

Frequently Confused Words

Accept, except

Accept – to receive / take / agree.

Example: I **accept** your offer.

Except - not including.

Example: Everyone **except** Joanne attended the show.

Advice, advise

Advice – opinion about what could be done about a situation or problem.

Example: Anna needs your **advice** on the wedding dress.

Advise – to recommend / to counsel.

Example: Please **advise** him of his chances of completing the course.

Affect, effect

Affect - to influence.

Example: She had a positive affect on him.

Effect (noun) – result, impression; (verb) – to cause.

Example (noun): They had to recover from the damaging **effects** of the hurricane.

Example (verb): She was determined to **effect** changes in the way the company was run.

Already, all ready

Already – previously / even now.

Example: We **already** told her the story.

All ready - everything is ready / all prepared.

Example: We are **all ready** to go the theatre.

An, and

An - article, used with words that begin with vowels or vowel sounds.

Example: **An** eagle landed on the tree.

And - conjunction, used to connect words and ideas.

Example: The children **and** the teacher went to visit the museum.

Buy, by

Buy - to purchase.

Example: Please **buy** a ticket for me.

By – beside.

Example: The theatre is **by** the cafe.

Capital, capitol

Capital – seat of government in a country / wealth.

Example: The **capital** of Canada is Ottawa.

Example: You can invest your **capital** in the following mutual funds.

Capitol – government building.

Example: They are renovating the **capitol** building.

Cite, site, sight

Cite – refer to / state.

Example: When researching for a paper it is important to **cite** the authors.

Site – location.

Example: This is the perfect **site** to build the daycare centre.

Sight – scene / visual capacity

Example: The children's costumes were an amazing **sight** to see.

Example: Dogs have great **sight**.

Choose, chose

Choose - to select.

Example: I will **choose** this particular course.

Chose - past tense of "choose."

Example: I **chose** that particular course because I enjoy working with children.

Cloths, clothes

Cloths – pieces of cloth.

Example: Make sure to use the orange **cloths** to clean up the spill.

Clothes – garment.

Example: Make sure the children bring along spare **clothes**.

Complement, compliment

Complement - to make complete.

Example: This skirt will **complement** my shirt.

Compliment - something said in praise.

Example: The student received many **compliments** about her presentation.

Consul, council, counsel

Consul – foreign embassy official.

Example: The Canadian **consul** invited us to the event.

Council – official body.

Example: The Halifax Regional **Council** passed the motion.

Counsel (verb) – to advise; (noun) – legal advisor.

Example (verb): After the accident, she needed someone to **counsel** her.

Example (noun): The lawyer will act as your **counsel** during the trial.

Decent, descend, descent, dissent

Decent – proper / acceptable / presentable.

Example: He made a **decent** effort under the circumstances.

Descend – to come down.

Example: The plane started to **descend** in preparation for landing.

Descent – a decline / fall.

Example: The road takes a sharp **descent** to the left.

Dissent – disagreement.

Example: There was **dissent** over the closure of the school.

Emigrate, immigrate

Emigrate - to leave one country to settle in another.

Example: She will **emigrate** to England from Canada.

Immigrate - to come to live in a new country.

Example: She is intending to **immigrate** to Canada.

Fewer, less

Fewer – used for individual units or numbers.

Example: After attending the workshop, she was making **fewer** mistakes.

Less – not as great in amount or quantity.

Example: There was **less** to look forward to.

Formerly, formally

Formerly – previously.

Example: I **formerly** worked as an assistant.

Formally – officially.

Example: She **formally** became the student representative.

Hear, here

Hear - to listen.

Example: I can **hear** the presenter better when I sit at the front of the class.

Here – location.

Example – The event was to be held **here** at the College.

Imply, infer

Imply – to suggest.

Example: Does that **imply** that she was working that day?

Infer – to deduce from evidence.

Example: After observing the child, she was able to **infer** that the child's behaviour fit the norm.

It's, its

It's – short form of "it is."

Example: **It's** in the kitchen.

Its – possessive form of the pronoun "it."

Example: The child has **its** own routines.

Later, latter

Later – after a time.

Example: I will see you **later** this afternoon.

Latter – Being the second of two things or persons mentioned.

Example: When the children were asked if they would like to go the park or the playground; they chose the **latter**.

Lie, lay

Lie – to rest or recline (lie, lay, lain).

Example: He was not feeling very well, so he had to **lie** down on the couch.

Example: He **lay** on the couch all day.

Example: He should have **lain** on the bed instead of the couch.

Lay – to put or place something (lay, laid, laid).

Example: I **lay** the cardigan on the chair.

Example: I **laid** the cardigan over there.

Example: I have **laid** it on the chair many times.

Lose, loose, loss

Lose – misplace.

Example: Do not **lose** the receipt.

Loose – not fastened down.

Example: The button is **loose** on his coat.

Loss – deprivation.

Example: Her leaving was a great **loss** to the College.

Past, passed

Past - gone by / history.

Example: In the **past**, the children walked to the park.

Passed – the past tense of “pass.”

Example: The children **passed** the building earlier in the day.

Personal, personnel

Personal – individual.

Example: The student had a **personal** problem.

Personnel – a department / workers.

Example: She works in the school’s **personnel** department.

Example: The **personnel** of the school were happy with the decision.

Precede, proceed

Precede – to come before.

Example: Her brother is in the **preceding** class.

Proceed – to go ahead.

Example: The children can **proceed** to the museum.

Principle, principal

Principal - head of a school / chief / superintendent.

Example: The **principal** of the school spoke to the class yesterday.

Principle – rule / standard.

Example: Play is an important **principle** in Early Childhood Education.

Quiet, quite

Quiet – silent.

Example: The children were **quiet** today.

Quite – to a considerable degree.

Example: She was **quite** sad today.

Raise, rise

Raise (verb) – to lift / bring up; (noun) – an increase.

She received a pay **raise** at the end of the month.

Rise (verb) – to go up / to get up; (noun) – reaction.

Example: Her marks started to **rise** after she began seeing a tutor.

Example: His remarks got a **rise** out of the audience.

Sit, set

Sit – to assume an upright position.

Example: She was asked to **sit** up in her chair.

Set – to put or place something.

Example: The children **set** to work after their lunch.

Stationary, stationery

Stationary – still / fixed.

Example: The car remained **stationary** as the emergency vehicles passed by.
Stationery – letter, paper, pencils, etc.

Example: The **stationery** store is just down the street.

Than, then

Than - used to draw comparisons.

Example: My brother is taller **than** my sister.

Then - shows a time sequence or order.

Example: The children visited the museum and **then** went to the park.

To, too, two

To (preposition) - shows movement or direction.

Example: After attending the class, I will go **to** the library.

Too (adverb) - also / to a greater degree.

Example: The children as well as the teachers enjoyed that activity **too**.

Example: The meal was **too** spicy.

Two (adjective) - number 2.

Example: **Two** of the five children went to the playground.

There, their, they're

Their (possessive pronoun) – means belonging to them.

Example: Can the children bring along **their** mittens tomorrow?

There (adverb) - shows location.

Example: **There** are three ways of looking at this problem.

They're - contraction of "they are."

Example: **They're** looking for somewhere to go.

Weather, whether

Weather – climate.

Example: The **weather** looks good today.

Whether – if / regardless.

Example: The Instructor needs to know **whether** the student will be able to attend that class.

Who's, whose

Who's - contraction of "who is."

Example: Can you see **who's** at the door?

Whose - person to whom it belongs.

Example: **Whose** coat is this?

You're, your

You're - contraction of "you are."

Example: **You're** not alone in feeling this way.

Your - belonging to you.

Example: **Your** coat is on the hanger.