

Divide and Conquer

“All Gaul is divided into three parts ...” So too are many English words of Latin origin. Those three parts are the **prefix, the base, and the suffix**.

Try this exercise on yourself and see how you can generate vocabulary from a single Latin base. All the words in this column derive from the Latin base:

PON-, POS-, POSIT- = **“put, place”**

By combining this base with any number of Latin prefixes, we can generate many useful and common English words. The meaning of the English word is based on the meaning of the base and prefix. (We’ll hold off on suffixes for this exercise, since most of these words are nearly complete without them!).

There are barely 30 Latin prefixes that a student (or adult learner) needs to commit to memory for his or her entire life. Chances are that you already know most of them just through being a speaker of English. Here are some:

| | | |
|-------------------|---|---------------------------------------|
| con-, com- | = | with, together |
| de- | = | down |
| dis- | = | apart, in different directions |
| ex- | = | out |
| in-, im- | = | in, on, into |
| pre- | = | before |
| pro- | = | forward, ahead |
| trans- | = | across, change |

DIVIDE AND CONQUER THESE WORDS:

| | Prefix means: | Base means: |
|--------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|
| 1. COMPOST: | <u>with, together</u> | <u>put, place</u> |

Sample sentence: I “put” all my grass clippings and raked leaves “together” in a _____ pile in the back of my yard.

| | | |
|-------------------|-------|-------|
| 2. DEPOSE: | _____ | _____ |
|-------------------|-------|-------|

“The angry masses _____ (“put” “down”) the tyrant from his throne.”

| | | |
|-------------------|-------|-------|
| 3. EXPOSE: | _____ | _____ |
|-------------------|-------|-------|

“You will _____ your undeveloped film if you “put” it “out” in the light.”

4. **DEPOSIT:** _____

“When I “put” money “down” at the bank, I make a _____.”

5. **TRANSPOSE:** _____

“When typing, I sometimes write “teh” for “the” and carelessly _____
 (“change” the “places” of) those letters.”

6. **DISPOSAL:** _____

“My garbage _____ “puts” all my vegetable peels “apart, in
different directions” and washes them down the drain.”

7. **COMPOSITION:** _____

“I have to write two _____ (essays in which I “put”
“together” words and sentences) for my English class this week.”

Now, see how you can divide and conquer these words:

8. **PREPOSITION:** _____

9. **COMPOSITE:** _____

10. **IMPOSE:** _____

11. **IMPOSITION:** _____

**Complete these sentences with words derived from the Latin base meaning “put,
place, position.” (Hint: these words will have no prefixes; all begin with PO ...).**

12. When I “place” a letter in the mailbox I _____ it.

13. A rod or pole that has been “placed” in the earth is called a _____.

14. Whenever I _____ for a picture, I make sure my hair is neat. I
“put” myself in order so that I look good for the photographer

15. My teacher always tells me to stand up straight and “put” my shoulders back so that I
can develop good _____.