



The Prefix SUB-



Learning prefixes is an awesome way to increase your English vocabulary. This post will teach you how to use **the prefix sub-** with lots of real example sentences.

The prefix SUB-

1. *Below or less than*

- I live in a **subtropical** area.

2. *Under*

- Let's take the **subway** to save on parking.

3. A smaller part of something

- Only a small **subset** of patients qualify for the drug trial.

The prefix SUB-

The prefix sub- has three meanings.

#1. (in **nouns** and **adjectives**) below; less than

We are expecting heavy snow, strong winds, and **sub-zero** temperatures tomorrow.

#2. (in **nouns** and **adjectives**) under

I like to watch foreign movies with **subtitles**.

#3. (in **verbs** and **nouns**) a smaller part of something

They are building a new **subdivision** behind the school.

[sub- \[prefix\] Oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com](http://sub-[prefix].Oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com)

Word Origin

from Latin sub 'under, close to'.

For a word to be included in this post, **the prefix sub-** must be added to an already existing word to change the meaning. Words like *subject* and *subvert* did not qualify. (*Ject* and *vert* are not words.)

Adjectives with the prefix SUB-

[subarctic](#) - relating to the region just south of the Arctic Circle

- **Subarctic** forests are at risk due to climate change.

Root meaning [arctic](#)

[subconscious](#) - connected with feelings that influence your behavior even though you are not aware of them

- Many commercials and advertisements try to affect your mind on a **subconscious** level.

Root meaning [conscious](#)

[suboptimal](#) - of less than the best standard or quality

- Military hospitals inside a warzone do the best they can in harsh conditions. The environment is **suboptimal** for healthcare.

Root meaning [optimal](#)

[subprime](#) - connected with the practice of lending money to somebody who is likely to have difficulty paying it back

- Dennis had a low-paying job so he applied for a **subprime** mortgage when he bought a house.

Root meaning [prime](#)

[sub-Saharan](#) - from or relating to areas in Africa that are south of the Sahara Desert

- Motorcycles have recently become quite popular in **sub-Saharan** Africa. There are more motorcycles on the road now than ever before.

Root meaning [Sahara](#)

Did you know?

The Sahara desert is the largest hot desert in the world. Smaller only than the cold deserts of Antarctica and the northern Arctic. [LINK](#)



[substandard](#) - not as good as normal; not acceptable

- After opening 3 cases, we discovered the products were **substandard** and immediately sent them back to the factory.

Root meaning [standard](#)

[subtropical](#) - in or connected with regions that are near tropical parts of the world

- Bananas grow well in **subtropical** climates.

Root meaning [tropical](#)

[suburban](#) - in or connected with a suburb

- I was lucky to be raised in a **suburban** environment. We were close enough to the city to enjoy the convenience but far enough away to not be bothered by large crowds, bright lights, and noise.

Root meaning [urban](#)

[sub-zero](#) - below zero

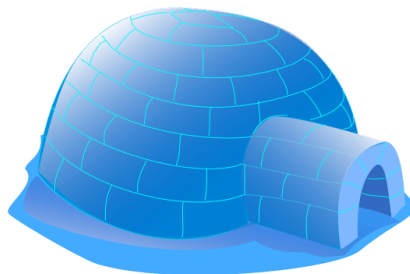
- We are expecting heavy snow, strong winds, and **sub-zero** temperatures tomorrow.

Root meaning [zero](#)

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Did you know?

The Eastern Antarctic Plateau, Antarctica is the coldest place on Earth. Air temperatures could be around -94°C. [LINK](#)



Two adverbs with the prefix sub-

[subconsciously](#) adverb - as a result of feelings that influence your behavior even though you are not aware of them

- Commercials try to **subconsciously** affect our shopping habits. Ad companies are very sneaky.

[suboptimally](#) adverb - not in the best way; not to the highest standard

- Ryan's stomach cramps were caused by a **suboptimally** distended bladder.

*This adverb is quite rare!

FAQ - Difference between Urban and Rural

The root word of Suburban is Urban. Some of my private students have asked me to explain the difference between urban and rural. Here is what I teach them.

Urban vs Rural (city vs countryside)

Urban is an adjective that means connected with a town or city

"I used to live in Tokyo. Tokyo is very big, with lots of people, buildings, and businesses. Tokyo is an **urban** area."

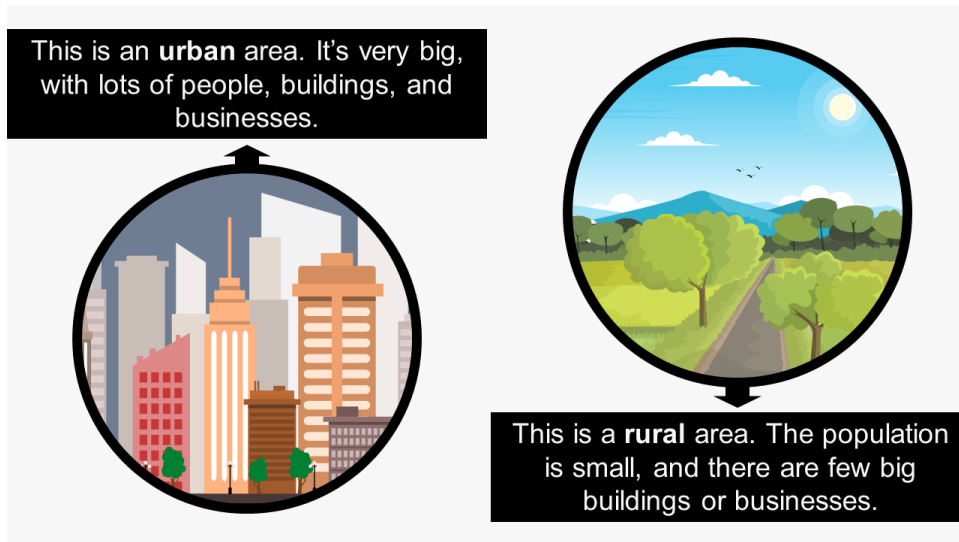
urban Oxford Learner's Dictionary [HERE](#)

Rural is an adjective that means connected with or like the countryside

"My family is from a very **rural** part of Ontario. The population is small, and there are few big buildings or businesses."

rural Oxford Learner's Dictionary [HERE](#)

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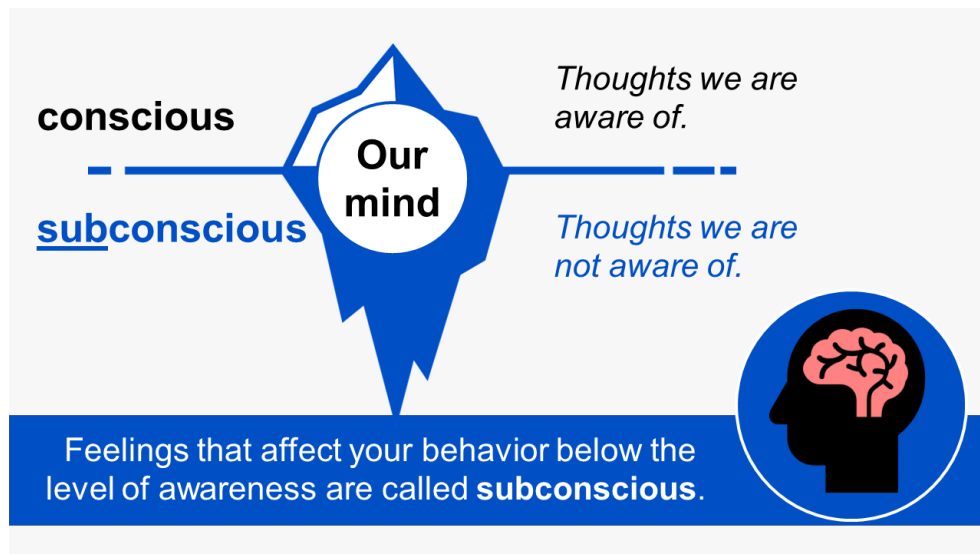


Nouns with the prefix SUB-

subconscious - the part of your mind that contains feelings that you are not aware of

- Advertisers are always trying to influence our **subconscious**.

Root meaning conscious



subcontractor - a person or company that does part of the work given to another person or company

- The renovation company uses **subcontractors** to do the carpeting and painting.

Root meaning contractor

subculture - the behavior and beliefs of a particular group of people in society that are different from those of most people

- The police send undercover officers inside the city's criminal **subculture**. It's dangerous work but it's necessary.

Root meaning culture

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subdivision - an area of land that has been divided up for building houses on

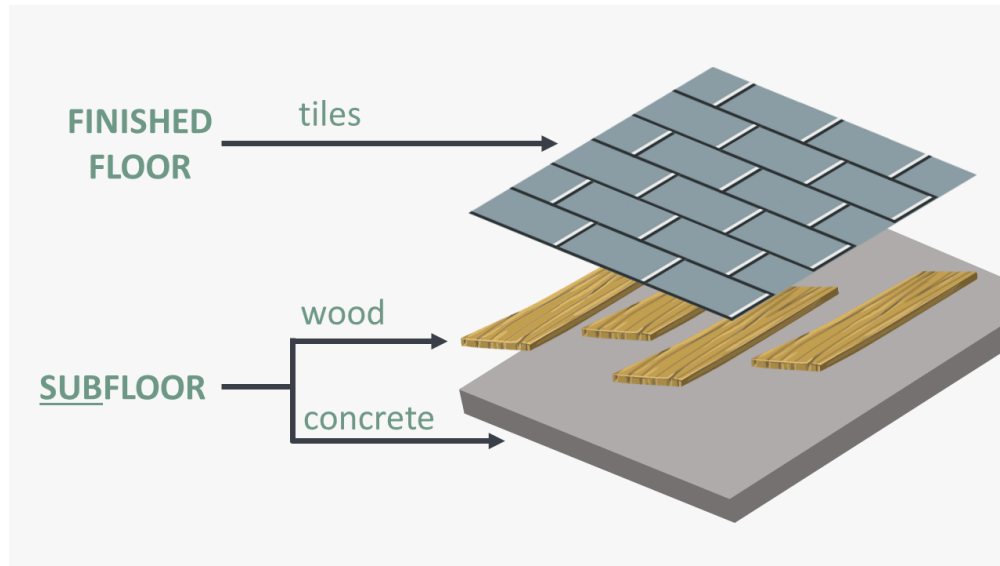
- They are building a new **subdivision** behind the school.

Root meaning division

subfloor - a rough floor laid as a base for a finished floor

- The subcontractor needs 3 days to do the floors. The first day is to measure and build the **subfloor** and the next 2 days are for tile installation.

Root meaning floor



subgenre - a genre that is part of a larger genre

- The found-footage **subgenre** of horror movies was very popular when I was younger.
Found footage (film technique)

Root meaning genre

subgroup - a smaller group made up of members of a larger group

- The survey asked 3 questions from people across 18 **subgroups** divided by ideology, religiosity, and age.

Root meaning group

Do you know Reddit?

Reddit is a network of communities where people can read and write about their interests, hobbies and passions. A **subreddit** is a Reddit community or **group** dedicated to one topic. (A **subgroup**) <https://www.reddit.com/>

subheading - a title given to any of the sections into which a longer piece of writing has been divided

- A good blog post is divided into clear headings and **subheadings**. This makes the information easier to read and understand.

Root meaning heading

sublet - property and especially housing obtained by or available through a sublease

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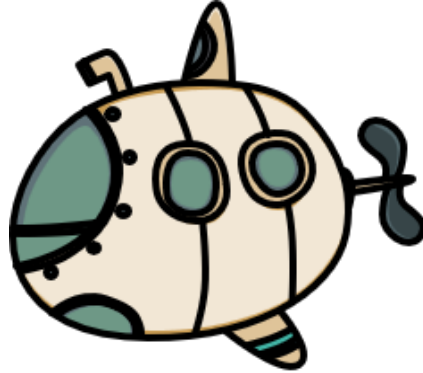
- When I get to town I'm going to look for a **sublet** that I can stay in for a few weeks. A quiet place where I can finish writing my book.

Root meaning [let](#)

[submarine](#) - a ship that can travel underwater

- France has a deal to sell nuclear **submarines** to Australia.

Root meaning [marine](#)



Submariner is the name of a high-quality diving watch made by Rolex. Diving watches are specially made to work underwater. (Just like a submarine.) [Rolex](#)

Namor The Sub-Mariner is the name of a Marvel Comic character who lives underwater. [Comic](#)
Did you know? The Sub-Mariner comic came before Aquaman? [LINK](#)

[subplot](#) - a series of events in a play, novel, etc. that is separate from but linked to the main story

- I'm a big fan of this TV show, I like the characters and their **subplots** are always interesting.

Root meaning [plot](#)

[subquery](#) [computing] - A query embedded within a more extensive query, relating only to the data returned by the parent query.

- The files I was looking for were located on a **subquery** on an external hard drive.

Root meaning [query](#)

[subset](#) - a smaller group of people or things formed from the members of a larger group

- Only a small **subset** of patients qualify for the drug trial.

Root meaning [set](#)

[subtitles](#) - words that translate what is said in a film into a different language and appear on the screen at the bottom

- I like to watch foreign movies with **subtitles**.

Root meaning [title](#)



subtotal - the total of a set of numbers which is then added to other totals to give a final number

- I finally learned how to use the **subtotal** function in Microsoft Excel.

Root meaning [total](#)

suburb - an area where people live that is outside the center of a city

- I liked growing up in the **suburbs**. I had many friends there's always something fun to do.

Root meaning [urban](#)

subway - an underground railway system in a city

- I've lived in Japan for many years and I'm still surprised how the **subways**, trains, and buses are always on schedule. It's amazing.

Root meaning [way](#)

subwoofer - a part of a loudspeaker that produces very low sounds

- Lucas just bought some wireless **subwoofers** for his home theater system. They sound great.

Root meaning [woofer](#)



Verbs with the prefix SUB-

[sublet](#) - to rent to somebody else all or part of a property that you rent from the owner

- I stay with my parents for a few months every summer. I **sublet** my apartment in the city during that time to make some extra money.

Root meaning [let](#)

[subscribe](#) - to arrange to have regular access to an electronic information service or other Internet services

- I have **subscribed** to a YouTube channel and 3 subreddits about fishing.

Root meaning [scribe](#)



[subtitle](#) - to give a subtitle or subtitles to a book, film, etc.

- I have one client in Japan who **subtitles** western movies for the Japanese audience. I often consult with her on English movies and TV shows.

Root meaning [title](#)

Advanced Vocabulary

I have included two more vocabulary words here that are a little bit advanced but I have heard once or twice in movies or in conversation.

Note that these two words are using the suffix sub- to mean **below** but they're not connected to a root word that is used by itself.

Subsidiary

A business or company that is owned or controlled by another, larger company is a [subsidiary](#).

- Google, Calico, and DeepMind are all **subsidiaries** of Alphabet Inc. They are companies owned by Alphabet.

More info about these companies from Wikipedia below:

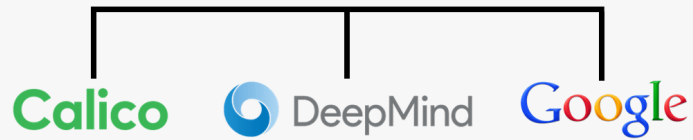
- [Alphabet Inc.](#)
- [Google](#)
- [Calico](#)
- [DeepMind](#)

Word Origin

mid 16th cent. (in the sense 'serving to help or supplement'): from Latin subsidiarius, from subsidium 'support, assistance'.

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Alphabet Inc.



Calico, DeepMind, and Google are all **subsidiaries** of Alphabet Inc.

Subterranean

If something is located under the ground we can use the adjective [subterranean](#).

- Many historical buildings have private access to underground chambers. Guided tours through the **subterranean** city are a tourist highlight.

Word Origin

early 17th cent.: from Latin subterraneus (from sub- 'below' + terra 'earth') + -an.



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