

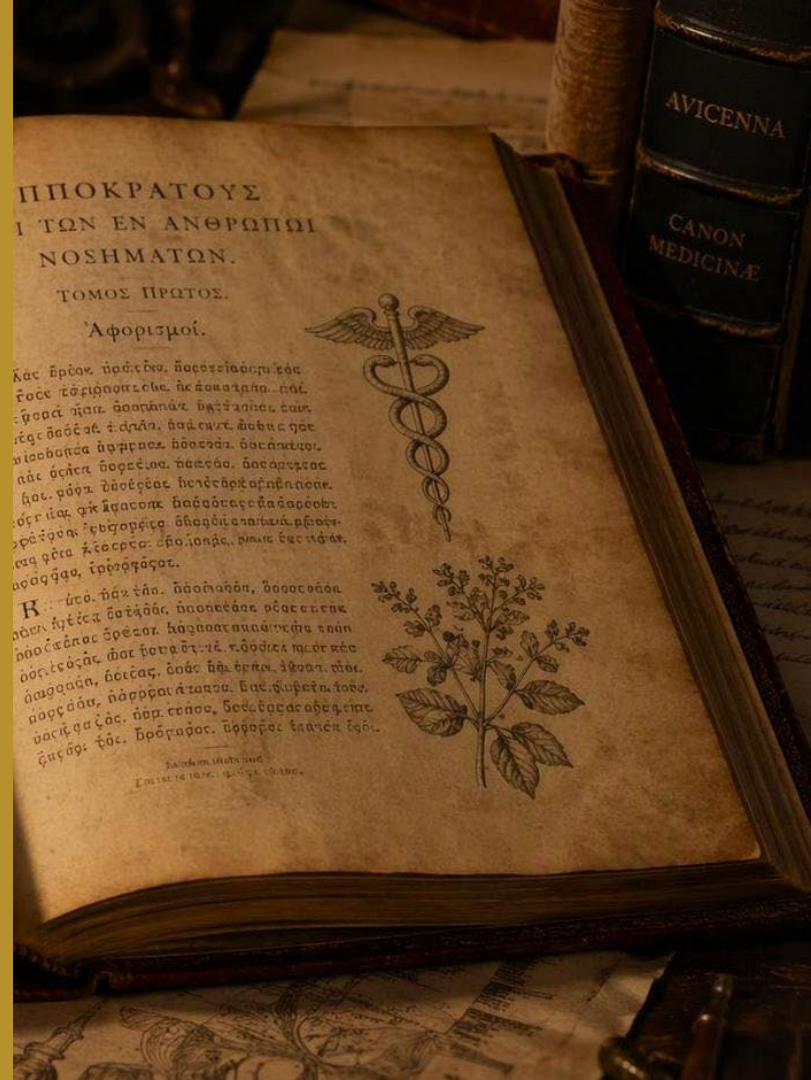
A TRAINING WORKSHOP

Teaching Latin & Greek Root Words for Medical Interpreters

Decode medical terminology with confidence — build the roots, prefixes, and suffixes behind everyday clinical language.

Designed for a mixed classroom of trainee and practicing interpreters

By Professional Translations Solutions, LLC



Why Root Words Matter

- Thousands of medical terms are built from a small set of Greek and Latin parts.
- Learn the parts once and you can decode words you have never seen before.
- Accurate roots protect patient safety — a single misread part can change an organ or a procedure.
- Confidence with terminology lets you focus on meaning and tone, not on guessing.



Anatomy of a Medical Term

Most terms break into three predictable pieces. Read them from the end backward.

PREFIX

hyper-

where / when / how much

ROOT

cardi-

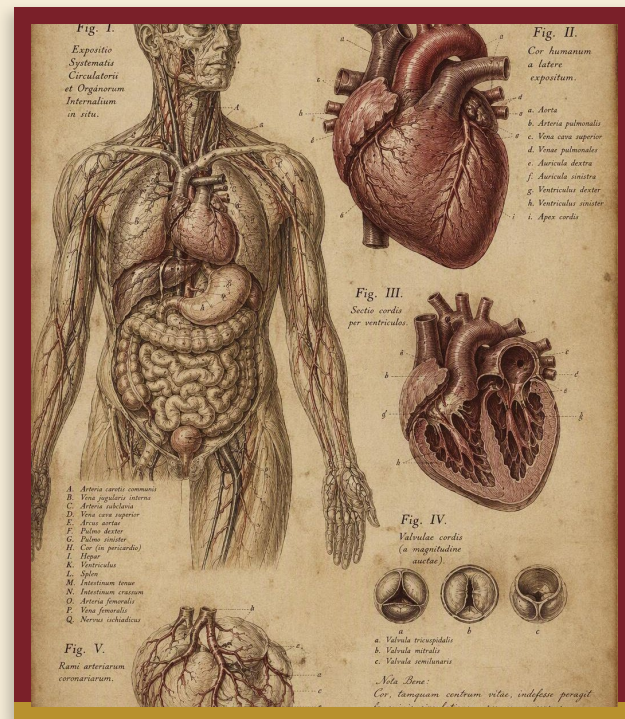
the body part or system

SUFFIX

-ology

condition or procedure

Example: *cardi* (heart) + *-ology* (study of) = **cardiology**



Common Roots to Know

Roots name the organ or body system. Each card shows root — meaning — a term you will hear.

cardi/o

heart

cardiology

hepat/o

liver

hepatitis

nephr/o

kidney

nephrology

gastr/o

stomach

gastritis

derm/o

skin

dermatology

pneum/o

lung / air

pneumonia

oste/o

bone

osteoporosis

neur/o

nerve

neurology

Prefixes & Suffixes

Prefixes tell you where, when, or how much. Suffixes tell you the condition or procedure.

PREFIXES

hyper- excessive / high — *hypertension*

hypo- low / under — *hypoglycemia*

brady- slow — *bradycardia*

tachy- fast — *tachycardia*

a- / an- without — *anemia*

SUFFIXES

-itis inflammation — *arthritis*

-ectomy surgical removal — *appendectomy*

-otomy incision into — *tracheotomy*

-algia pain — *neuralgia*

-emia blood condition — *leukemia*

-ology study of — *cardiology*

-oscopy - the visual examination with a specialized medical instrument - *colonoscopy*

Exercise 1 — Match the Root

Draw a line from each root to its meaning. Write your answers, then check the key at the end.

ROOT

1. **gastr/o**

2. **oste/o**

3. **nephr/o**

4. **derm/o**

5. **pneum/o**

MEANING

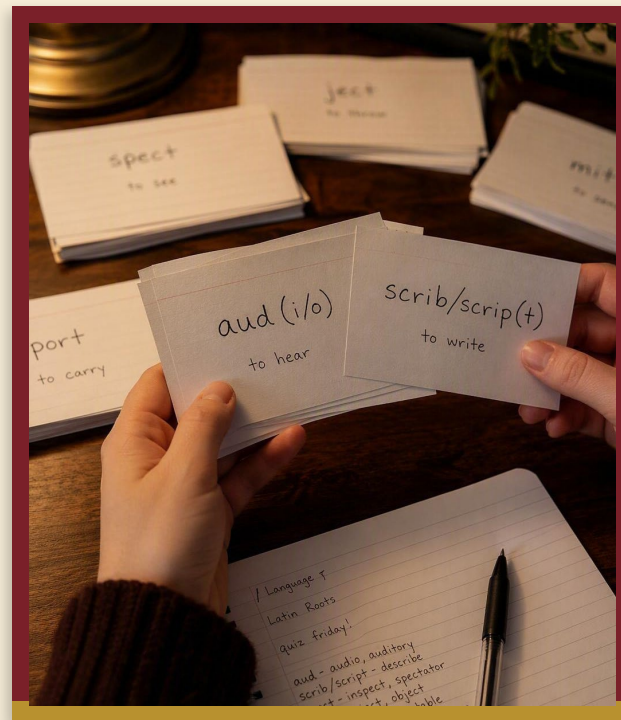
A. bone

B. skin

C. lung / air

D. stomach

E. kidney



Exercise 2 — Build & Decode Terms

Combine the parts to build a term or break a term into its parts.

BUILD THE TERM

- inflammation of the liver = hepat/o + -itis
- study of the nerves = neur/o + -ology
- surgical removal of the stomach = gastr/o + -ectomy

DECODE THE TERM

- cardiology = _____ + _____
- dermatitis = _____ + _____
- tachycardia = _____ + _____

Exercise 3 — Fill in the Blank

Complete each medical term with the correct prefix or suffix from the reference slides.

- 1 High blood pressure is called _____ tension.
- 2 A slow heart rate is _____ cardia.
- 3 Inflammation of the joints is arthr_____.
- 4 Surgical removal of the appendix is an append_____.
- 5 A condition of low blood sugar is _____ glycemia.

Exercise 4 — Real Interpreting Scenario

The physician says: *“We need a gastroscopy because your labs show anemia and possible gastritis.”*

1. Break down gastroscopy, anemia, and gastritis into their roots and affixes.
2. Explain each term in plain language the patient can understand.
3. Which part names the organ, and which part names the procedure?

Interpreter tip: *convey meaning, not word-for-word — then confirm the patient understood.*



Answer Key & Study Tips

ANSWER KEY

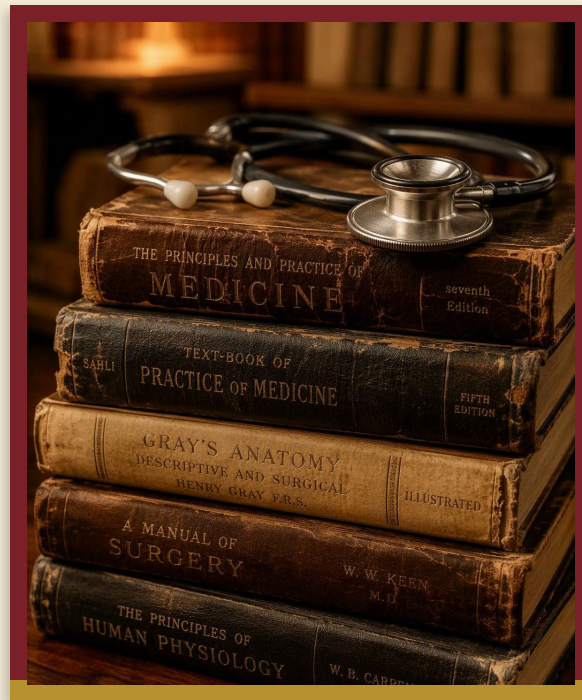
Ex 1: 1-D, 2-A, 3-E, 4-B, 5-C

Ex 2 (decode): cardi/o + -ology · derm + -itis · tachy- + -cardia

Ex 3: hyper- · brady- · -itis · -ectomy · hypo-

STUDY TIPS

- Learn roots in related groups, then read every term from the suffix backward.
- Keep a personal glossary of terms and words you meet on the job.



References & Further Reading

Resources to keep building your medical terminology skills.

TEXTBOOKS & DICTIONARIES

Chabner, D. The Language of Medicine. Elsevier.

Cohen, B. J. & Jones, S. A. Medical Terminology: An Illustrated Guide. Wolters Kluwer.

Ehrlich, A. & Schroeder, C. L. Medical Terminology for Health Professions. Cengage.

Taber's Cyclopedic Medical Dictionary. F. A. Davis.

INTERPRETER & ONLINE RESOURCES

NCIHC — National Council on Interpreting in Health Care (ncihc.org).

IMIA — International Medical Interpreters Association (imiaweb.org).

MedlinePlus — U.S. National Library of Medicine (medlineplus.gov).

Merriam-Webster Medical Dictionary (merriam-webster.com/medical).