

Fourth Edition

The
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Should
Know

about

Vocabulary
Building

Word
Roots

TERESA FERSTER GLAZIER

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藏书章

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To the Instructor

Because learning to break words into their parts is perhaps the most important initial step in vocabulary building, this text helps students take that step and begin what should become an ongoing study of words. Whether the text is used in the classroom or for self-help, the following features make it easy to use with little guidance.

1. Since only one approach is used—word roots—students can work through the text easily. They learn a method of study while learning the first root and follow it throughout the book.
2. No distinction is made between Greek and Latin roots. Students need to remember the meaning of a root rather than its language source. Similarly, no distinction is made among roots, prefixes, and suffixes because all are equally sources of word meaning.
3. Students learn words in context. After a word is defined, it is then used in a sentence.
4. Some difficult words are included for those who happen to be ready for them, but students should be encouraged to concentrate on words they have encountered before and are curious about.
5. The simplest pronunciation aids are used, the only diacritical mark being the one for long vowels.
6. Answers at the back of the book allow students to teach themselves.
7. Three exercises with no answers provided (pp. 77, 117, 137) may be used as tests.
8. A Word Index simplifies using the text.

A packet of ready-to-photocopy tests is available to instructors upon adoption of the text and may be obtained from the local representative or from the English Editor, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich College Publishers, 301 Commerce Street, Suite 3700, Fort Worth, Texas 76102.

TFG

Acknowledgments

The idea for this book I owe to my father from whom I learned the meaning of such words as *propensity*, *convivial*, and *commodious* before I could read. I can still hear the creak of the old metal dictionary stand as my father would open the *Funk and Wagnalls New Standard Dictionary* to look up a word and then try the word out again and again on my mother and me. From him I learned to keep word lists and to probe for root meanings. This is really his book.

More recently I am indebted to my son Kenneth for exceptionally careful proofreading.

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Increasing Your Vocabulary through Learning Word Roots

How did words get to be words? Why, for example, is a hippopotamus called a hippopotamus and not a glipserticka? There's a good reason. Since the animal looks a bit like a fat horse and spends much of its time in rivers, the Greeks combined their word for horse, HIPPOS, and their word for river, POTAMOS, and called the animal a hippopotamos, a river horse. And with only a one-letter change, the word has come down to us as hippopotamus.

Words did not just happen. They grew. And if you learn how they grew—what original roots they came from—you'll find it easier to remember them. You'll *understand* the words you look up in the dictionary instead of just memorizing the definitions. And weeks later, even though you may have forgotten the meaning of a word, your knowledge of its roots¹ will help you recall its meaning.

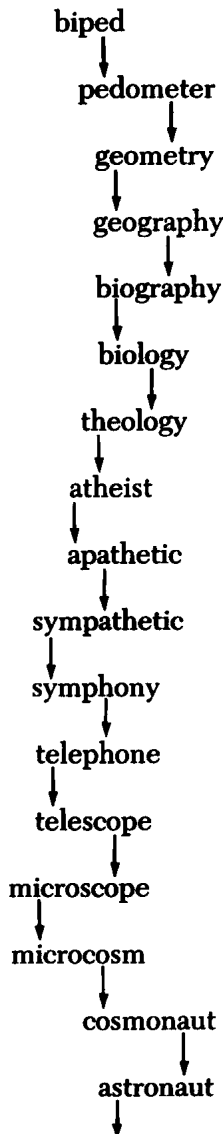
The best first step in vocabulary building, then, is to become familiar with some word roots because learning the root of one word often gives a clue to dozens or hundreds more. For example, if you learn that SYN (SYM, SYL) means *together* or *with*, you have a clue to more than 450 words, for that many words beginning with SYN (SYM, SYL) are listed in *Webster's Third New International Dictionary*. Similarly, when you learn that *philanthropist* is made up of PHIL to *love* and ANTHROP *human*, you have learned not only that a philanthropist is a lover of humanity, but you also have a clue to some 70 other words beginning with PHIL and to more than 60 others beginning with ANTHROP, not to mention those that have PHIL or ANTHROP in the middle or at the end of the word.

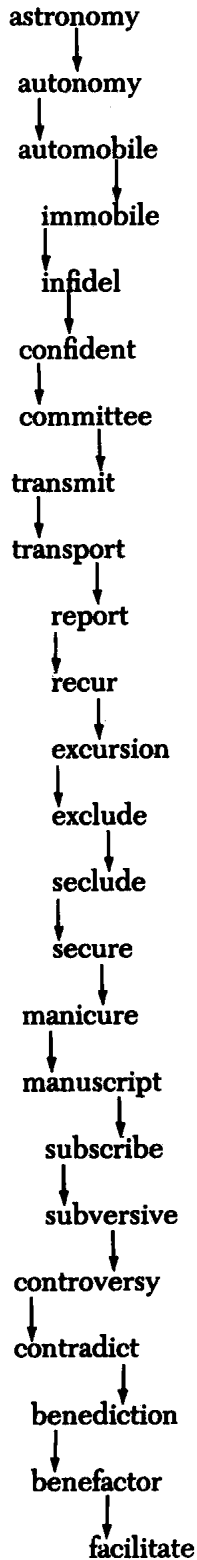
As you become aware of how words are made up, familiar words will take on new meaning, and unfamiliar words may often be understood even without a dictionary. For instance, if you know that the root BIBL means *book* as in *bibliography* and *Bible*, then you can guess that a *bibliophile* will have something to do with books. And if you remember that PHIL means to *love*, as in *philanthropist* (lover of humanity), then you will immediately guess that a bibliophile must be a lover of books.

¹In this book the term roots includes prefixes and suffixes because all word parts are equally sources of word meaning. All are the roots from which our language came.

2 INCREASING YOUR VOCABULARY THROUGH LEARNING WORD ROOTS

Glancing at the root chain below will help you spot some common roots. The chain begins with *biped* [BI two + PED foot], a two-footed animal. The next word contains one of the preceding roots, PED. A *pedometer* [PED foot + METER measure] is, as its roots indicate, a “foot measure” or an instrument that measures the distance walked by recording the number of steps taken. The next word must contain METER, and out of the hundreds of METER words, *geometry* [GEO earth + METER measure] has been chosen. As its roots show, geometry was originally a system of “earth measuring,” that is, of measuring the earth through the use of angles. The next word must contain GEO, and so on.





4 INCREASING YOUR VOCABULARY THROUGH LEARNING WORD ROOTS

This root chain ends with *facilitate* (to make easier). Perhaps reading the chain will facilitate your spotting word roots in the future.

After you've learned some of the roots in this book, try to make a root chain of your own.

Learning word roots is not only the quickest way to increase your vocabulary but also the most entertaining. For example, did you know . . .

- that **salary** [SAL salt] originally was the money paid to Roman soldiers to buy salt . . .
- that a **companion** [COM with + PAN bread] was originally a person one shared one's bread with . . .
- that **malaria** [MAL bad + AER air] was so named because people thought it was caused by the bad air of the swamps . . .
- that a **terrier** [TERR earth] got its name because it digs in the earth after small animals in burrows . . .
- that **escape** [ES out + CAP cape] originally meant to get out of one's cape, leaving it in the hands of the pursuer . . .
- that an **insect** [IN in + SECT to cut] was so named because its body is "cut" into three segments . . .
- that a **bonfire** in the Middle Ages was the bone fire built to dispose of corpses during the plague . . .
- that **panic** originally described the frantic efforts of the Greek nymphs to escape when the mischievous god Pan suddenly appeared among them . . .
- that **curfew** in the Middle Ages in France was the ringing of a bell telling the peasants to cover their fires (*couvre-feu*) for the night . . .
- that **alphabet** comes from the first two letters of the Greek alphabet, ALPHA and BETA, "a" and "b" . . .
- that **trivia** [TRI three + VIA way] in Roman times meant the crossroads where three ways met and where neighborhood gossips on their way to market often stopped to chat about unimportant things (TRI VIA talk) . . .
- that **preposterous** [PRE before + POST after] originally meant having the before part where the after part should be, like a horse with its tail where its head should be—in other words, absurd.

As you look up words in your dictionary, you may uncover other interesting stories if you note the word roots, which will be found in square brackets either just before or just after the definition.

Where to Find Word Roots in Your Dictionary

Most dictionaries give the derivation (word roots) of words. You'll find the derivation either just after or just before the definition.

*The American Heritage Dictionary, Second College Edition*¹

eu·pho·ny (yŏō'fə-nē) *n.*, *pl. -nies* Agreeable sound, esp in the phonetic quality of words [Fr *euphonie* < LLat *euphonia* < Gk < *euphōnos*, sweet-voiced *eu-*, good + *phōnē*, sound]

The derivation is in square brackets at the end of the definition. The last part of the derivation gives the original roots: *eu-*, good + *phone*, sound.

*Webster's New World Dictionary*²

eu·pho·ny (-nē) *n.*, *pl. -nies* [Fr. *euphonie* < LL. *euphonia* < Gr. *euphōnia* < *euphōnos*, sweet-voiced, musical < *eu-*, well + *phōnē*, voice: see **PHONE**¹] the quality of having a pleasing sound; pleasant combination of agreeable sounds in spoken words; also, such a combination of words

The derivation is in square brackets before the definition. The last part of the derivation gives the original roots: *eu-*, well + *phone*, voice.

*Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*³

eu·pho·ny \'yu-fə-nē\ *n.*, *pl. -nies* [F *euphonie*, fr LL *euphonia*, fr Gk *euphōnia*, fr *euphōnos* sweet-voiced, musical, fr *eu-* + *phōnē* voice — more at **BAN**] (ca 1623) 1 : pleasing or sweet sound, esp : the acoustic effect produced by words so formed or combined as to please the ear 2 : a harmonious succession of words having a pleasing sound —

The derivation is in square brackets before the definition. The last part of the derivation gives the original roots and the meaning of one of them: *phone*, voice. To find the meaning of the other root, look for *eu-* as a regular dictionary entry. There its meaning is given: well or good.

Thus the roots indicate that *euphony* means good sound or good voice. And when you look at the definitions, you'll find that that is exactly what it means: agreeable sound; the quality of having a pleasing sound; pleasing or sweet sound. Having learned the roots of *euphony*, you'll remember the word longer than if you had merely looked up the definition.

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²© 1988. Used by permission of the publisher, New World Dictionaries/A division of Simon & Schuster, New York.

³By permission. From *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary* © 1991 by Merriam-Webster Inc., publisher of the Merriam-Webster® dictionaries.

Changes in Root Spelling

A root may change its spelling slightly according to the word it is in. For example, **EX out** is found in **excursion**, but it changes to **ES** in **escape** and to simply **E** in **educate**. Such changes have occurred to make pronunciation easier. **Escape** and **educate** are easier to pronounce than **excape** and **exducate** would be. Here are some of the ways root spellings change.

Sometimes the last letter of a root changes to be like the first letter of the root that follows:

COM nect	becomes	CON nect
COM loquial	becomes	COL loquial
COM relate	becomes	COR relate
DIS fident	becomes	DIF fident
SYN metrical	becomes	SYM metrical

Sometimes the last letter of a root changes (or is dropped) to make the pronunciation easier, but it doesn't become the same as the first letter of the root that follows:

EX cape	becomes	ES cape
COM temporary	becomes	CON temporary
SYN pathy	becomes	SYM pathy
DIS vert	becomes	DI vert
EX ducate	becomes	E ducate

A root may also appear in slightly different forms in different words. **CLUD**, *to close*, *to shut*, may appear as

CLUD	in	seclude
CLUS	in	recluse
CLAUS	in	claustrophobia
CLOS	in	closet

but you'll soon learn to spot a root even when its spelling varies.

How to Use This Book

It makes little difference which root you study first because each root will help you eventually with some new word. Therefore the roots in this text are presented alphabetically.

Don't worry if on a page you find a few words you're not acquainted with. They're included merely for anyone who happens to be ready for them. Concentrate on words you've heard or seen before and wondered about, words you almost know but aren't quite sure of. They're the ones you can learn most easily. And mastering even a few words under each root will give quite a boost to your vocabulary.

Here are six steps to take as you begin your study.

1. First, take the **PRELIMINARY TEST** on page 9. At the end of your study you'll have a chance to take a similar test to see how the study of word roots has increased your vocabulary.
2. Now turn to the first root—A, AN on page 12.

(For help with pronunciation see the **Pronunciation Key** on the inside front cover of this book.)

Note that not every root of every word is explained but only those that will help you remember the word.

The first definition is often a literal one (marked *lit.*) taken directly from the meaning of the roots. The definitions that follow are current ones.

3. After you have studied all the words on the page, then do Exercise 1 and correct your answers by those in the Answer section beginning on page 139.
4. Study again any words you missed—if they are ones you want to add to your vocabulary.
5. Next use some of the words in your own writing. Begin to keep a vocabulary journal, writing each day two or three sentences about whatever interests you and using some of the words you have just learned. Putting the words into your own writing will help you remember them longer than if you merely fill in blanks. And from time to time you can reread your journal to review your words.
6. Finally, take the most important step in vocabulary building—use your newly learned words in conversation. Using a word in conversation will do more to help you remember it than any amount of silent study. **USE A WORD THREE TIMES AND IT'S YOURS.** Try using one

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new word a day. Begin at breakfast, and during the day find two more opportunities to use the word. Once you have used it three times, you'll be surprised how easily it will slip into your conversation. And even if it's a word you don't expect to use, it will stay in your passive vocabulary so that you'll recognize it when you encounter it in your reading.

PRELIMINARY TEST Test yourself on these words taken from college textbooks and current magazines. Check your answers with those on page 139.

- _____ 1. ambiguous A. very large B. having two possible meanings
C. seeking fame D. exceptionally clear
- _____ 2. philanthropic A. unmoved by criticism B. fond of animals
C. sociable D. charitable
- _____ 3. antipathy A. strong dislike B. worry C. kindly feelings
D. ancient times
- _____ 4. autonomous A. self-governing B. governed by a few
C. governed by a dictator D. without any government
- _____ 5. benefactor A. one who receives money from a will B. one who
receives a grant C. distant relative D. one who gives assistance
- _____ 6. anachronism A. mistake in grammar B. something out of its proper
historical time C. incorrect calculation D. clock for navigation
- _____ 7. circumscribe A. to overcome circumstances B. to write an
autograph C. to restrict the action of D. to denounce
- _____ 8. convivial A. sociable B. superficial C. dangerous to life D. vivid
- _____ 9. credulous A. unbelieving B. believing too readily C. suspicious
D. having a good credit rating
- _____ 10. precursor A. supervisor B. beginner C. forerunner D. financial
officer
- _____ 11. pandemic A. causing illness B. causing a wild uproar
C. undemocratic D. widespread
- _____ 12. euphemism A. substitution of a pleasant for an unpleasant word
B. substitution of a specific term for a general one C. false
statement D. unrestrained praise
- _____ 13. enervate A. to weaken B. to strengthen C. to soothe D. to excite
- _____ 14. epilogue A. speech at a funeral B. speech at the end of a play
C. speech at the beginning of a play D. speech of apology
- _____ 15. loquacious A. full of life B. having the ability to see through things
C. understanding several languages D. talkative
- _____ 16. malingering A. move slowly B. spend too much time on details
C. pretend to be ill to get out of work D. waste time
- _____ 17. missive A. lost article B. missing part C. wrong answer D. letter

10 PRELIMINARY TEST

- _____ 18. metamorphosis A. life of a butterfly B. change of form C. mental illness D. abnormal growth
- _____ 19. panacea A. remedy for all ills B. folk remedy C. widespread epidemic D. view from a mountain
- _____ 20. apathy A. dislike B. strong interest C. indifference D. sympathy
- _____ 21. impediment A. lack of funds B. hindrance C. inability to speak D. inability to walk
- _____ 22. progeny A. plan of action B. gifted child C. descendants D. ancestors
- _____ 23. assiduous A. overbearing B. haughty C. critical D. persevering
- _____ 24. auspicious A. unfavorable B. favorable C. foreboding evil D. having doubts
- _____ 25. subterranean A. under cover B. under the ocean C. under the earth D. underhanded
- _____ 26. supercilious A. haughty B. socially prominent C. intellectually superior D. solicitous
- _____ 27. syndrome A. place where horse races are held B. stadium C. two adjoining domes D. symptoms occurring together

WORD ROOTS IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER

A, AN—not, without

When A or AN meaning *not* or *without* comes at the beginning of certain words, it gives those words a negative meaning. Anything that is **asymmetrical** is *not* symmetrical, and anything that is **atypical** is *not* typical.

Atheist and **agnostic** both begin with the negative A and are close in meaning. An atheist [A without + THE god] is *without* a God whereas an agnostic [A not + GNOS to know] does *not* know whether there is a God. In other words, the atheist is sure there is no God whereas the agnostic simply does not know.

Note how A or AN gives each of the following words a negative meaning.

agnostic (ag nos' tik) [A not + GNOS to know]—one who does not know whether there is a God. *He had lost his former faith and had become an agnostic.*

amoral (ā mawr' ul)—*lit.* without moral standards; neither moral nor immoral; unable to distinguish between right and wrong. *Infants are amoral.*

anarchy (an' ur kē) [AN without + ARCH ruler]—*lit.* without a ruler; political disorder and confusion. *The overthrow of the government resulted in anarchy.*

anecdote (an' ik dōt) [AN not + EKDOTOS given out]—originally, not published (some stories were made public by publishing them, and others were kept private); now, merely a short account of some interesting or humorous incident. *The speaker enlivened his talk with humorous anecdotes.*

anemia (uh nē' mē uh) [AN without + HEM blood]—*lit.* without blood; a deficiency of red corpuscles in the blood. *Her weakness was caused by anemia.*

anesthetic (an is thet' ik) [AN without + ESTHET feeling]—*lit.* without feeling; a drug causing one to be insensitive to pain. *Before the operation he was given an anesthetic.*

anomaly (uh nom' uh lē) [AN not + HOMO same]—*lit.* not the same (as others); a rare exception; something that is not normal. *Charles Darwin wrote, "There is no greater anomaly in nature than a bird that cannot fly."*

anonymous (uh non' uh mus) [AN without + ONYM name]—*lit.* without a name; having an unknown or unacknowledged name. *The donor of the new building wished to remain anonymous.*

asymmetrical (ā si met' ri kul) or **asymmetric** [A not + SYM together + METER measure]—*lit.* not measured together; not having both sides exactly alike; not symmetrical. *She preferred asymmetrical flower arrangements.*