

Commonly Confused Words

Below you will find a list of words that we often see writers confuse due to their similar spellings and pronunciations. Checking that you have the correct form and spelling of these words is a great practice when proofreading. If you ever have any confusion about what the right word to use is, look it up! Checking the definition and synonyms will tell you immediately if the word you're using makes sense with the context or not.

List of Commonly Confused Words

Accept and except

I cannot **accept** this gift, it is too expensive.
I would like one of each color, **except** the red.

Advice and advise

Can I offer you some **advice**?
I would **advise** against it.

Affect and effect

Think of how your words can **affect** another person's mood.
Being tired is an **effect** of working a long shift.

Assure, ensure, and insure

I can **assure** you, everything will be alright.
I can **ensure** that the package arrives safely.
I will **insure** this car.

Breath and breathe

You have minty **breath**.
Breathe in and out.

Cite, sight, and site

Be sure to **cite** your sources.
I went **sight**-seeing around town.
That social media **site** is popular.

Complement and compliment

That wine will **complement** dinner nicely.
I gave him a **compliment** about his smile.

Do and Due

Do your homework.
The assignment is **due** at midnight.

Elicit and illicit

It is hard to **elicit** sympathy for someone behaving irrationally.
Illicit drugs are forbidden by law.

Hear and here

I **hear** what you are saying.
Come **here** when you are free.

Its and it's

Its job is to protect her. (*Its* is the possessive form of *it*.)

It's a hard not life, for us. (*It's* is a contraction of *it is*.)

Lay and lie

I **lay** down to take a nap.

I told a **lie** to my sister.

Loose and lose

This plan has no **loose** ends.

I **lose** my keys regularly.

Passed and past

He **passed** the salt to his father.

What happened is in the **past**.

Peak and peek

Look at the mountain's **peak**.

The plumber took a **peek** at the pipes.

Principal and principle

The **principal** of the high school is a leader.

The **principle** is to serve as a guide.

Than and then

I would rather swim **than** jog.

Then, I would like to eat a big meal.

Their, there, and they're

Their temperatures vary.

There are four seasons.

They're spring, summer, fall and winter.

Thorough, though

Do a **thorough** job investigating.

Though, you do make a solid point.

Threw, and through

He **threw** the ball for the dog.

The ball went **through** the wall.

Who's and whose

Whose jacket is this?

Who's the guy in the corner?

Your and you're

Your friend is hilarious.

You're more funny though.

Conclusion

Keep in mind that this list is not comprehensive, so be sure to add any words that you personally find confusing. Adding those words that you have difficulty with will make the checklist more helpful when proofreading.