



# How to use Over and Under as Prefixes



**This PDF will show you how to use the words OVER and UNDER as prefixes to change the meaning of other words you may already know.**

A **prefix** is: a letter or group of letters added to the beginning of a word to change its meaning, such as **un-** in unhappy and **pre-** in preheat

Over – **prefix** = excessively or too much  
overweight – weigh too much (adjective)  
overconfident – be excessively [too] confident (adjective)  
overeat – eat too much (verb)

Under – **prefix** = below or not enough  
underwater – below the surface of the water (adjective)  
undercooked – not cooked enough (adjective)  
underqualified – not having enough qualifications (adjective)

## The Prefix **OVER**

In English when **OVER** is used as a prefix it can mean **EXCESSIVELY** or **TOO MUCH**.

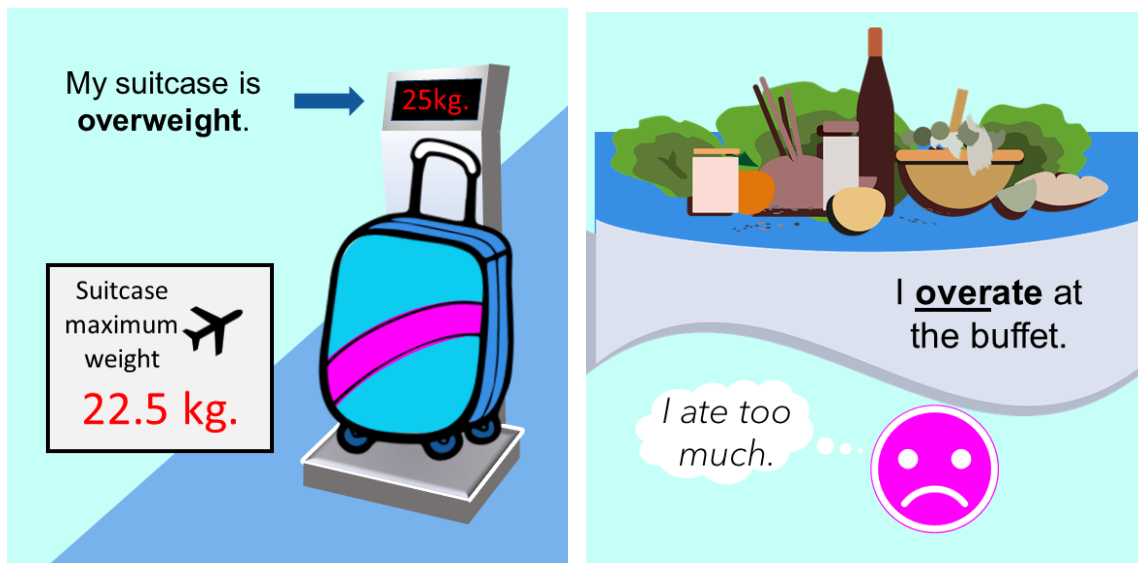
### Examples:

→ If your luggage is too heavy when you weigh it at the airport, your bags are **overweight**.

◆ My suitcase is **overweight**. (*Overweight is an adjective.*)

→ If you eat too much at a buffet and now your stomach hurts, it may be because you **overate**.

◆ I **overate** at the all you can eat restaurant. (*Overate is the past tense of the verb overeat.*)



Both these words (**overweight** - **overeat**) show that something is **too much** or **was done too much**.

## The Prefix UNDER - Examples:

In English we use the prefix **UNDER** to mean **BELOW** or **NOT ENOUGH**.

You may already know some common words that use this prefix.

- underground
- underwater

These words talk about a position or location, they mean below ground and below the surface of the water.



## More examples:

→ If something is not cooked enough it is **undercooked**.

◆ I'm gonna send this hamburger back. It's **undercooked**.

*(Undercooked is an adjective.)*

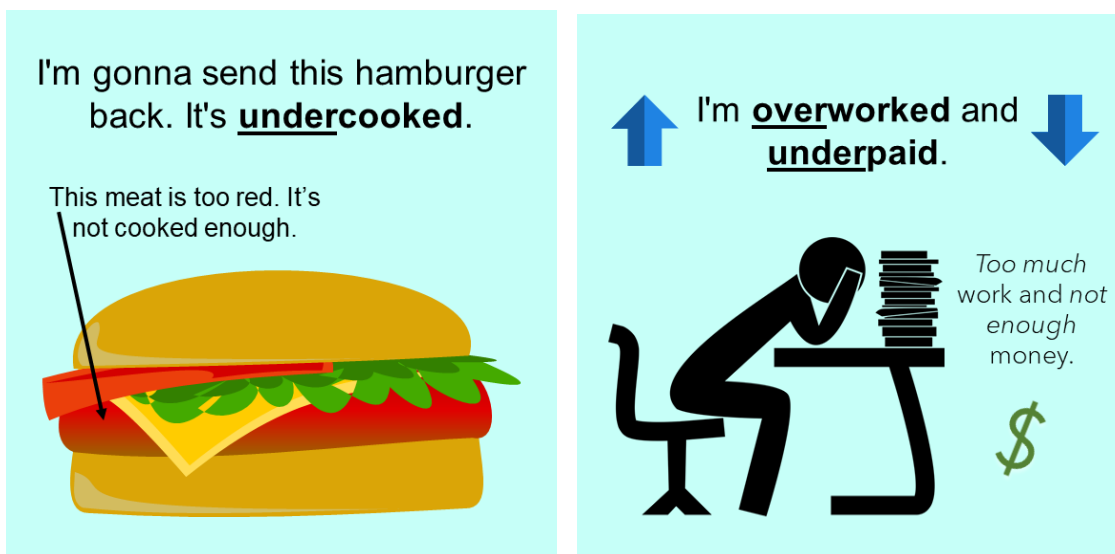
→ If you don't have enough qualifications for a job you are **underqualified**.

◆ "Peter applied for a new job but he was **underqualified**."

*(Underqualified is an adjective.)*

Some people who work very hard at their job but feel like they don't get enough money might say:

*"I'm **overworked** and **underpaid**."*



## MORE words with the prefix OVER

- **overdo** – to do too much (verb)

My back is really sore today. I think I **overdid** it at the gym yesterday.

- **overdone** – done too much (adjective)

This steak is **overdone**. (= cooked too much)

- **oversee** – to watch somebody/something and make sure that a job or an activity is done correctly (verb)

The architect **oversaw** the building of the model house.

- ①**overlook** – to fail to see or notice something (verb X3)

We should not **overlook** this possibility.

- ②**overlook** – to see something wrong or bad but decide to ignore it

I can **overlook** your mistakes this time but please be more careful in the future.

- ③**overlook** – if a building, etc. overlooks a place, you can see that place from the building

My wife and I had dinner at a great restaurant **overlooking** the ocean.

- **overachiever** – a person who tries too hard to be successful in their work (noun)

Spencer comes in early and works overtime every day. He is such an **overachiever**.

- **overbearing** – trying to control other people in an unpleasant way (adjective)

I feel bad for Ken. His mother is really **overbearing**.

- **overhaul** – an examination of a machine or system, including doing repairs on it or making changes to it (noun)

I'm going to do an **overhaul** of my entire website.

- **overhaul** – to examine every part of a machine, system, etc. and make any necessary changes or repairs (verb)

We need to **overhaul** the car's engine. It's gonna be expensive.

- ①**override** – to use your authority to reject somebody's decision, order, etc. (verb X3)

The chairman **overrode** the committee's objections and signed the agreement.

- ②**override** – to be more important than something  
Safety concerns **override** all other issues.

- ③**override** – to interrupt the action of a device that usually works by itself in order to control it yourself

I had to **override** my computer after I forgot my password.

- **overcharge** – to make somebody pay too much for something (verb)

It's a popular nightclub but they will **overcharge** you on the drinks if you don't watch the bartenders carefully.

- **overturn** – overturn something to officially decide that a legal decision, etc. is not correct, and to make it no longer legally recognized (verb)

The verdict was **overturned** by the appeal court.

## **MORE words with the prefix UNDER**

- **undergo** – to experience something, especially a change or something unpleasant (verb)

New COVID-19 vaccines are currently **undergoing** trials in Asia.

- **underway** – having started (adjective)

New vaccine trials are **underway**.

- **undertake** – to make yourself responsible for something and start doing it (verb)

This task has been **undertaken** by a group of new employees.

- **underhanded** – secret and dishonest (adjective)

Too many leaders and business owners are involved in **underhanded** deals.

- **underprivileged** – having less money and fewer opportunities than most people in society (adjective)

We need more programs in place to support the **underprivileged** in our society.

- **underlying** – important in a situation but not always easily noticed or stated clearly (adjective)

Unemployment may be an **underlying** cause of the rising crime rate.

- **undermine** – to make something, especially somebody's confidence or authority, gradually weaker or less effective (verb)

Budget cuts have **undermined** our efforts to vaccinate more people.

- **undergraduate** – a university or college student who is studying for their first degree \*This is commonly shortened to undergrad. (noun)

I teach language communication to **undergrads** at university.

- **underdog** – a person, team, country, etc. that is thought to be in a weaker position than others and therefore not likely to be successful, win a competition, etc. (noun)

In politics, he was a champion of the **underdog** (= always fought for the rights of weaker people).

- **underage** – done by people who are too young by law (adjective)

The police shut down the party due to all the **underage** drinking.

Learn more at my blog post [HERE](#)

