What's in a word?

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Words can be broken up into different parts to help students understand what they mean. Use this description of word parts to introduce the topic and then give the students the task.

Word parts

The parts of a word are:

Prefix – appears at the beginning of the word, eg hypo- (below)

Root – words that have a meaning standing alone. They often form the longest part of a word. Science vocabulary often has Greek or Latin roots, eg allo (other), com (together)

Suffix – appears at the end of the word and provides additional information, eg -lysis (decompose)

Here's how two example words can be broken down:

- **hydrophobic**

hydro meaning water **phobic,** from **phobia** meaning fear

- **hydrophilic**

hydro meaning water **philic**, from **philos** meaning friend

Substances that are hydrophobic do not dissolve in water, while substances that are hydrophilic will dissolve in water.

Task

Use the table of root words, prefixes and suffixes overleaf to work out the meaning of these words.

- Endothermic
- Exothermic
- Allotrope
- Isotope
- Electrolysis
- Hydrochloric
- Transition
- Immiscible
- Hydrolysis
- Distillation

Root words, prefixes and suffixes	Meaning
Allo, -io	Other, different
Chlor-	Green
Dis-	Separate, apart
Electr, -i, -o	Electrode
En-, endo-, ent-	In, into, within
Exo-	Out, outside, without
Hydr, -a, -i, -o	Water
-ible	Able to be, suitable, causing
Im-	Not
-ion	Process
Iso-	Equal, same
-lys, -i, -is, io	Loose, loosening, breaking
Misc-	Mix
Therm, -o	Heat
Trans-	Across
-trop-	Turn, change