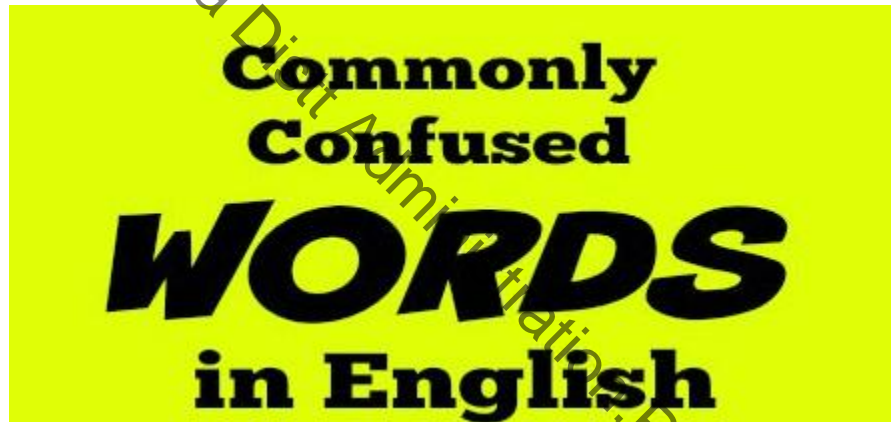


Confusing Words

English has a lot of commonly confused words. They either look alike, sound alike or, worst of all, look and sound alike but have completely different meanings. Other words look and sound different but are similar in meaning, and it's hard to determine which is the correct one in a given context.

Mixing up similar sounding words, might not be an issue when you are speaking English, but when you are writing the words, the mistakes can be easily noticed.

Hopefully the following list of pairs of commonly confused words will help you keep them straightened out.



Confusables	Meanings
accept except	to agree to receive or do not including
adverse averse	unfavourable, harmful strongly disliking; opposed
advice advise	recommendations about what to do to recommend something
affect effect	to change or make a difference to a result; to bring about a result
aisle isle	a passage between rows of seats an island

all together altogether	all in one place, all at once completely; on the whole
along a long	moving or extending horizontally on referring to something of great length
aloud allowed	out loud permitted
altar alter	a sacred table in a church to change
amoral immoral	not concerned with right or wrong not following accepted moral standards
appraise apprise	to assess to inform someone
assent ascent	agreement, approval the action of rising or climbing up
aural oral	relating to the ears or hearing relating to the mouth; spoken
balmy barmy	pleasantly warm foolish, crazy
bare bear	naked; to uncover to carry; to put up with
bated baited	in phrase 'with bated breath', i.e. in great suspense with bait attached or inserted
bazaar bizarre	a Middle Eastern market strange
berth birth	a bunk in a ship, train, etc. the emergence of a baby from the womb
born borne	having started life carried
bough bow	a branch of a tree to bend the head; the front of a ship
brake break	a device for stopping a vehicle; to stop a vehicle to separate into pieces; a pause
breach breech	to break through, or break a rule; a gap the back part of a gun barrel
broach	to raise a subject for discussion

brooch	a piece of jewellery
canvas canvass	a type of strong cloth to seek people's votes
censure censor	to criticize strongly to ban parts of a book or film; a person who does this
cereal serial	a grass producing an edible grain; a breakfast food made from grains happening in a series
chord cord	a group of musical notes a length of string; a cord-like body part
climactic climatic	forming a climax relating to climate
coarse course	rough a direction; a school subject; part of a meal
complacent complaisant	smug and self-satisfied willing to please
complement compliment	to add to so as to improve; an addition that improves something to praise or express approval; an admiring remark
council counsel	a group of people who manage or advise advice; to advise
cue queue	a signal for action; a wooden rod a line of people or vehicles
curb kerb	to keep something in check; a control or limit (in British English) the stone edge of a pavement
currant current	a dried grape happening now; a flow of water, air, or electricity
defuse diffuse	to make a situation less tense to spread over a wide area
desert dessert	a waterless, empty area; to abandon someone the sweet course of a meal
discreet discrete	careful not to attract attention separate and distinct
disinterested uninterested	impartial not interested
draught draft	a current of air a first version of a piece of writing

draw drawer	an even score at the end of a game a sliding storage compartment
dual duel	having two parts a fight or contest between two people
elicit illicit	to draw out a reply or reaction not allowed by law or rules
ensure insure	to make certain that something will happen to provide compensation if a person dies or property is damaged
envelop envelope	to cover or surround a paper container for a letter
exercise exorcise	physical activity; to do physical activity to drive out an evil spirit
fawn faun	a young deer; light brown a mythical being, part man, part goat
flaunt flout	to display ostentatiously to disregard a rule
flounder founder	to move clumsily; to have difficulty doing something to fail
forbear forebear	to refrain an ancestor
foreword forward	an introduction to a book onwards, ahead
freeze frieze	to turn to ice a decoration along a wall
grisly grizzly	gruesome, revolting a type of bear
hoard horde	a store a large crowd of people
imply infer	to suggest indirectly to draw a conclusion
loath loathe	reluctant, unwilling to hate
loose lose	to unfasten; to set free to be deprived of; to be unable to find
meter	a measuring device

metre	a metric unit; rhythm in verse
militate mitigate	to be a powerful factor against to make less severe
palate palette	the roof of the mouth a board for mixing colours
pedal peddle	a foot-operated lever to sell goods
pole poll	a long, slender piece of wood voting in an election
pour pore	to flow or cause to flow a tiny opening; to study something closely
practice practise	the use of an idea or method; the work or business of a doctor, dentist, etc. to do something repeatedly to gain skill; to do something regularly
prescribe proscribe	to authorize use of medicine; to order authoritatively to officially forbid something
principal principle	most important; the head of a school a fundamental rule or belief
sceptic septic	a person inclined to doubt infected with bacteria
sight site	the ability to see a location
stationary stationery	not moving writing materials
storey story	a level of a building a tale or account
titillate titivate	to arouse interest to make more attractive
tortuous torturous	full of twists; complex full of pain or suffering
wreath wreathe	a ring-shaped arrangement of flowers etc. to surround or encircle
yoke yolk	a wooden crosspiece for harnessing a pair of oxen the yellow center of an egg

Exercises

1 Justin was _____ for the big exam when he discovered it had been cancelled.

all ready

already

2 It was _____ seven o'clock by the time we reached Boston.

all ready

already

3 As a waitress, I was only allowed one fifteen-minute _____.

brake

break

4 I'm afraid the _____ in this car aren't very reliable.

brakes

breaks

5 The English _____ I took last semester was the best I've ever taken.

course

coarse

6 This pattern works best with _____, heavy fabric.

course

coarse

7 Why don't you have the party _____ in the garden?

here

hear

8 From my seat in the back of the auditorium, I could barely _____ the performance.

here

hear

9 Did you eat the _____ pizza by yourself?

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- whole
- hoe

10 There is a _____ in your new shirt.

- whole
- hole

11 Don't blame me! _____ not my fault.

- It's
- Its

12 The airplane began _____ descent.

- it's
- its

13 After an hour, he _____ Sharon wasn't coming.

- knew
- new

14 Is that a _____ hat?

- knew
- new

15 How did you _____ it was going to rain?

- know
- no

16 There are _____ onions on this half of the pizza.

- know
- no

17 As the years _____, Gwen grew more and more like her mother.

- passed
- past

18 Did you drive _____ the cemetery on your way home?

- passed

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past

19 Would you like another _____ of cherry pie?

piece

peace

20 The contestant said she wished for world _____.

piece

peace

21 The book arrived in a _____ brown envelope.

plain

plane

22 Robert's _____ was over an hour late.

plain

plane

23 Today was Justine's eighth time in the _____ office.

principal's

principle's

24 As a matter of _____, Claire refused to attend the congresswoman's rally.

principle

principal

25 I hate to admit it, but you were _____ about my last boyfriend.

right

write

26 I promised my sister I would _____ to her every week

right

write

27 Jake is a foot taller _____ me.

then

than

28 If you come over, _____ you can meet my new puppy.

then

than

29 Your shoes are over _____.

there

they're

their

30 Have your friends forgotten _____ manners?

there

they're

their

31 My parents are so pleased with my grades that _____ throwing me a party.

there

they're

their

32 After graduation, he _____ all of his papers out of the window.

threw

through

33 When you're _____ slicing the carrots, can you help me with the potatoes?

threw

through

34 There are only _____ bagels left.

too

to

two

35 I haven't been able to convince my father _____ quit smoking.

too

to

two

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36 That bag is _____ big to fit in the trunk.

too

to

two

37 Did you _____ your new suit to work today?

wear

where

38 Do you know _____ I put my glasses?

wear

where

39 If the _____ is nice, we'll go to the park.

weather

whether

40 I'm not sure _____ to wait or to come back later.

weather

whether

41 Do you know _____ sweater this is?

who's

whose

42 _____ at the door?

whose

who's

43 Did you remember to pack _____ camera?

your

you're

44 _____ the first guest to arrive.

Your

You're

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Exercise

Underline the correct word.

1. (Who, Whom) is going to the party?
2. I need to make (fewer, less) mistakes.
3. I want to go, (two, to, too).
4. Put the box over (their, there, they're).
5. She (lead, led) the children in a song.
6. (Can, May) I have another cookie?
7. Give the present to (I, me).
8. I need (your, you're) telephone number.
9. The toy has lost (its, it's) batteries.
10. The park is (by, buy, bye) the lake.
11. I am going (two, to, too) the show.
12. (Their, There, They're) going to be here soon.
13. Are you talking to (I, me)?
14. (Who, Whom) should I say is calling?
15. I want to put (fewer, less) sugar in my tea.
16. (Its, It's) time to go.
17. (Your, You're) going to be late.
18. I know you (can, may) do it all by yourself.
19. That is made of (lead, led).
20. We need to (by, buy, bye) some milk.

Answers

1. who
2. fewer
3. too
4. there
5. led
6. may
7. me
8. your
9. its
10. by
11. to
12. they're
13. me
14. whom
15. less
16. it's

17. you're
18. can
19. lead
20. buy

Exercise

1. The school (principal, principle) came in to the room.
2. My pants are too (lose, loose).
3. We went before the teen (council, counsel).
4. The (capital, capitol) of Colorado is Denver.
5. I like all (accept, except) the blue one.
6. This is a (stationary, stationery) bike.
7. I would like to (precede, proceed) with my story.
8. It was a steep (descent, dissent) into the cave.
9. Most drugs have side (affects, effects).
10. Warm bread (compliments, complements) any meal.
11. I practice so I won't (lose, loose) the game.
12. The Senate was in session at the (capital, capitol) today.
13. My daughter likes purple (stationary, stationery).
14. The government's decision met with much (descent, dissent).
15. Everybody likes to receive (compliments, complements).
16. Voting can help (affect, effect) change.
17. You should always stand by your (principals, principles).
18. He will (council, counsel) me to help me make the right decision.
19. She was happy to (accept, except) her award.
20. A joke should (precede, proceed) your speech.

1. principal
2. loose
3. council
4. capital
5. except
6. stationary
7. proceed
8. descent
9. effects
10. 10 complements
11. lose
12. capitol
13. stationery
14. dissent
15. compliments
16. affect
17. principles
18. counsel

19. accept
20. precede

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