

# ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION

## Layers of Language: Greek Combining Forms

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### ~ Module 13, Session 11 ~ Lecture Notes

Remember that Greek combining forms (sometimes called roots) are combined to form new English words. Each combining form holds a specific meaning. Teachers need to teach these word parts along with their meanings. The following list provides the major Greek combining forms with meaning in parentheses, based on a possible sequence of presentation (reading across the rows):

<i>phon/phono</i> (sound)	<i>photo</i> (light)
<i>gram, graph</i> (written or drawn)	auto (self)
<i>tele</i> (distant)	<i>logy</i> (study; from <i>logos, logue</i> [speech or word])
<i>micro</i> (small or minute)	<i>meter, metr</i> (measure)
<i>therm, thermo</i> (heat or hot)	<i>bio</i> (life)
<i>scope</i> (to watch or see)	<i>hydr, hydra, hydro</i> (water)
<i>biblio</i> (book)	<i>cracy, crat</i> (rule)
<i>geo</i> (earth)	<i>metro</i> (mother city; measure)
<i>pol, polis, polis</i> (city, government)	<i>dem, demo</i> (people)
<i>derm</i> (skin)	<i>hypo</i> (under)
<i>chron, chrono</i> (time)	<i>cycl, cyclo</i> (wheel or circle; circular)
<i>hyper</i> (over, above, or excessive)	<i>chrom</i> (color)
<i>phys</i> (nature)	<i>techn</i> (skill, art, or craft)
<i>path</i> (feeling, suffering, or disease)	<i>psych</i> (mind or soul)
<i>lex</i> (word)	<i>gno, gnosi</i> (know)
<i>mega</i> (large or great)	<i>mech</i> (machine)
<i>meta</i> (beside, after, later, beyond)	<i>arch</i> (chief or ruler)
<i>kine, cine</i> (movement)	<i>phil, phila, phile, philo</i> (love or affinity for)
<i>the, theo</i> (god)	<i>soph</i> (wisdom or cleverness)
<i>mania</i> (madness, frenzy, obsession)	<i>phobia, phobic; phobe</i> (irrational fear or hatred; one who fears-hates)
<i>ast, astro</i> (star)	<i>andr, anthr</i> (man)
<i>archae, arche, archi</i> (primitive or ancient)	

*NOTE: This sequence of presentation is taken from Henry & Redding, 1996; and Henry, 2003.*

Some of these combining forms serve as prefixes, including *auto* and *tele*. Others are often considered suffixes as they appear at the end of a word such as *ology* and *logue*.

Teachers will introduce approximately four to six of the Greek combining forms in any lesson. Students will be able to generate scores of words putting together the parts they have learned, along with other words they know. Teachers must check that students know the meaning of each combining form, and provide numerous opportunities for practice in reading and spelling words.

Remember that Greek combining forms may add suffixes as in *hemispheric* or *autobiographical*. In addition prefixes such as *dys-* in *dyslexia* and *syn-* and its variants *syl-*, *sys-*, and *sym-* in *syllable*, *systematic*, and *sympathy* come originally from Greek.

For sample lessons see Henry, M. K. (2004) *Unlocking literacy: Effective decoding and spelling instruction* (pp. 115-117). Baltimore: Brookes Publishing; Henry, M. K. (1990). *WORDS: Integrated decoding and spelling instruction based on word origin and word structure* (p. 47). Austin, TX: PRO-ED; and Henry, M. K., & Redding, N. C. (1996). *Patterns for success in reading and spelling* (pp. 281-284). Austin, TX: PRO-ED.

More advanced readers who learn all of the previous Greek combining forms may want to learn some of the following less common forms with their meanings:

<i>drome, dromos</i> (course or running)	<i>morph</i> (form, shape, or structure)
<i>dyn, dynamo</i> (power, strength, or force)	<i>neo</i> (new or recent)
<i>eco</i> (house or home)	<i>nym, onym</i> (name)
<i>ecto</i> (outside, external, or beyond)	<i>ortho</i> (straight, correct, or upright)
<i>helio</i> (sun)	<i>phyll</i> (leaf or leaves)
<i>hema, hemo</i> (blood)	<i>pneumon, pneuma</i> (breath or lung)
<i>hypn, hypno</i> (sleep)	<i>proto</i> (earliest, original, or first in time)
<i>lith, litho</i> (stone)	<i>saur</i> (lizard or serpent)
<i>macro</i> (large, long, or great)	<i>stereo</i> (solid, firm, or hard)
<i>log, logo, logue</i> (speech or word; logy, meaning study, comes from this word family)	<i>zo, zoo</i> (animal)