

PSEUDOANTONYMS

ANIL

Perth, Australia

Pseudoantonyms or contronyms are pairs of apparent antonyms that instead are synonyms of sorts. The two forms must be able to be the same part of speech. For example, **tied up** and **tied down** by the Lilliputians. Pseudoantonyms are not to be confused with Susan Thorpe's double negative Pseudo-opposites in the November 2010 Kickshaws.

The present article deals with misleading negatory prefixes of words that should be antonyms of the rest of their word but instead are in some sense synonyms. **Disguise** = **guise** is a prime example. Most of those below are gimmicky, eg, **inflammable**, **invaluable**, and all of the **a-**'s: their prefixes are intensifiers or other modifiers that only coincidentally resemble negators. Two pairs that were not synonyms had amusing affinities: **Apathetic**. "**Pathetic!** — **Discuss?**" **Cuss**.

<u>Negator</u>	<u>added to these substantives</u> <i>doesn't</i> reverse or even change the meaning, or not much.
a-	bate, bide, butting, corn, far, fresh, kin, light, like, live, mass, mend, mid, rise, round, rouse, skew, stray, vow, wait, waken
contr-	alto ¹
counter-	act... ² , balance, culture, part
de-	cease, fault, fend, legate, part, pend, press, spoil, void
dis-	coloured, guise, miss[i/a]ble ³ , section, solution
im-	passive, pending, peril, plant, print, prison
in-	coming, dent, famous, flammable, scribe, take, valuable
no- ⁴	ball, body, contest, hoper, nonsense (non-on sense)
non- ⁴	collegiate ⁵ , entity, event, person, word
not-	aries ⁶ , e-book, half bad, o' Gaea ⁶ , ornis ⁶
un-	ravel, to, 'til (and, debatably, <i>till</i> , despite the etymological and spelling differences)

¹ Alto once meant the highest male voice, making it a contronym (self-opposite), past vs. present.

In fact it's an unusual double contronym, highest vs. lowest *and* male vs. female

² and over 30 other counter- words that mean the same activity from the opposite side or direction

³ For no apparent reason dismissible and missable have different spellings of the -ble suffix. Is there a cover-up conspiracy here? Missable isn't listed in most dictionaries including Web-3. (*A self-referential event!*) Dismissible also isn't in Web-3. (*Another!*) Was the omission accidental, or do they expect us to infer the -ble forms and how to spell them?

⁴ Most of these negators are used ironically, so the referents are nonetheless balls, bodies, contests, hopeful, entities, events, people or "words" (collections of letters with an attributed meaning; misspellings, nonces and coinages are still words to the user).

⁵ In the UK non-collegiate refers to university students not connected with a College (a glorified dormitory), but in the US sense they are still collegiate.

⁶ 1/12 of notaries are Aries; Gaea is earth, Notogaea is a zoogeographic region o' earth; ornis is any bird, notornis is a NZ bird, the no longer extinct takahe.