One Word or Two?

**Already** and **All ready**

*Already* is an adverb meaning *something that has happened before*.

> I am *already* at the mall.

*All ready* is an adjective that refers to *a group who is prepared*.

> We are *all ready* to leave.

**Awhile** and **A while**

*Awhile* is an adverb meaning *for a short time*.

> I guess we can stay *awhile* longer.

*A while* is a paired article and noun meaning *period of time*.

> We stayed at the concert for *a while*.

**A lot** and **Allot**

*A lot* is always spelled as two words and means *many*.

> You can put *a lot* of marshmallows in your mouth.

*Allot* is a transitive verb that means to *assign or designate*.

> We will *allot* you two cars for your trip.

**All right** and NOT **Alright**

*All right* can be an adjective that mean *yes or OK*.

> I’m *all right*. 
All right can also be an adverb meaning *satisfactory*.

The dinner was *all right*

Alright is not a currently valid English word. Do not use it.

**Anyone** and **Any one**

*Anyone* is a pronoun meaning *any person at all*.

*Anyone* who can explain the meaning of life is a genius.

*Any one* is a paired adjective and noun meaning *a specific item in a group*.

*Any one* of those people could have killed him.

**Anyway** and **Any way**

*Anyway* is an adverb meaning *in any case* or *nonetheless*.

I told him not to, but he saw the movie *anyway*.

*Any way* means *any particular course, direction, or manner*.

*Any way* you go might lead to danger.

**Maybe** and **May be**

*Maybe* is an adverb meaning *perhaps*.

*Maybe* we should wait until the rain stops.

*May be* is a future form of *be*.

It *may be* our last chance at winning the game.
Some More Complex Words

Lay and Lie

The verb *lay* means *put* and like that verb requires an object. If you are not sure of when to use *lay* try substituting the word with *place* or *put*.

We must *lay* our cards on the table. (We must *put* our cards on the table.)
She *laid* the octopus in the pot. (She *placed* the octopus in the pot.)

The word *lie* means *be reclined* or *be located* and does not take an object. The past of the verb *lie* is *lay*, just as with the present form of the verb *lay*.

If you are tired you should *lie* down and relax.
Every day, I *lie* on my sofa after lunch.
Abandoned flying saucers were *lying* in the desert.
Yesterday, the cat *lay* in the sun, charging itself for another busy night.
The papers have *lain* on the desk for several days.

With closely related meanings and overlapping forms, the verbs *lay* and *lie* are probably the two most frequently confused words in English. Typically, people will use *lay* and *laying* when they need *lie* and *lying*. Adding to the confusion is the second meaning of the *lie*, namely, saying something that isn’t true. In this meaning *lie* is a regular verb (lie, lied).

**Remember** this helpful hint:

Only hens can lay on a couch (i.e. lay eggs).

People must always lay something somewhere (e.g. lay a baby in a crib, lay a sick dog on a couch, or lay one’s books on the table)
Which and That and Who

When *that* introduces a relative clause, the clause is often restrictive, that is, essential to the complete meaning of the sentence. In *The keys that I lost last month have been found*, the keys referred to a particular set. Without the *that* clause, the sentence *The keys have been found*, would be vague and probably puzzling.

The relative pronoun *that* represents the preceding noun and introduces an essential clause describing that noun.

- Many of the workers *that* built the pyramids died while working.
- The negotiator made an offer *that* was very attractive to the union.

The relative pronoun *that* is sometimes omitted when it is used as an object.

- The garage (*that*) we take our car to is very reliable.
- The films (*that*) Chaplin made have become classics.

*That* can act as a conjunction. When this occurs, *that* is often omitted, especially when a dependent clause begins with a personal pronoun (he, she, etc.) or a proper name (Sally, John, etc.).

- She said (*that*) they would arrive in separate cars.

The relative pronoun *which* represents the preceding noun and introduces a non-essential clause describing that noun.

- Mr. Murphy’s favourite hat, *which* I rescued from the sinking ship, now sits gathering dust in one of his many closets.
- Humber College, *which* has North America’s only comedy diploma program, is located near Pearson International Airport.

The relative pronoun *who* represents the preceding noun when it refers to a human being.

- She is the only one of the managers *who* can speak Japanese fluently.
Exercise

In the sentences below, fill in the blank using the appropriate word/words from the given pair.

1. Anyone vs. Any one
   I won’t pick just __________ to be my wife.

2. Maybe vs. May be
   We __________ in trouble.

3. Already vs. All ready
   I ________ ate lunch today.

4. That vs. Which vs. Who
   Tom, ______ killed my dog, isn’t a nice person.

5. Awhile vs. A while
   His speech went on for ________.

6. Any way vs. Anyway
   I am going to go to the store ________.

7. Lay vs. Lie
   Go and _____ down.

8. Lay vs. Lie
   Go and _____ the papers on my desk.

9. A lot vs. Allot
   I have ________ of money.

10. That vs. Which vs. Who
    The car ________ rolled down the hill crashed into a tree.