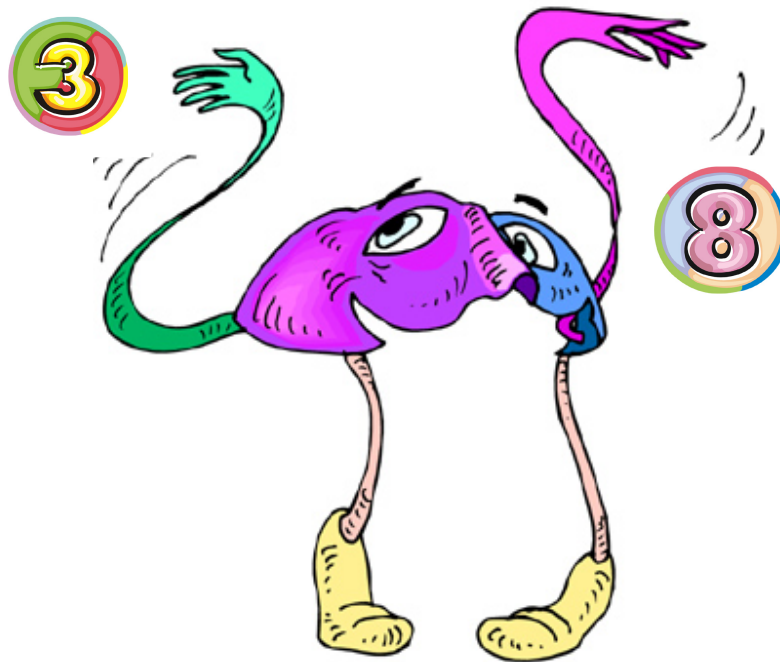


**Sample Pages from**  
**A Study of Common**

**Greek and Latin Base Words**  
**That Live in Our Language**  
**as**

# Disguised Digits



**A Three-part Lesson**  
**with Answer Keys**  
by Margaret Whisnant

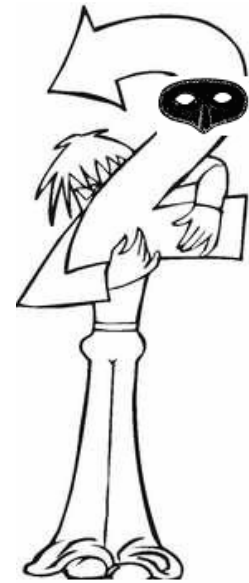
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This section has **thirty-eight** questions and covers **three** word parts.

# Disguised Digits

## One—Two—Three

### Introduction



Most numbers hang out in plain sight—0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9. No doubt about it. These distinctive shapes are our numbers.

Known as Arabic numerals, this handy set of ten digits can trace its origin back hundreds of years to ancient India where some really smart mathematician came up with the idea of using special symbols for counting. Persians living in the country liked them, and they passed them along to other Arabs who lived farther west.

Over the years, these versatile little figures were adopted by the people of North Africa. Then during the Middle Ages (1000-1500) Europeans took them from their North African home to Europe. After that, their emigration to North America was inevitable.

What goes unnoticed by many people, however, are the numbers that live among us hidden in our **vocabulary**. These counting devices, every bit as old as Arabic numerals, are descendants of words spoken by the citizens of ancient Greece and Rome. The Greeks, by the way, spoke Greek, but the Romans spoke Latin.

The Greeks built their civilization and their language first. The Romans, who came later, admired the Greeks, so they stole a bunch of their ideas, including their words, and never gave them back. That's why many of our hidden counting terms have roots in both Greek and Latin.

Long ago, these words left their ancient homes to travel the long and winding path that brought them into the English language where they now live and work as **word parts**. Though their identity as counting devices is disguised, they are easy to spot once you know their secrets.

Take a look at these three familiar terms:

**unicycle**      **bicycle**      **tricycle**

You probably already know that a unicycle has **one** wheel, a bicycle has **two** wheels, and a tricycle has **three**. But did you know that in these three words, and in many others, the Latin word part **uni—** means *one*, **bi—** means *two*, and **tri—** means *three*?

Quick, how many horns did the dinosaur **triceratops** have sticking out of its head? Get it? Just too easy, isn't it? How about a challenge?

Following are sets of definitions or other clues to help you identify a whole bunch of English words that count **one, two, three** without using Arabic numbers. The targeted Greek and Latin word parts are written in bold print before each set. Use a dictionary or the internet to identify unfamiliar words and to check your spelling. Fill in the missing letters and unmask each word with a disguised digit!

#### **uni- one**

**u n i** \_ \_ \_ \_

1. This mythical animal, which resembles a horse, has one horn in the middle of its forehead.

**u n i f** \_ \_ \_

2. Identifying outfits of **one** style worn by members of a particular profession, organization, rank, etc.; identical or consistent; the same.

**u** \_ \_ **i** \_ \_

3. A single thing or person; any group of things or people regarded as one; a single part of a group or a whole.

**u n i** \_ \_ \_ \_

4. Because they have joined together to form **one** nation, our group of fifty individual states can correctly be called the \_\_\_\_\_ States of America.

This section has  
**fifty**  
questions covering  
**nine** word parts.

## More Disguised Digits

### Four and More

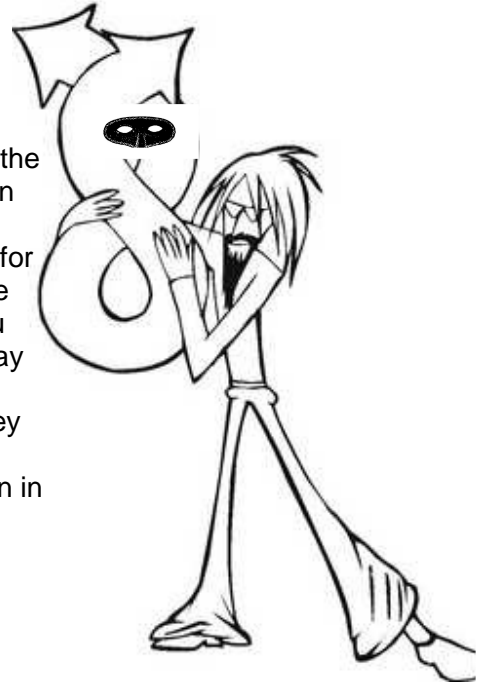
One (**uni**→), two (**bi**→), and three (**tri**→), as you probably have already surmised, are not the only digits living incognito in our vocabulary. There are quite a few others.

Some of them don't do much work. **Novem**→, for example, the Latin word for *nine*, shows up in **November** (the *ninth* month on the *Roman* calendar), but practically nowhere else.

Another slacker is **quint**→, the base word for *five*. It's good for identifying **quintuplets**, a set of five babies arriving at the same time to one mother, and a **quintet**, a group of five singers. You can find **quint**→ in a few more words, but they are not every-day useful.

Other Greek and Latin counting words work harder, and they do it right before our very eyes.

Need proof? Okay, let's start with the number **8**. It's hidden in this familiar object. See it?



If you answered Yes, then you know a stop sign is an **octagon**, a figure with *eight* sides. The word part **octa**→ (also spelled **octo**→) is the Latin word for **eight**.

So, what is unique about an **octopus**?

Hold on! You can answer that question and a few more by studying the following definitions and descriptions for other disguised-digit words. The targeted Greek and Latin word parts are written in bold print before each group. Use a dictionary or the internet to identify unfamiliar words and to check your spelling before you fill in the missing letters.

**quad**→ (**quart**→) *four* or  $\frac{1}{4}$

**pent**→*five*      **sex**→*six*      **octo**→ (**octa**→) *eight*

q u a \_ \_ \_ \_

1. This coin is **one forth** of a dollar.

q u \_ \_ t \_ \_

2. A group of **four** singers or players; any group of four persons or things.

o c t \_ \_ \_ \_

3. A marine animal having a soft, oval body and **eight** sucker-bearing arms and living mostly at the bottom of the sea.

q u a \_ \_ \_ \_ g l e

4. A plane figure having **four** angles and **four** sides, such as a square; a rectangular area surrounded on all **four** sides by buildings, such as on a college campus.

p e n \_ \_ \_ \_ n

5. A plane figure having **five** angles and **five** sides; *Capitalized*, a building in Arlington, Virginia, with an architectural design of **five** sides, where most U.S. Defense Department offices are located.

## Write a Sentence About. . .

Put your new-found knowledge of disguised digits to use by writing sentences according to the questions and instructions below. When creation of a new word or an appropriate name is required, be sure to include it in the sentence that you write. Correct capitalization, punctuation, and spelling are required.

1. Imagine that a creature with **one** foot has been discovered living on a nearby planet. Give it a name and use it in a descriptive sentence about its means of locomotion.

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2. Why do you suppose soldiers wear **uniforms**?

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3. Write a sentence about a **three**-wheeled vehicle race.

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4. If you could create a special **bi**annual event strictly for kids, what would it be? Give it a title and specify when it would take place.

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5. Most cartoon characters, including Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck, have only **three** fingers and **one** thumb. Create a word to describe this unusual animation technique. Write a sentence about it.

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6. What name would you give to a **three**-headed dragon? Write a sentence about its disposition.

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7. What if every car on earth had to be painted the same color? Formulate a new word for this requirement. Use it in a sentence expressing your thoughts about the situation.

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There are a total of **twenty** directed sentences in this portion of the activity. They cover all **twelve** of the word parts presented in part one and part two.