisto** (a person who sells or checks tickets), **biletujo** (a wallet for tickets and notes) and several compounds such as **enirbileto**, but not **biletejo**, even though **bilet** + **-ej-** + **-o** follows the pattern from Chapter 4. Passing the paraphrase test (a place for tickets) is not enough. This word is understandable but not confirmed in the article I read, so check another dictionary, or choose a word the article does list, before relying on it.

> **Where to check**
>
> Use the **Reta Vortaro** (the root's article lists its family), a larger reference dictionary such as the **PIV**, and the **Plena Manlibro de Esperanta Gramatiko**, which is free online. I could not reach the PMEG compounding chapter while writing Chapter 8, so I have not checked any claim in this course against it directly. Read it for the borderline cases.

Every affix in the course

CHAPTER	AFFIXES	JOB
2	**mal- re- for- ek-**	opposite, again or back, away, start
3	**-ul- -in- -ist- -an- -estr- -id- -ar- ge- bo-**	persons, groups, family
4	**-ej- -uj- -ing- -ĉj- -nj-**	place, container, holder, pet names
5	**-et- -eg- -aĉ- -ec- -em- -ind- -ebl- -end-**	degree, quality, tendency, worth, possibility, obligation
6	**-il- -ad- -ig- -iĝ-**	tool, continued action, make, become
7	**-er- -on- -op- -obl- -um-**	piece, fraction, group, multiple, undefined
8	compounds, **kun- sen- pri-**	two roots; prepositions as prefixes

📖 A Short Text — Mallonga teksto

Find every affix and say what it does.

Mia amikino

Mia amikino estas instruistino. Ŝi estas tre laborema, kaj la lernantoj en la lernejo ŝatas ŝin. Ĉiuvespere ŝi relegas la lecionon kaj preparas la sekvan tagon.

▼ Show a translation

My friend is a teacher. She is very hardworking, and the pupils in the school like her. Every evening she rereads the lesson and prepares the next day.

🖍️ Try It Yourself — Ekzercoj: the review

A review of the whole course. Say the answer first, then click to check.

1. Give the opposite of *fermi* and a word meaning "to read again".

▼ Show answer

malfermi and **relegi**.

2. Build: a woman who is a dentist; a village head; parents-in-law.

▼ Show answer

dentistino, **vilaĝestro**, **bogepatroj**.

3. Choose between *-ej-* and *-uj-*: a place where you cook; a bowl for sugar.

▼ Show answer

kuirejo (place) and **sukerujo** (container).

4. Which suffix says "must be done"? Which says "can be done"? Which says "deserves to be done"?

▼ Show answer

-end-, **-ebl-**, **-ind-**.

5. Build the verb for "to make sharp" and the verb for "to become sharp".

▼ Show answer

akrigi and **akriĝi**.

6. Say "three quarters", "twice as much" and "two together".

▼ Show answer

tri kvaronoj, **duoble**, **duope**.

7. Explain the difference between *kantobirdo* and *birdokanto*.

▼ Show answer

The last part is the main word: a songbird versus birdsong.

8. Take apart *malsanulejo* and *remalsaniĝo*.

▼ Show answer

mal + **san** + **ul** + **ej** + **o** (a hospital); **re** + **mal** + **san** + **iĝ** + **o** (a relapse).

9. Name two words you should not build, and the word to use instead.

▼ Show answer

For example **malvivi** (use **morti**) and **elektigi** (use **elekti**); or **kirurgisto** (use **kirurgo**).

10. You need a word for "a place for tickets". Walk through the method.

▼ Show answer

Look first: ReVo's **bilet-** article lists **biletisto** and **biletujo**, not **biletejo**. Root **bilet-**, affix **-ej-** (place): **biletejo**. Paraphrase: a place for tickets. Ambiguity: it could be where tickets are sold or kept. Check another dictionary before using it, or write the phrase (**loko por aĉeti biletojn**).

What you have learned

CHAPTER	SKILL
1 Roots, Endings and the Dictionary	Root plus ending, reading a ReVo entry, words with no ending.
2 Opposites and Reversals	**mal-**, **re-**, **for-**, **ek-** and stacking prefixes.
3 People and Groups	Person suffixes, family prefixes, and choosing between **-ul-**, **-ist-** and **-an-**.
4 Places and Containers	**-ej-**, **-uj-**, **-ing-** and the pet names.
5 Size, Quality and Degree	Degree, quality, tendency and the passive trio.
6 Tools and Actions	**-il-**, **-ad-**, **-ig-**, **-iĝ-**.
7 Parts, Numbers and Fractions	Pieces, fractions, groups, multiples and **-um-**.

CHAPTER	SKILL
8 Compounds	Main part last, the joining vowel, ambiguity.
9 Word Families	Reading whole families and avoiding pitfalls.

Words used in this chapter

krei create · **kontroli** check · **abelo** bee · **abelisto** beekeeper · **abelujo** beehive · **abelejo** apiary · **bileto** ticket · **biletisto** ticket seller · **leciono** lesson · **prepari** prepare · **sekva** next

Course Complete. You have finished **Esperanto Word-Building**. Keep practising by taking apart every new word you meet, and keep the Reta Vortaro open while you read, for example in Esperanto Reading 1.