

Greek and Latin Root Words for Biology

The key to learning biological terms is in learning the origins of those words, which is usually Greek or Latin. The following list was modified from:

<http://www.biology.ualberta.ca/courses.hp/zool250/Roots/RootsMain.htm>

<p><i>a(n)</i>- without <i>ab</i> - away <i>ad</i>- towards <i>adipo</i>- fat <i>affer</i>- carrying to <i>agro(st)</i>- field <i>al(i)</i>- wing <i>alb</i>- white <i>amnio</i>- fetal envelope <i>amyl</i>- starch <i>ana</i>- up, back, again <i>andr</i>- male <i>angi</i>- vessel <i>ante</i>- before <i>antho</i>- flower <i>anthro</i>- human <i>anti</i>- against, opposite <i>apo</i>- separate, from <i>aqua</i>- water <i>arach</i>- spider <i>arbor</i>- tree <i>arc</i>- arch <i>arch(ae/i)</i>- ancient <i>are</i>- space <i>arthro</i>- joint <i>asc</i>- sac <i>ast(e)r</i>- star <i>ater, atra</i>- black <i>atr(ium)</i>- vestibule, a room you enter <i>aur</i>- ear, gold <i>auto</i>- self <i>aux</i>- grow <i>avi</i>- bird <i>axi</i>- axis</p>	<p><i>basi</i>- at the bottom <i>bi</i>- two <i>bi(ola)</i>- life <i>blast</i>- germ <i>brachi</i>- arm <i>brachy</i>- short <i>brady</i>- slow <i>bronch</i>- windpipe <i>bucca</i>- mouth cavity <i>bulbos</i>- bulbous <i>bursa</i>- pouch, purse</p> <p><i>caec</i>- blind <i>calc</i>- stone <i>calyx</i> cup, chalice <i>cani</i> - dog <i>cap(it)</i>- head <i>card</i>- heart <i>carp</i>- seed, wrist <i>cary</i>- nut <i>cata</i>- down <i>cauda</i>- tail <i>centi</i>- hundred <i>ceph(al)</i>- head <i>cerebro</i>- brain <i>cerv</i>- neck <i>chiasm</i>- crossing <i>chlor</i>- green <i>chondr</i>- cartilage <i>chord</i>- cord <i>chorion</i> membrane <i>chrom</i>- colour <i>chrys</i>- golden</p>	<p><i>chyl</i>- fluid <i>chym</i>- juice <i>cili</i>- eyelash <i>circum</i>- around <i>cl(e)ist</i>- closed <i>clad</i>- branch <i>clast</i>- broken <i>clin</i>- bed, recline <i>cloaca</i> sewer <i>coccus</i> berry, grain <i>coel</i>- hollow <i>col(on)</i> large intestine <i>collat</i>- borne together <i>columella</i> little column <i>com</i>- with <i>commutat</i>- changed <i>compact</i>- compact <i>compress</i>- flattened <i>con</i>- with <i>contra</i>- opposite <i>copro</i>- dung <i>cord</i>- heart <i>coron</i>- crown <i>corp</i>- body <i>cost</i>- rib <i>crani</i>- skull <i>crass</i>- thick <i>cric</i>- ring <i>cruci</i>- cross-like <i>crypt</i>- hidden <i>cune</i>-wedge <i>cuspl</i>- lance, point <i>cuti</i>- skin <i>cyan</i>- blue <i>cycl</i>- circular <i>cyst</i>- capsule <i>cyt</i>- cell</p>	<p><i>dactyl</i>- finger <i>deci</i>- ten (one tenth) <i>decid</i>- falling off <i>deka</i>- ten <i>demi</i>- half <i>dendr</i>- tree <i>dent</i>- tooth <i>derm</i>- skin <i>deut</i>- second <i>dextro</i>- right <i>di(a)</i>- two <i>dia</i>- through <i>digit</i>- finger <i>dino</i>- terrible <i>diplo</i>- double <i>dipso</i>- thirst <i>dissect</i>- deeply cut <i>dodeca</i>- twelve <i>dont</i>- tooth <i>dors</i>- back <i>dubi</i>- doubtful <i>dulci</i>- sweet <i>duo</i>- two <i>dur</i>- hard</p>
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<p><i>echino-</i> spiny <i>eco-</i> house <i>ecto-</i> outside <i>effer-</i> carrying away <i>elat-</i> tall <i>-ell-</i> diminutive <i>embio-</i> living (with life) <i>endo-</i> inside <i>entolenter-</i> inside <i>epi-</i> upon <i>equi-</i> horse, equal <i>erect-</i> upright <i>erythr-</i> red <i>eu-</i> well, very <i>ex-</i> out of <i>exo-</i> outside <i>extens-</i> draw out <i>extra-</i> beyond <i>extrins-</i> coming from</p> <p><i>fallax-</i> false <i>fasc(ic)-</i> bundle <i>feli-</i> cat <i>fer-</i> carry <i>fil-</i> thread <i>fistul-</i> hollow, tube <i>flacc-</i> flabby <i>flav-</i> yellow <i>flexu-</i> wavy <i>foetid-</i> foul smelling <i>foli-</i> leaf <i>foramen-</i> opening <i>fovea-</i> shallow round depression <i>furc(ul)-</i> fork</p>	<p><i>gal-</i> milk <i>gall-</i> of France <i>gangli-</i> knot <i>gast(e)r-</i> stomach, pouch <i>gemin-</i> twins <i>gemm-</i> bud <i>genu-</i> knee, joint <i>gladi-</i> sword <i>glia-</i> glue <i>glo(ss/tt)-</i> tongue <i>glu / glyc-</i> sweet <i>gono-</i> seed <i>gram-</i> of grass <i>gymn-</i> naked <i>gyn-</i> woman <i>gyr-</i> turning</p> <p><i>haem-</i> blood <i>hal-</i> salty <i>haplo-</i> single, simple <i>hect-</i> hundred <i>helios-</i> sun <i>helminth-</i> worm <i>hemi-</i> half <i>hepa(r/t)-</i> liver <i>hepta-</i> seven <i>hetero-</i> different <i>hex-</i> six <i>hibem-</i> winter <i>hippo-</i> horse <i>holo-</i> complete, whole <i>homo-</i> man, same <i>hormon-</i> that which excites <i>hortens-</i> of gardens <i>humus-</i> ground <i>hydr-</i> water <i>hyper-</i> above <i>hypo-</i> beneath</p>	<p><i>ichthy-</i> fish <i>-ida-</i> like <i>ileum-</i> twisted <i>impar-</i> unpaired <i>in-</i> (prefix) in, not <i>-in-</i> (suffix) diminutive <i>-inae-</i> ending of zoological <i>incarnat-</i> flesh coloured <i>incis-</i> cutting in <i>inflexis-</i> rigid <i>infra-</i> under <i>inter-</i> between <i>intra-</i> within <i>-iola-</i> diminutive <i>iris-</i> rainbow <i>iso-</i> equal</p> <p><i>ket-</i> ketone <i>kilo-</i> thousand</p> <p><i>labi-</i> lips <i>labyrinth-</i> tortuous passage <i>lacer-</i> torn <i>lacrim-</i> tears <i>lact-</i> milk <i>laevo-</i> left <i>lamella-</i> leaf, layer <i>lati-</i> broad <i>lecith-</i> egg yolk <i>lemm-</i> skin, husk <i>lens-</i> lentil, bean <i>leo(n)-</i> lion <i>leuc-</i> white <i>levator-</i> lifter <i>lign-</i> wood <i>lin-</i> line <i>ling-</i> tongue <i>lip-</i> fat <i>lith-</i> stone</p>	<p><i>lumen-</i> cavity <i>luna-</i> moon <i>lupus</i> wolf <i>lymph-</i> clear water <i>lysis-</i> loosen</p> <p><i>macr-</i> large <i>macula-</i> spot <i>magni-</i> large <i>malleus-</i> hammer, mallet <i>mamma-</i> breast <i>mandib-</i> lower jaw <i>manu-</i> hand <i>maritim-</i> of the sea <i>marsupium-</i> pouch <i>masseter-</i> chewer <i>mast-</i> nipple <i>mat(e)ri-</i> mother <i>maxi-</i> large <i>maxill-</i> jaw <i>maxim-</i> greatest <i>medi-</i> medium <i>medull-</i> marrow <i>mega-</i> large <i>melan-</i> black <i>menin(x,g)-</i> membrane <i>mer-</i> part <i>meso-</i> middle <i>meta-</i> after <i>micro-</i> small <i>milli-</i> thousand <i>min-</i> smaller <i>minim-</i> smallest <i>miss-</i> sent <i>mito-</i> thread <i>mixi-</i> mingle <i>mono-</i> one <i>morph-</i> form <i>motor-</i> mover <i>multi-</i> many <i>myo-</i> muscle, mouse <i>myri-</i> countless <i>myx-</i> mucous</p>
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<p> <i>na(rls)</i>- nose <i>necro</i>- dead <i>neo</i>- new <i>nephr</i>- kidney <i>neur</i>- nerve <i>nictitat</i>- winking <i>nigr</i>- black <i>non</i>- not <i>nona</i>- nine <i>noth</i>- spurious <i>noto</i>- back, south <i>nu(clx)</i>- nut <i>nucle</i>- little nut <i>nud</i>- naked <i>nulli</i>- none <i>occip</i>- back of head <i>oct</i>- eight <i>odont</i>- tooth <i>odor</i>- fragrant <i>oed</i>- swollen <i>oesoph</i>- gullet <i>-oid</i>- like <i>oleo</i>- oily <i>olfact</i>- smelling <i>oligo</i>- few <i>oliva</i>- olive <i>omm</i>- eye <i>omphalo</i>- navel <i>onto</i>- existing <i>oo</i>- egg <i>op(t)</i>- eye <i>ophthalmo</i>- eye <i>orbi</i>- circle <i>orch</i>- testicle <i>ornith</i>- bird <i>ortho</i>- straight <i>os(s/t)</i>- bone <i>os(ti)</i>- mouth <i>ot</i>- ear <i>ovi</i>- sheep <i>ovo</i>- egg </p>	<p> <i>pachy</i>- thick <i>palae</i>- old <i>pallid</i>- pale <i>pan</i>- all <i>par(a)</i>- near <i>patella</i>- small dish <i>pect(or)</i>- chest <i>ped</i>- foot, child <i>pent</i>- five <i>per(i)</i>- through, beyond <i>peri</i>- around <i>petr</i>- rock <i>phag</i>- eat <i>pher</i>- carry <i>phil</i>- love <i>phloe</i>- tree bark <i>pho(s/to)</i>- light <i>phor</i>- carry <i>phragm</i>- fence <i>phren</i>- diaphragm, mind <i>phyll</i>- leaf <i>physio</i>- nature <i>phyto</i>- plant <i>pil</i>- hair <i>pinea</i>- pine cone <i>pinnat</i>- feather- shaped <i>pisc</i>- fish <i>plac</i>- plate, tablet <i>plan</i>- flat <i>platy</i>- flat, broad <i>pleth</i>- full <i>plex</i>- interwoven <i>plum</i>- feather <i>pneu(mo/st)</i>- air, lung <i>pod</i>- foot <i>polio</i>- grey <i>polit</i>- polished <i>poly</i>- many <i>pons</i>- bridge <i>porc</i>- pig <i>porta</i>- gate <i>post</i>- after <i>praeco</i>- early <i>pre</i>- before <i>prim</i>- first </p>	<p> <i>pro</i>- in front of <i>proct</i>- anus <i>profund</i>- deep <i>prom</i>- first <i>proso</i>- front <i>prostratus</i>- lying flat <i>prot</i>- first <i>pseud</i>- false <i>psycho</i>- mind <i>pter</i>- wing, fern <i>pubescens</i>- downy <i>pubi</i>- sexually mature <i>pulmo</i>- lung <i>pyl</i>- gate <i>pyo</i>- pus <i>pyro</i>- heat, fire <i>quadr</i>- four <i>quarter</i>- four <i>quin(t/que)</i>- five <i>radi</i>- root <i>rect</i>- straight <i>reflex</i>- bent back <i>ren</i>- kidney <i>reptans</i>- crawling <i>retina</i>- little net <i>retro</i>- behind, backward <i>rhage</i>- tear, rent <i>rhin</i>- nose, snout <i>rhiz</i>- root <i>rhodo</i>- red <i>rota</i>- tum, wheel <i>-rrh</i>- flow <i>rub(e)r</i>- red </p>	<p> <i>sacchar</i>- sugar <i>sal</i>- salt <i>sanguini</i>- bloody <i>sapon</i>- soapy <i>sarc</i>- flesh <i>saur</i>- lizard <i>scala</i>- ladder <i>scalene</i>- uneven <i>schizo</i>- split <i>scler</i>- hard <i>seba</i>- tallow, wax <i>sect</i>- cut <i>semi</i>- half <i>sept</i>- seven, wall <i>ser(olu)</i>- any body fluid <i>sex</i>- six <i>simi</i>- monkey <i>sinus</i>- hollow, bay <i>sipho</i>- tube <i>sol</i>- sun <i>soma</i>- body <i>somni</i>- sleep <i>sperm</i>- seed <i>sphinct</i>- closing <i>spinos</i>- spiny <i>spondyl</i>- vertebra <i>squam</i>- scale <i>stae(rlt)</i>- fat <i>stell</i>- star <i>steril</i>- sterile <i>stern</i>- breastbone <i>stom</i>- mouth <i>strat</i>- layer <i>strept</i>- twisted <i>styl</i>- column <i>sub</i>- below <i>sucr</i>- sugar <i>super</i>- beyond <i>supin</i>- lying back <i>supra</i>- above <i>sutur</i>- seam <i>sym</i>- with <i>syn</i>- with <i>sytrin(glx)</i>- pipe <i>sys</i>- with </p>
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<p> <i>tachy-</i> fast <i>tact-</i> touch <i>tard-</i> late <i>tect-</i> covered <i>tel (e/o)-</i> far, end <i>ter(ti)-</i> three <i>teres-</i> round <i>tetr-</i> four <i>therm-</i> heat <i>trachy-</i> rough <i>trans-</i> across <i>trapez-</i> four sided, table <i>tremulans-</i> trembling <i>tri-</i> three <i>trich-</i> hair <i>troph-</i> feed </p>	<p> <i>ultra-</i> above <i>umbilic-</i> navel <i>un-</i> one <i>unc-</i> hook <i>ungul-</i> hoof, claw <i>urs-</i> of bears <i>uv(ela)-</i> grapes </p>	<p> <i>vagina-</i> sheath <i>vagus-</i> wandering <i>vas-</i> vessel <i>ven-</i> vein <i>ventr-</i> belly <i>verd-</i> green <i>veris-</i> true <i>vesic-</i> blister <i>virens-</i> green <i>visc-</i> organs of body cavity <i>vita-</i> life <i>vitell-</i> yolk <i>vitr-</i> glass <i>vora-</i> devour <i>vulgaris-</i> common </p>	<p> <i>xanth-</i> yellow <i>xen-</i> stranger <i>xyl-</i> wood <i>zo-</i> animal <i>zyg-</i> yoke </p>
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