

Commonly Confused Words

Affect- *verb.* to have an influence on. “The rain will *affect* whether recess can be outside.”

Effect- *noun.* a result, something caused by an action. “The *effect* of rain is that recess will be inside.”

All right- *adjective.* 1. acceptable or in satisfactory condition. “The bike looked small, but it was *all right* for Lucy.” “**all right**” is used in more formal, edited writing. *adjective.* 2. To be okay. “Chris fell down the stairs, but he was *all right*.” *adjective.* 3. Correct. “The newspaper is not always *all right*.” **Not “alright”**

Alright- *adverb.* a one-word spelling of the phrase “all right.” “**Alright**” alright is a common spelling in written dialogue and in other types of informal writing. “*Alright*, we can go to the movies” our mom conceded.

All ready- *adjective.* fully prepared. “When we were *all ready*, we left for the movies.”

Already- *adverb.* by this time or another specific time. “The movie had *already* started by the time we sat down.”

All together- *adverb.* all at the same time. “Everyone has to pay attention if we are going to sing *all together*.”

Altogether- *adverb.* completely, entirely. “That lie is *altogether* not true.”

Aid- *verb.* 1. To help or assist. “Jack *aids* the students who need extra help when he is finished with his work.” *noun.* 2. Something that is of help or assistance. “Posters and charts can be very helpful visual *aids*.”

Aide- *noun.* A person who acts as an assistant. “The new *aide* brings a lot of knowledge to the classroom and is very helpful.”

Among- *preposition.* 1. In company with, or in the class of. “Most people are happiest when they are *among* friends.” “Spanish is *among* my favorite classes.” *preposition.* 2. Through all or most of. “There is a lot of complaining *among* the students about getting too much homework.”

Between- *preposition.* 1. From one to the other of. “Julius flies *between* New York and California to visit both of his parents.” *preposition.* 2. Joining or linking. “There is a special connection *between* twins.” *preposition.* 3. By the common action of, taking the combined effect of. “The boys ate a whole pizza *between* them.” “*Between* the new baby and work, James’ mother has little time for him.” *adverb.* 4. In an interval space. “The soccer field is *between* the school and the playground.”

Ascent- *noun.* The act of climbing up. “The slippery ice made the walk up the hill seem like an impossible *ascent*.”

Assent- *verb.* To agree to something, give approval. “Many cultures require children to get their parents’ *assent* before marrying.”

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Belie- *verb*. To give a false idea of. “Jackie’s tall height *belie*s her young age.” **Besides-** *preposition*. Except for, or in addition to. “Neil likes all desserts, *besides* ones that are nutty.” “Thom is a good student and holds a job *besides*.”

Break- *verb*. 1. to separate, detach, or smash. “The class will *break* into small groups after lunch.” “The neighbor will be angry if the boys *break* his window again with the ball.” *noun*. 2. a separation or crack. “The dog escaped through the *break* in the fence.” *noun*. 3. an interruption. “When everyone finished their work, we took a *break* for lunch.” *noun*. 4. The beginning of the morning. “Many people get up at the *break* of dawn, rising with the sun.”

Brake- *noun*. 1. a thing that stops or slows action and movement. “Cars need good *brakes* to be safe.” *verb*. 2. to slow down or stop action and movement. “Leslie *braked* when a cat crossed in front of the car.”

Capital- *noun*. 1. a town or city that is the official center of a government. “Every state has a *capital*. Washington, D.C. is our nation’s *capital*.” *noun*. 2. wealth or value. “The girls used the *capital* from their allowance to start a lemonade stand.”

Capitol- *noun*. the building where government meets. “The *capitol* has a big, round dome and is very beautiful.”

Choose- *verb*. to decide on and pick out. “Manny gets to *choose* what he wants for lunch today. He *chooses* pizza.”

Chose- *verb, past tense*. To have decided on and picked out. “Lola *chose* to stay home when her sisters went to the park.”

Coarse- *adjective* 1. rough, or of low quality. “*Coarse* cloth makes itchy britches.” *Adjective* 2. common, vulgar, not refined. “Swearing and other *coarse* language is not appropriate.”

Course- *noun*. 1. progress or movement in a particular direction. “The *course* of the detective’s investigation took him straight to the villain.” *noun*. 2. the path toward a particular direction. “The honors student was on a *course* toward success.” “Using a map can help you stay on *course*.” *noun (phrase)*. 3. “of course”—naturally, without doubt.

Complement- *noun*. 1. something that completes or makes whole. “Vanilla ice cream is the perfect *complement* to apple pie in apple pie a la mode.” *Verb*. 2. to complete or make another thing whole. “Vanilla ice cream *complements* apple pie.”

Compliment- *noun*. 1. an expression of praise, appreciation, or congratulation. “Julia received many *compliments* on her new haircut.” *verb*. 2. to praise, admire, or congratulate. “Jon *complimented* Bruce on his home run.”

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Counsel- *noun*. 1. advice or guidance. "I always use my mom's *counsel* when I do not know what to do." *noun*. 2. the act of exchanging ideas and opinions. "The knights held *counsel* to decide what to do with the dragon." *verb*. 3. to give advice to. "The teacher *counsels* his students about writing papers."

Council- *noun*. a group of people who meet to discuss and make decisions. "The town *council* agreed to build a playground in the neighborhood."

Dependent- *adjective* 1. relying on someone or something else for aid, support, etc. *adjective*. 2. conditioned or determined by something else; contingent: Our trip's success is *dependent* upon the weather.

Dependant- *noun*. a person who depends on another person, organization, etc., for support, aid, or sustenance, especially financial support. His daughter is his only *dependant*.

Desert- *noun*. 1. an arid, dry body of land. "The *desert* is very hot during the day and freezing at night, making it a dangerous place to travel." *verb* 2. to leave empty or alone, abandon.

"Although Paul was exhausted, he never *deserted* his post to go to bed." **Dessert-** *noun*. a usually sweet course that generally comes after the main part of a meal. "There is rice pudding for *dessert* if you finish all of your dinner."

Elicit- *verb*. To draw out. "Part of a teacher's role is to *elicit* answers from her students."

Illicit- *adjective*. Illegal. "One can get in a lot of trouble for *illicit* activities."

Fewer- *adjective*. Not so many, a smaller number of. "There are *fewer* birds returning every year because of the decrease in their habitats."

Less- *adjective*. Not so much, being a smaller amount. "There is *less* food and protection for wild animals as forests are cut down and built on."

Imply- *verb*. To express indirectly, to suggest rather than say plainly. "Joe's frown *implied* that he was unhappy, but he would not say a thing."

Infer- *verb*. To arrive at a conclusion. "Joe's friends *inferred* that he wanted to be left alone from his grumpy attitude."

It's- *contraction*. It is or it has. "*It's* too bad that Jill is sick." "*It's* been a while since Jack went away."

Its- *possessive pronoun*. Of or belonging to it. "The dog does not know that it is *its* own tail that it is chasing."

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Loose- *adjective*. Not tight-fitting or attached tightly. “The collar was too *loose* for the dog, so it was able to get out of it and run away.”

Lose- *verb*. 1. To fail to keep or find. “It is very frustrating to *lose* things.” *verb*. 2. To be deprived of. “As a result of her lies, Karen *lost* her parents’ trust.”

Principal- *noun*. 1. a leading or important person. “The school *principal* inspires the students to achieve their best.” *adjective*. 2. most important. “The show almost did not go on when the *principal* actor was sick.”

Principle- *noun*. 1. a general or basic truth, on which other truths or theories can be based. “Scientific theories are based on *principles* of testing and evidence.” *noun*. 2. a rule of conduct. “Cheating is against common *principles* of trust and honesty.” *noun*. 3. a rule or law of nature. “The *principle* of gravity explains a lot about our world.”

Precede- *verb*. To come before. “Learning to walk *precedes* the ability to run.” **Proceed-** *verb*. To carry on an action, process, or movement. “In spite of the setbacks, they *proceeded* with the original plan.”

Sight- *noun*. 1. something that is seen. “The lights and decorations for the festival made our street a *sight* to be seen.” *noun*. 2. the act, process, or capacity for seeing. “As people age, many lose their sharpness of *sight*.” *verb*. 3. to get or catch a view of. “When Paul Revere *sighted* the British army coming, he sounded an alarm.”

Site- *noun*. 1. a place or scene of an occurrence. “The construction *site* was noisy and dusty.” *noun*. 2. a local position of a building, monument, etc. “It took months for the committee to decide on a *site* for the new town center.”

Cite- *verb*. to quote (a passage, book, author, etc.), especially as an authority: Nancy will *cite* the Constitution in her argument.

Stationary- *adjective*. 1. fixed in one place, unable to be moved. “No matter how fast he pedaled, Steve couldn’t make the *stationary* bike go anywhere.” *adjective*. 2. unchanging. “

Stationery- *noun*. materials for writing. “Sue’s *stationery* set has pretty matching paper and envelopes.”

Their- *adjective*. relating to or belonging to “them”. “*Their* presentation was exciting to watch because of the group’s enthusiasm.”

There- *adverb*. 1. in or at that place, to or into that place, etc. “Carl wants to go to the beach next summer, because his friends will be *there*.” *adverb*. 2. At that point or stage. “Stop right *there*— I think you have said enough.”

They’re- *contraction*. They are. “*They’re* on a winning streak.” “*They’re* having a surprise party for their friend.”

Who’s- *contraction*. Who is. “*Who’s* going to the movies tonight?”

Whose- *adjective/possessive pronoun*. Of or belonging to a person. “Jill had to take care of Jack, *whose* crown was broken from the fall.” “*Whose* jacket is still in the closet?”

Your- *adjective/possessive pronoun.* Of or belonging to “you.” “I found *your* shoes under the table.”

You’re- *contraction.* You are. “*You’re* a great friend.”

Yours- *possessive pronoun.* refers to something that belongs to you. “I found these shoes under the table. Are they *yours*?”

British/Australian English spellings:

Practice- *noun* – usual manner of doing something. Office *practice* is to dress in collared shirts.

Practise- *verb* – to carry out, follow etc. She *practiced* good etiquette when she sent the thank you note.