

Tools for Instruction

Prefixes *inter-*, *fore-*, *mid-*, *post-*, *semi-*

Students who recognize when words can be broken apart into base words or word roots and affixes are much better equipped to figure out the meanings of unfamiliar words they see and hear. Explicitly teaching common prefixes, such as *inter-*, *fore-*, *mid-*, *post-* and *semi-*, is an important step in encouraging this kind of word consciousness. Reinforce students' understanding of the function of each prefix by giving practice in breaking words apart and offering multiple opportunities to use words with the target prefixes.

Step by Step 30–45 minutes

1 Introduce the prefixes and model breaking words apart.

- Display the following chart, and use it as a reference to introduce the prefixes *inter-*, *fore-*, *mid-*, *post-*, and *semi-*.

Prefix	Meaning	Example Words
inter-	between, among	international, interview
fore-	in front of, before	forehead, forefather
mid-	in the middle of, during	midway, midday
post-	after	postsurgical, postscript
semi-	partly, half	semiformal, semicircle

- Point to the word *international* and read it aloud, having students repeat it chorally.
- Underline *inter* and say, *Inter- is a prefix, or a word part added to the beginning of a word. The prefix inter- means "between" or "among."*
- Point to the base word *national* and ask students to tell what it means. (relating to a country) Model using the meaning of the prefix and the base word to determine the meaning of the whole word *international*.

If inter- means "between" and national means "relating to a country," then international must mean "between countries."

- Have partners brainstorm other words they know in English or another language that have *inter-* as a prefix. Call on volunteers to share the words they know and to explain their meanings.

2 Guide practice in breaking words apart.

- Review that to figure out the meaning of an unfamiliar word, students can try breaking it into parts and then think about combining the meaning of the parts.
- Display the word *foretell*, and draw a slash between *fore* and *tell*.
- Say, *Tell is a verb that means "to say or reveal." The prefix fore- means "in front of" or "before." Together, they make a new word. What do you think it means? (to say something about the future before it happens)*

- Display additional words containing the target prefixes, such as those below. Choose examples with base words that students will recognize.

interact forethought midstream postwar semidarkness

- Ask volunteers to draw a slash between each prefix and base word and suggest what the whole word might mean. Have them confirm their definitions by looking up the words in a dictionary.

3 Use prefixes in writing.

Connect to Writing Reinforce understanding of the target prefixes by having students write creatively using any *inter-*, *fore-*, *mid-*, *post-*, and *semi-* words they know, including but not limited to those taught in this lesson.

- Display a photograph or image to use as a thought prompt. Ask students to use words with the target prefixes to describe what they see. See the following example.

The Australian and Japanese teams played against each other at the international basketball game. The newspaper foretold a win for Australia, but midway through the game, Japan's score began to soar! All the players gathered for a postgame party.

- Ask volunteers to share their writing, and point out any words containing the target prefixes that were not previously discussed.

4 Review prefixes.

- During the following week, keep a chart of words with each of the target prefixes. When students read or hear a word with one of the prefixes, have them add the word to the chart. Prompt students to break apart the word and use the parts to determine the word's meaning.

Check for Understanding

If you observe...	Then try...
difficulty understanding the meaning of a prefix	reviewing it using words that can be illustrated with concrete examples, such as by pointing to body parts for <i>forehead</i> or <i>forearm</i> or turning off the classroom lights for <i>semidarkness</i> . Then prompt students to suggest their own examples in order to confirm understanding.