

Assessment Preparation: Word Origins—Etymology

English is the most widely spoken language in the world. If we consider the vast number of cultures that are represented in the United States today, it is easy to see how over seventy percent of English words have been taken from other languages. In addition, travel, war, even new technologies have had a major influence on the formation of the English language.

An effective approach to figuring out the meaning of unfamiliar words is to break down the words into smaller parts. To do this, you should be familiar with common prefixes, suffixes, root words and base words. In addition, you can learn about word parts by using a dictionary. To find the correct word to look up in the dictionary, you need to pay attention to the way the word is used in the sentence. For the sample below, *swilling*, you would look up the base word, *swill*. In your dictionary, you might find more than one entry. Choose the one that most closely matches the way the word is used in context.

¹swill \ˈswɪl\ *vb* [ME *swilen*, fr. OE *swillan*] *vt* (bef. 12c) 1 : WASH, DRENCH 2 : to drink great drafts of : GUZZLE 3 : to feed (as a pig) with swill ~ *vi* 1 : to drink or eat freely, greedily, or to excess 2 : SWASH – **swiller** *n*

Look at the sample dictionary entry. The information in the brackets [] is the “etymology” of the word. “ME” means that the word comes from Middle English, but “fr. OE” indicates that the word originated from Old English. The entry “(bef. 12c)” tells you that the word has been in existence since before the 12th century. Some examples of common word origins include:

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|---------------------|---------------------|--|-----------------|
| ME = Middle English | OE = Old English | L = Latin | Gk = Greek |
| VL = Vulgar Latin | ML = Medieval Latin | Heb = Hebrew | OF = Old French |
| Sp = Spanish | Chin = Chinese | ISV = International Science Vocabulary | |
- (You can find more abbreviations in the front section of your dictionary near the pronunciation guide.)

Directions: Using a dictionary, look up the following vocabulary words from Chapters 6-10. For each word, write the base word and its etymology, including its origin and the approximate time period in which the word was introduced into the English language. Then write the correct definition for each word on the line provided, followed by a sentence which reflects the meaning in context. An example has been done for you.

swilling

Origin: Middle English; Old English Base word: swill Date: before 12th century

Definition: to drink great drafts of, guzzle; to drink or eat freely, greedily, or to excess

Sentence: We sprinted past the filthy street people, who sat swilling their wine.

1. strutting

Origin: _____ Base Word: _____ Date: _____

Definition: _____

Sentence: _____

2. deficiency

Origin: _____ Base Word: _____ Date: _____

Definition: _____

Sentence: _____

3. converging

Origin: _____ Base Word: _____ Date: _____

Definition: _____

Sentence: _____

Name _____ Period _____

4. nanosecond

Origin: _____ Base Word: _____ Date: _____

Definition: _____

Sentence: _____

5. evasive

Origin: _____ Base Word: _____ Date: _____

Definition: _____

Sentence: _____

6. confrontation

Origin: _____ Base Word: _____ Date: _____

Definition: _____

Sentence: _____

7. artifact

Origin: _____ Base Word: _____ Date: _____

Definition: _____

Sentence: _____

8. avarice

Origin: _____ Base Word: _____ Date: _____

Definition: _____

Sentence: _____

9. sucrose

Origin: _____ Base Word: _____ Date: _____

Definition: _____

Sentence: _____

10. incision

Origin: _____ Base Word: _____ Date: _____

Definition: _____

Sentence: _____

11. modification

Origin: _____ Base Word: _____ Date: _____

Definition: _____

Sentence: _____

12. fealty

Origin: _____ Base Word: _____ Date: _____

Definition: _____

Sentence: _____

13. damsel

Origin: _____ Base Word: _____ Date: _____

Definition: _____

Sentence: _____