



# Suffix -ism Word List



## Meaning of the suffix -ISM

The suffix **-ism** is used in a few different ways. \*Words ending in -ISM are always nouns

① the action or result of

Example - criticism

② the state or quality of

Example - heroism

③ the teaching, system or movement of

Examples - Buddhism, Capitalism

④ unfair treatment or feelings of hate for the reason mentioned

Examples - racism, sexism

⑤ a feature of language of the type mentioned

Examples - a colloquialism, a euphemism

⑥ a medical condition or disease

Example - alcoholism

The word **ism** is also used as a noun (usually disapproving) to refer to a set of ideas or system of beliefs or behavior

- "Isms, in my opinion, are not good. A person should not believe in an **ism**, he should believe in himself." From the 1986 comedy "Ferris Bueller's Day Off" [IMDb](#)

## Words with the suffix -ISM

[Absolutism](#) - a political system in which a leader or government has total power at all times

- "**Absolutism** was the dominant form of government in Europe during the 17th century."

[Activism](#) - the activity of working to achieve political or social change, especially as a member of an organization with particular aims

- "Many college and university students today are involved in social **activism**."

[Ageism](#) - unfair treatment of people because they are considered too old

- "The company's decision to only hire young employees was a clear example of **ageism**."
- "**Ageism** is prevalent in Hollywood where younger actresses are preferred to their older counterparts."

[Alcoholism](#) - the medical condition caused by drinking too much alcohol regularly

- "After many years of denial, Janice finally saw treatment for her **alcoholism**."

[Altruism](#) - the fact of caring about the needs and happiness of other people and being willing to do things to help them, even if it brings no advantage to yourself

- "True **altruism** is the act of giving without expecting anything in return."

**Atheism** - lack of belief in the existence of God or gods

- "There are several levels of **atheism** including strong and weak versions."

**Baptism** - a Christian ceremony in which a few drops of water are poured on somebody or they are covered with water, to welcome them into the Christian Church and often to name them

- "Denise went to a **baptism** for her nephew on the weekend."

**Buddhism** - an Indian religion widely followed in Asia, based on the teaching of Siddhartha Gautama (or Buddha)

- "**Buddhism** is a peaceful religion that teaches compassion and non-violence."

**Capitalism** - an economic system in which a country's businesses and industry are controlled and run for profit by private owners rather than by the government

- "**Capitalism** encourages competition and innovation."

**Catholicism** - the beliefs and principles of the part of the Christian Church that has the pope as its leader

- "**Catholicism** is the traditions and beliefs of Catholic Churches."

**Chauvinism** - the belief held by some men that men are more important, more intelligent or better than women

- "Hugh is rude to women, he's the poster boy for male **chauvinism**."

**Colloquialism** - a word or phrase that is used in conversation but not in formal speech or writing

- "The phrase "I'm gonna grab a coffee." is a **colloquialism**."

**Consumerism** - the buying and using of goods and services; the belief that it is good for a society or an individual person to buy and use a large quantity of goods and services

- "Some people think that modern society is too focused on **consumerism**."

**Criticism** - the act of expressing disapproval of somebody/something and opinions about their faults or bad qualities; a statement showing this disapproval

- "The mayor faced **criticism** for his decision to lease the waterfront property to a big private company."

**Cynicism** - the belief that people only do things to help themselves, rather than for good or sincere reasons

- "The presidential candidate was smart but his **cynicism** turned off many of the voters."

**Determinism** - the belief that people are not free to choose what they are like or how they behave, because these things are decided by their environment and other things over which they have no control

- "I'm reading a book right now that discusses the difference between Free Will and **determinism**. It's a heavy topic but quite interesting."

**Dualism** - the theory that there are two opposite principles in everything, for example good and evil/the state of having two parts

- "Some religious scholars hold a belief in the **dualism** of spirit and flesh."

**Euphemism** - an indirect word or phrase that people often use to refer to something embarrassing or unpleasant, sometimes to make it seem more acceptable than it really is

- "**Downsizing** is a **euphemism** for *firing our employees*."

**Fanaticism** - extreme beliefs or behavior, especially in connection with religion or politics

- "Religious **fanaticism** is on the rise in our country."

**Fatalism** - the belief that events are decided by fate and that you cannot control them; the fact of accepting that you cannot prevent something from happening

- "Followers of **fatalism** claim of the belief has freed them from worry and doubt."

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**Feminism** - the belief and aim that women should have the same rights and opportunities as men; the struggle to achieve this aim

- "Feminism is the movement for women's rights and equality."

**Hedonism** - the belief that pleasure is the most important thing in life

- "Hedonism is a philosophy that encourages the pursuit of pleasure."

**Heroism** - very great courage

- "The heroism displayed by all the First Responders is inspiring."

**Humanism** - a system of thought that considers that solving human problems with the help of reason is more important than religious beliefs. It emphasizes the fact that the basic nature of humans is good.

- "Humanism is a rational approach to life."

**Idealism** - the belief that a perfect life, situation, etc. can be achieved, even when this is not very likely

- "The teacher's belief in the ability of every student to succeed is a clear example of idealism."

**Journalism** - the work of collecting and writing news stories for newspapers, magazines, radio, television or online news sites; the news stories that are written

- "The newspaper article was a solid piece of investigative journalism."

**Imperialism** - a system in which one country controls other countries, often after defeating them in a war

- "Imperialism was the main cause of the colonization of Africa."

**Magnetism** - a physical property (= characteristic) of some metals such as iron, produced by electric currents, that causes forces between objects, either pulling them towards each other or pushing them apart

- "The force of magnetism is what causes a compass needle to point North."

the qualities of something, especially a person's character, that people find powerful and attractive

- "His personal magnetism attracts attention from all the girls at the office."

**Materialism** - (usually disapproving) the belief that money, possessions and physical comforts are more important than spiritual values

- "She was troubled by the greed and materialism of modern society."

**Mechanism** - a set of moving parts in a machine that performs a task

- "He set the safety on his gun which locks the firing mechanism. This makes the gun unable to fire."

**Metabolism** - the chemical processes in living things that change food, etc. into energy and materials for growth (Your metabolic rate.)

- "Extremely cold weather can slow down your body's metabolism."

**Militarism** - the belief that a country should have great military strength in order to be powerful

- "North Korea's militarism is a worry to its neighbors and countries around the world."

**Narcissism** - (formal, disapproving) the habit of admiring yourself too much, especially your appearance

- "Ryan was obsessed with his appearance. Narcissism would prove to be his downfall as it would cost him private and work relationships."

**Nationalism** - the desire by a group of people who share the same ethnic group, culture, language, etc. to form an independent country

- "Nationalism is often the cause of unfair tax and trade policy placed on goods from foreign countries."

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[Naturalism](#) - (philosophy) the theory that everything in the world and life is based on natural causes and laws, and not on spiritual or supernatural ones

- “**Naturalism** often finds itself at odds with religious fundamentalists.”

[Nepotism](#) - giving unfair advantages to your own family if you are in a position of power, especially by giving them jobs

- “Many organizations have policies in place to prevent **nepotism** in hiring and promotion decisions.”

[Nihilism](#) - the belief that life has no meaning or purpose and that religious and moral principles have no value

- “The philosopher followed **nihilism** and believed that life had no ultimate meaning or purpose.”

[Optimism](#) - a feeling that good things will happen and that something will be successful

- “**Optimism** is a positive attitude towards life.”

[Organism](#) - (biology or formal) a living thing, especially one that is extremely small

- “The earliest life forms we know of were microscopic **organisms** that were on earth about 3.7 billion years ago”. [SOURCE](#)

[Pacifism](#) - the belief that war and violence are always wrong

- “I’m afraid that **pacifism** is losing popularity recently. We only see conflict met with more conflict.”

[Pessimism](#) - a feeling that bad things will happen and that something will not be successful

- “There was growing **pessimism** that the president would keep the promises he made during his campaign.”

[Plagiarism](#) - an act of plagiarizing something; something that has been plagiarized (copy another person’s ideas, words or work and pretend that they are your own)

- “**Plagiarism** is a serious academic offense.”

[Pragmatism](#) - thinking about solving problems in a practical and sensible way rather than by having fixed ideas and theories

- “**Pragmatism** is the only thing that will help move this country forward.”

[Racism](#) - the unfair treatment of people who belong to a different race; violent behavior towards them

- “**Racism** is a destructive force that needs to be stopped.”

[Realism](#) - a way of seeing, accepting and dealing with situations as they really are without being influenced by your emotions or false hopes

- “**Realism** is a way to see the world without biases.”

[Recidivism](#) - the act or habit of continuing to commit crimes, and seeming unable to stop, even after being punished

- “**Recidivism** can be reduced through rehabilitation programs and education opportunities for offenders.”

[Romanticism](#) - a style and movement in art, music and literature in the late 18th and early 19th century, in which strong feelings, imagination and a return to nature were more important than reason, order and intellectual ideas

[Sexism](#) - the unfair treatment of people, especially women, because of their sex; the attitude that causes this

- “**Sexism** in the workplace is becoming a growing problem in this country.”

[Socialism](#) - a set of political and economic theories based on the belief that everyone has an equal right to a share of a country’s wealth and that the government should own and control the main industries

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- “**Socialism** aims to reduce economic inequality.”

[Solipsism](#) - the theory that only the self exists or can be known

- “**Solipsism** was first recorded by the Greek philosopher, Gorgias.”

[Stoicism](#) - the fact of not complaining or showing what you are feeling when you are suffering (Being stoic)

- “**Stoicism** is an ancient philosophy that emphasizes the acceptance of the present moment and the ability to remain calm in the face of adversity.”

[Terrorism](#) - the use of violent action in order to achieve political aims or to force a government to act

- “**Terrorism** is a threat to world peace.”

[Theism](#) - belief in the existence of God or gods

- “There are two branches of **theism**. **Monotheism** is the belief that there's only one God and **polytheism** is the belief that there are many gods.”

[Utilitarianism](#) - the belief that the right course of action is the one that will produce the greatest happiness of the greatest number of people

- “His actions are motivated by his belief in **utilitarianism**.”

[Vandalism](#) - the crime of destroying or damaging something, especially public property, deliberately and for no good reason

- “Acts of **vandalism** have increased this year by 11%.”



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