



Helping Your Child with the 'un-' Prefix in Year 2

Key points

- In Year 2, children learn to add the prefix 'un-' to the start of a word to create its opposite, such as turning 'happy' into 'unhappy'.
- The root word stays exactly the same when you add 'un-', so 'lock' becomes 'unlock' and 'tie' becomes 'untie' without any spelling changes.
- It is important to know that 'un-' does not work on every word; for example, we say 'bad' rather than 'unbad', so children need to learn which words accept the prefix.
- This skill is part of the National Curriculum spelling objectives and helps prepare children for learning other prefixes like 'dis-' and 're-' in Year 3.
- Practising spotting and building these words helps children understand how English words are constructed, supporting their reading and writing confidence.

Things to try at home

- Play a quick 'Opposites' game while getting dressed or tidying up, asking your child to say the opposite of words like 'buttoned', 'folded' or 'happy' using 'un-'.
- Create a simple two-column chart on a piece of paper labelled 'Works' and 'Doesn't Work', and sort words like 'lock', 'tie', 'kind' and 'bad' into the correct columns together.
- Spot prefixes in everyday life, such as on packaging or signs, and ask your child if they can guess what the word means before you tell them.
- Read a storybook together and pause when you see a word starting with 'un-', asking your child to explain what the word means in the context of the story.

Find out more

- Ask your child's Year 2 teacher for their specific spelling list or any school-provided worksheets that focus on prefixes.
- Visit the GOV.UK website to read the National Curriculum for English, which outlines the spelling expectations for Key Stage 1.
- Check the Education Makes Sense website for their Year 2 English resources, including videos and worksheets on prefixes and word building.