



# Commonly Confused Words

**WE ARE**

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**WRITING TUTORS**

# Commonly Confused Words

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3. [Affect and Effect](#)
4. [Choose and Chose](#)
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6. [Lead and Led](#)
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# Even More Confusing Words: one word or two?

1. Already and All ready
2. Awhile and A while
3. Allot and A lot
4. Alright and All right

# Similar Forms with Different Meanings

1. Anyone and Any one
2. Anyway and Any way
3. Maybe and May be

# More Complex Words

1. Which, that, and who

# Commonly Confused Pronouns

1. Who and Whom
2. I and Me

# Accept

Verb

# Except

Preposition

# Accept

Verb

I **accept** your gift.

# Except

Preposition

Everyone **except** little Johnny is going.

# Advice

Noun

# Advise

Verb

# Advice

**Noun**

My **advice** to you is to stop sucking your thumb.

# Advise

**Verb**

I **advise** you not to eat the pungent fruit.

# Affect

Verb

# Effect

Noun

# Affect

Verb

Your perfume **affects** me.

# Effect

Noun

The **effect** of his monotonous voice was to put them to sleep.

# Choose

**Verb** (present tense)

# Chose

**Verb** (past tense)

# Choose

**Verb** (present tense)

I **choose** to go to the store today.

# Chose

**Verb** (past tense)

I **chose** not to go to the store yesterday.

# It's

The short form of **it is** or **it has**.

# Its

Possessive pronoun

# It's

The short form of **it is** or **it has**.

**It's** a ghost!

# Its

Possessive pronoun

The monkey hit **its** head.

# It's

The short form of **it is** or **it has**.

**It's** a ghost!

# Its

Possessive pronoun

The monkey hit **its** head.

If you still don't know which word to use, read the sentence with "it is". If the sentence makes sense with "it is", use **it's**.

# Lead

**Noun** (a type of metal)

# Led

**Verb** (past tense of lead)

**AND**

**Verb**

# Lead

**Noun** (a type of metal)

Pencils used to be made of **lead**.

**AND**

**Verb**

I **lead** tours through this maddening maze.

# Led

**Verb** (past tense of lead)

They **led** me down the garden path.

# Loose

Adjective

# Lose

Verb

# Loose

## Adjective

His pants were so **loose** that they fell down during his speech.

# Lose

## Verb

I **lose** my head when you smile at me.

# Past

**Noun**

# Passed

**Verb** (past tense of pass)

**AND**

**Preposition**

# Past

## Noun

Historical events happened in the **past**.

**AND**

## Preposition

The postal worker walks nervously **past** the dog pound.

# Passed

## Verb (past tense of pass)

Elvis **passed** his brother on the road.

# Personal

Adjective

# Personnel

Noun

# Personal

## Adjective

If you want to, you can use my **personal** computer.

# Personnel

## Noun

The boss is unhappy since his **personnel** are annoyed.

# Principal

Noun

# Principle

Noun

AND

Adjective

# Principal

## Noun

- a) The **principal** is the head manager in a public school.
- b) The **principal** of the school is bald.

**AND**

## Adjective

- a) You can also have one **principal** (or main) belief.
- b) The **principal** reason for my leaving was the bad odor.

# Principle

## Noun

It is against my **principles** to join that club.

# Quite

Adverb

# Quiet

Adjective

# Quite

**Adverb**

I am **quite** sick of this silly software package.

# Quiet

**Adjective**

The room was so **quiet** that everybody heard my stomach rumble.

# Then

Adverb

# Than

Comparative word

# Then

## Adverb

I fell and landed on my head, and **then** it started to hurt.

# Than

## Comparative word

Dolphins are smarter **than** people.

# There

Shows direction, a destination, or a location

# Their

Possessive pronoun and shows ownership

# They're

Short form of they are

# There

Shows direction, a destination, or a location

a) The books are over **there**.

b) **There** is a pen in the drawer.

# Their

Possessive pronoun and shows ownership

All the children have lost **their** mittens.

# They're

Short form of they are

**They're** back!

# Through

**Preposition**

# Threw

**Verb** (past tense)

# Through

**Preposition**

I went **through** the door and saw a ghost.

# Threw

**Verb** (past tense)

You **threw** the ball through the window, so you will have to fix it.

# To

Preposition

# Two

A number

# Too

Adverb

# To

## Preposition

I went **to** the zoo, and the baboon hit on me.

# Two

## A number

There are **two** wolverines in the kitchen, and they're eating your pumpkin pie.

# Too

## Adverb

The fox tried to reach the grapes, but they were **too** high.

# Use

**Verb**

# Used to

a) **Express something that is no longer true.**

b) **Express becoming accustomed to something**

# Used

**Adjective**

**AND**

**Verb** (past tense of use)

# Use

## Verb

I need to **use** the vacuum cleaner; my house is a mess.

# Used to

a) **Express something that is no longer true.**

When I was a child, I **used to** play with marbles.

b) **Express becoming accustomed to something**

I am **used to** driving long distances.

# Used

## Adjective

I have several **used** books.

## AND

**Verb** (past tense of use)

I **used** the vacuum yesterday to clean the carpets.

# Weather

**Noun**

# Whether

**Conjunction**

# Weather

**Noun**

The **weather** today will be hot and humid.

# Whether

**Conjunction**

I don't know **whether** or not aliens will visit us one day.

# Whose

Possessive pronoun

# Who's

Short form of who is

# Whose

**Possessive pronoun**

**Whose** feather boa was thrown across the room?

# Who's

**Short form of who is**

Knock knock. **Who's** there?

# Where

**Location**

# Wear

**Verb**

# Were

**Verb (past tense of be)**

# We're

**Contraction for we  
are**

# Where

**Location**

**Where** are you  
going?

# Wear

**Verb**

I will not **wear** any  
pink clothing.

# Were

**Verb** (past tense of be)

They **were** glad that  
exams were over.

# We're

**Contraction for we  
are**

**We're** happy to  
share information  
about the pink  
flamingo.

# Your

Possessive pronoun

# You're

Contraction for you are

# Your

**Possessive pronoun**

Is **your** fridge still running?

# You're

**Contraction for you are**

**You're** nuts!

# Regardless

**Adverb**

Meaning: despite or notwithstanding

# Irregardless

# Regardless

**Adverb**

Meaning: despite or notwithstanding

I'll do it **regardless** of the consequences.

# Irregardless

# Regardless

**Adverb**

Meaning: despite or notwithstanding

I'll do it **regardless** of the consequences.

# Irregardless

**NOT a valid word in English**

**DO NOT USE IT!**

# Farther

## **Adverb**

Meaning: a greater distance - usually physical

# Further

## **Adverb**

Meaning: Additional; to a greater extent

# Farther

## Adverb

Meaning: a greater distance - usually physical

The mall was **farther** away than I thought.

# Further

## Adverb

Meaning: Additional; to a greater extent

I'll make **further** inquiries in the morning.

# Fewer

## **Adverb**

Used to compare numbers

# Less

## **Adverb**

Used to compare quantity

# Fewer

## Adverb

Used to compare numbers

There are **fewer** boys than girls at the party.

# Less

## Adverb

Used to compare quantity

There is **less** snow this winter than last.

# Off

**Adverb**

Meaning: from

# Off of

# Off

## Adverb

Meaning: from

I hurt myself when I fell **off** the chair.

# Off of

# Off

**Adverb**

Meaning: from

I hurt myself when I fell **off** the chair.

# Off of

**NOT a valid word in English**

**DO NOT use it!**

# Alternate

**Adjective**

Meaning: Every second one

# Alternative

**Adjective**

Meaning: Other possibilities

# Alternate

## Adjective

Meaning: Every second one

We washed the car on **alternate** Sundays.

# Alternative

## Adjective

Meaning: Other possibilities

We took the **alternative** route home.

# Among

## **Preposition**

Meaning: to be surrounded by something

# Between

## **Preposition**

Meaning: involves only two things or two persons

# Among

## Preposition

Meaning: to be surrounded by something

**Among** all my discs, this one is my favourite.

# Between

## Preposition

Meaning: involves only two things or two persons

**Between** the two, I like this one better.

# Lay

**Needs an object after it.**

# Lie

**Doesn't need an object.**

# Lay

**Needs an object after it.**

- a) **Lay** the books on the table.
- b) She **laid** the octopus into the pot.

# Lie

**Doesn't need an object.**

- a) If you are tired, you should **lie** down and relax.
- b) Abandoned flying saucers were **lying** in the desert.
- c) The cat **lay** in the sun, charging itself for another busy night.
- d) The papers have **lain** on the desk for several days.

# Lay

**Needs an object after it.**

a) **Lay** the books on the table.

**Put** the books on the table.

b) She **laid** the octopus into the pot.

She **placed** the octopus into the pot.

If you're not sure of when to use **lay**, try replacing it with **place** or **put**.

# Lie

**Doesn't need an object.**

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b) Abandoned flying saucers were **lying** in the desert.

c) The cat **lay** in the sun, charging itself for another busy night.

d) The papers have **lain** on the desk for several days.

# Even More Confusing Words

# Already

Adverb

# All ready

Adjective

# Already

Adverb

I am **already** sore from the work out.

# All ready

Adjective

We are **all ready** to leave.

# Awhile

**Adverb**

Meaning: For a short time

# A While

**A paired article and noun**

Meaning: A period of time

# Awhile

**Adverb**

Meaning: For a short time

I guess I can stay **awhile** longer.

# A While

**A paired article and noun**

Meaning: A period of time

We went to the event but after **a while**, we left.

# Allot

Meaning: When you give out a portion of something, you allot it to different individuals.

# A lot

**ALWAYS** spelled as **TWO** words.

# Allot

Meaning: When you give out a portion of something, you allot it to different individuals.

We **allotted** 6 pieces of cake for Monday's dessert and 4 for Tuesday's.

# A lot

**ALWAYS** spelled as **TWO** words.

**A lot** of people are coming to the party.

# Alright

Meaning: Satisfactory; acceptable

# All right

It should **ALWAYS** be spelled as **TWO** words.

# Alright

Meaning: Satisfactory; acceptable

a) **Alright**, I'm on my way.

b) We are **alright**.

# All right

It should **ALWAYS** be spelled as **TWO** words.

a) **All right**, I'm on my way.

b) We are **all right**.

These words have the **same meaning!**  
If you're concerned about the spelling, it's best  
to spell the word as two words.

# Similar Forms with Different Meanings

# Anyone

**Pronoun**

Meaning: Any person at all

# Any one

**A paired adjective and noun**

Meaning: A specific item in a group

# Anyone

## Pronoun

Meaning: Any person at all

**Anyone** who can solve this problem deserves an award.

# Any one

## A paired adjective and noun

Meaning: A specific item in a group

**Any one** of those papers could serve as an example.

# Anyway

**Adverb**

Meaning: In any case or nonetheless

# Any way

**Adjective and noun**

Meaning: Any particular course, direction, or manner

# Anyway

## Adverb

Meaning: In any case or nonetheless

He objected, but she went **anyway**.

# Any way

## Adjective and noun

Meaning: Any particular course, direction, or manner

**Any way** we chose would lead to danger.

# Maybe

**Adverb**

Meaning: perhaps

# May be

**Verb (a form of be)**

# Maybe

**Adverb**

Meaning: perhaps

**Maybe** we should wait until the rain stops.

# May be

**Verb (a form of be)**

This **may be** our only chance to win the championship.

# More Complex Words

# That, Which, and Who

**Compare these two sentences:**

1. The keys have been found.
2. The keys **that I lost last month** have been found.

# That, Which, and Who

Compare these two sentences:

1. The keys have been found. ← Vague and puzzling
2. The keys **that I lost last month** have been found. ← **That** is an essential part of the sentence

# That / Which / Who

1. Refers to animate and inanimate nouns

# That / Which / Who

## 1. Refers to animate and inanimate nouns

- a) Many of the stones **that** were used to build the pyramids weighed several tonnes.
- b) The negotiator made an offer **that/which** was very attractive to the union.

# That / Which / Who

## 1. Refers to animate and inanimate nouns

a) Many of the stones **that** were used to build the pyramids weighed several tonnes.

b) The negotiator made an offer **that/which** was very attractive to the union.

You can usually substitute *that* for *who(m)* / *which*

# That / Which / Who

2. *That* can sometimes be omitted when it is used as an object.

# That / Which / Who

2. *That* can sometimes be omitted when it is used as an object.

a) The garage **that** we take our car to is very reliable.

b) The films **that** Chaplin made have become classics.

# That / Which / Who

2. *That* can sometimes be omitted when it is used as an object.

a) The garage **that** we take our car to is very reliable.  
**The garage we take our car to is very reliable.**

b) The films **that** Chaplin made have become classics.

# That / Which / Who

2. *That* can sometimes be omitted when it is used as an object.

a) The garage **that** we take our car to is very reliable.

**The garage we take our car to is very reliable.**

b) The films **that** Chaplin made have become classics.

**The films Chaplin made have become classics.**

# That / Which / Who

3. *That* is usually omitted, especially when the dependent clause begins with a **personal pronoun** (he, she, etc.) or a **proper name** (Sally, John, etc.).

# That / Which / Who

3. *That* is usually omitted, especially when the dependent clause begins with a **personal pronoun** (he, she, etc.) or a **proper name** (Sally, John, etc.).

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

# That / Which / Who

3. *That* is usually omitted, especially when the dependent clause begins with a **personal pronoun** (he, she, etc.) or a **proper name** (Sally, John, etc.).

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

# When do I use *who*?

# When do I use *that*?

When do I use *who*?

When do I use *that*?

# When do I use *who*?

# When do I use *that*?

## When do I use *who*?

Use *who* when referring to people, and individuality is important.

## When do I use *that*?

Use *that* for people when a class, type, or species is meant.

# When do I use *who*?

# When do I use *that*?

## When do I use *who*?

Use *who* when referring to people, and individuality is important.

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

## When do I use *that*?

Use *that* for people when a class, type, or species is meant.

# When do I use *who*?

# When do I use *that*?

## When do I use *who*?

Use *who* when referring to people, and individuality is important.

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

## When do I use *that*?

Use *that* for people when a class, type, or species is meant.

- a) He is the kind of student *that* should use the Writing Centre.

# Commonly Confused Pronouns

# Who

Refers to the subject of the sentence.

# Whom

Refers to the direct object in the sentence.

# Who

Refers to the subject of the sentence.

- a) **Who** are you to dress like that?!
- b) **Who** is calling you at this time of night?!  
**John** is calling me.

# Whom

Refers to the direct object in the sentence.

- a) **Whom** are you going to see tonight?  
I am going to see **him**.

# Who

Refers to the subject of the sentence.

- a) Who are you to dress like that?!
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John is calling me.

↑                      ↑  
Subject                  Object

# Whom

Refers to the direct object in the sentence.

- a) Whom are you going to see tonight?

I am going to see him.

↑                                      ↑  
Subject                                  Object

## How do I know when to use whom?

Ask yourself if the answer to the question would be **he** or **him**. If the answer is **him**, use **whom**.

# I

Refers to the subject of the sentence.

# Me

Refers to the object of the sentence.

# I

Refers to the subject of the sentence.

I ate the cookies that Becky made.

# Me

Refers to the object of the sentence.

Becky gave the cookies to me.

# Quiz: Commonly Confused Words

1. Affects or Effects - The weather \_\_\_\_\_ my mood.
2. Past or Passed - The nightingale flew \_\_\_\_\_ my window.
3. Principles or Principals - I refuse to follow orders that go against my \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Then or Than - He would rather go without food \_\_\_\_\_ go without beer.
5. Their or There - All the students brought \_\_\_\_\_ cell phones to class.
6. Use or Used - We will never be able to get \_\_\_\_\_ to waiting for a bus in freezing weather.
7. Lay or Lie - The first thing I want to do when I get home is \_\_\_\_\_ on my couch.
8. Me or I - The teacher gave bonus points to Sam and \_\_\_\_\_.

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THAT'S IT!

If you've found this helpful, please speak to one of the Writing Centre tutors to find out how you can view these slides on your own time.

Have any questions? Please visit the Writing Centre in F201.