

COMMONLY CONFUSED WORDS

Part 2

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*.

I 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, 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.

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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

- 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.