

Lesson 11: The Building Blocks of Language

Prefixes in Use: Finding Bases and Building New Words

Lesson at a Glance

Review word	PLAYGROUND
Tool	PREFIX
Known handle	A PREFIX IS ADDED BEFORE A BASE.
New question	WHAT DOES THE PREFIX DO?
Families	RE- = AGAIN • UN- = NOT • SUPER- = EXTRA
Core comparison	SAME PREFIX. DIFFERENT BASES. WHAT STAYED THE SAME? WHAT CHANGED?
Closing payoff	SUPERHERO

Instructional Focus

Lesson 10 established structure: a base is something we can build on, a prefix is added before a base, and a suffix is added after a base. Lesson 11 keeps the structural work and adds meaning: **What happened to the word when we added the prefix?**

- Focus only on prefixes.
- Let HELPFUL and GROUNDED function as bases; do not reopen their internal structure.
- Use AGAIN, NOT, and EXTRA as working handles **in these words**, not universal definitions.
- Say that familiar whole words **can serve as bases**; do not define every base as a stand-alone word.
- When a proposed build is uncertain, respond: **INVESTIGATORS CHECK WHAT THEY BUILD.**

Teacher Handle

When we ask, **“What does this prefix contribute?”** we are asking what **meaning** it contributes to the whole word.

For example:

RE + PLAY → REPLAY

The base **PLAY** stays. The prefix **RE-** contributes the meaning **“again.”**

The children do not need a technical explanation of contribution. The teacher simply needs to know what kind of answer the investigation is looking for: **What meaning did this added part bring to the word?**

Purpose and Preparation

Students will

- recover PLAY and GROUND inside PLAYGROUND;
- keep PLAY as a base and add a prefix before it;
- compare three words in each prefix family;
- identify what stays the same and what changes;
- explain what the prefix contributes in the selected words;
- check uncertain word builds.

Prepare

- Word cards or magnetic pieces for prefixes and bases
- Board space for three family columns
- Optional simple visuals or gestures
- Student packet for follow-up—not as the main lesson

Teaching Sequence

1. Recover a Base from PLAYGROUND

Teacher action	Prompts and board record
Display PLAYGROUND . Use the established routine: say it, clap it, break it. Keep PLAY and remove GROUND .	PLAYGROUND → PLAY GROUND → PLAY + GROUND → PLAY
	“What kind of word is PLAYGROUND ?”
	“What whole words did we find?”
	“Can PLAY and GROUND serve as bases?”
	PLAY IS OUR BASE.

2. Bring Out the Prefix Tool

Write **PREFIX**. Recover: **A PREFIX IS ADDED BEFORE A BASE**. Write **PREFIX + BASE**. Say: “We already know where a prefix goes. Today we will look more closely at what happens when we use one.” Post the investigation question: **WHAT DOES IT DO?**

3. Model the Method with RE-

Build	Compare	Working handle
RE + PLAY → REPLAY	PLAY → PLAY AGAIN	RE- = AGAIN IN THESE WORDS.
RE + BUILD → REBUILD	BUILD → BUILD AGAIN	
RE + START → RESTART	START → START AGAIN	

Ask: “What are we building on?” “What did we add?” “Where did we add it?” “What stayed the same?” “What changed?” “What does RE- contribute in these words?”

Teaching move: Keep RE- fixed and change the base. This family is teacher-led so students learn the comparison method.

4. Use the Method with UN-

Build	Compare	Working handle
UN + KIND → UNKIND	KIND → NOT KIND	UN- = NOT IN THESE WORDS.
UN + HELPFUL → UNHELPFUL	HELPFUL → NOT HELPFUL	
UN + GROUNDED → UNGROUNDED	GROUNDED → NOT GROUNDED	

Teacher note: HELPFUL and GROUNDED are the bases for today’s builds. Do not pause to analyze HELP + FUL or GROUND + ED. Invite one or two student suggestions after UNKIND, then return to the planned words. If uncertain, mark the candidate with a question mark and say, “That is one we can check.”

5. Let Students Predict with SUPER-

Build	Quick experience	Working handle
SUPER + FAST → SUPERFAST	Act out FAST, then SUPERFAST.	SUPER- = EXTRA More than ordinary—in these words.
SUPER + STAR → SUPERSTAR	Students predict the build.	
SUPER + HERO → SUPERHERO	Save as the playful payoff.	

Accuracy note: SUPERFAST is one word. English has both the independent word super and the prefix super-. If a child notices, say: “Yes. You noticed something. Today we are using SUPER- as a prefix. We can keep that other question.”

6. Compare All Three Families

RE- = AGAIN	UN- = NOT	SUPER- = EXTRA
REPLAY	UNKIND	SUPERFAST
REBUILD	UNHELPFUL	SUPERSTAR
RESTART	UNGROUNDED	SUPERHERO

Ask: “Where is the prefix in every word?” “Did all three prefixes do the same job?” “Inside each family, what stayed the same?” “What changed?”

Conclude: SAME PREFIX. DIFFERENT BASES. COMPARE WHAT HAPPENS.

Practical boundary: A prefix card can be placed beside any base card, but every combination does not automatically become an established word. **INVESTIGATORS CHECK WHAT THEY BUILD.**

7. Close the Investigation

Return to **PREFIX**.

Ask: “What do we know about where a prefix goes?” Recover: **BEFORE THE BASE.**

Ask: “What new thing did we investigate?” Bring the class to: **A PREFIX CAN CONTRIBUTE SOMETHING TO THE WORD WE BUILD.**

Point to the family handles and say: “Those are the jobs we found for these prefixes **in these words.**”

Quick Formative Check

Show one word from each family. Ask the student to point to the prefix, identify the base, read the word, and explain what the prefix contributes. Look for demonstration, not recital.

Teacher Language Bank

- “What are we building on?”
- “What did we add, and where did we put it?”
- “Read what we built.”
- “Compare the base with the new word.”
- “What stayed the same in this family?”
- “What changed?”
- “What does the prefix seem to contribute in these words?”
- “Does that build make a word we know?”
- “Should we check?”

Implementation Notes

Participation

Students may say, point, move word pieces, hold prefix or base cards, read, sort, act out contrasts, draw, or explain. Preserve the function: investigate relationships inside words.

Packet

Use brief tasks for building, matching, identifying prefixes and bases, sorting families, and explaining one change. Avoid extensive copying or dictionary-style definitions. **The paper should not overtake the drill.**

Pacing

RE- is teacher-led; UN- begins returning the work to students; SUPER- is increasingly predicted and built by students. The goal is comparison, not racing through nine words.

Chapter hold

Do not investigate the histories of PREFIX or SUFFIX, free and bound bases, roots, or whether every base stands alone. Those questions remain available for later lessons.

A BASE IS SOMETHING WE CAN BUILD ON.

A PREFIX IS ADDED BEFORE A BASE.

A PREFIX CAN CONTRIBUTE SOMETHING TO THE WORD WE BUILD.

SAME PREFIX. DIFFERENT BASES.

WHAT STAYED THE SAME? WHAT CHANGED?

INVESTIGATORS CHECK WHAT THEY BUILD.