

Frequently Confused Words



A/An

A is used before a consonant sound: **a** tree, **a** friendly face.

-Exception: **a** unicycle

An is used before a vowel (A, E, I, O, U): **an** ice cream, **an** apple

Accept/Except

Accept means “to receive”

I **accept** your generous offer.

Except means “leaving out” or “excluding”

Everybody **except** Aunt Estelle is coming to Easter dinner.

Advice/Advise

Advice is a noun meaning a suggestion or opinion

Social workers love to give **advice**.

Advise is a verb meaning to give advice:

The dentist **advised** the little boy to brush his teeth regularly.

Affect/Effect

Affect is a verb meaning to influence.

Hopefully my B+ will not **affect** my grade point average too badly.

Effect is usually a noun meaning result.

The **effect** of me getting a B- is that I will not be getting a 4.0.

All ready/Already

All ready means “all set” or “prepared”

We are **all ready** to go home.

Already means “by this time”

Barbara has **already** delivered the package to Maria.

Among/Between

Use **between** for two people or things:

There are many disagreements **between** Lucero and Patty.

Use **among** for more than two people or things:

The argument **among** Lucero, Patty, Arthur, and Stan got blown out of proportion.

Beside/Besides

Beside means alongside of.

Park the car **beside** the garage.

Besides means in addition to.

Besides being late, Clark was also rude to his client.

Fewer/Less

Fewer is used for things that can be counted.

Fewer than 10 people came to the lecture.

Less is used for a unit and when something cannot be counted.

There is **less** concern for veterans than there should be.

Good/Well

Good is an adjective; it only describes nouns and pronouns.

Lester is a **good** singer. **Good** describes the noun, singer.

Well is an adverb; it only describes verbs.

Lester sings **well**. **Well** describes the verb sing.

Its/It's

Its is a possessive pronoun.

The dog wagged **its** tail.

It's is a contraction for **it is**.

It's a beautiful day.

Of/Have

Incorrect	Correct
Could of	Could have
Will of	Will have
Would of	Would have
Should of	Should have
May of	May have
Must of	Must have
Might of	Might have

Passed/Past

Past is used to describe a previous time, or it can also mean “by.”

You cannot change the **past**.

I drove **past** your house several times a day.

Passed is the past tense of the verb ‘to pass’ and means “went by” or “handed.”

I heard you **passed** by my house several times a day last week.

The teacher **passed** back last week’s exam.

Quiet/Quit/Quite

Quiet means “silence/silent” or “clam”

Some people were told to be **quiet**.

Quit means “stop” or “give up”

Berto **quit** trying to call his beloved.

Quite means “very” or “exactly”

Berto was **quite** content to stop calling his beloved.

Suppose/Supposed

Suppose means to assume or to guess.

I **suppose** I can take a history class.

Supposed means “ought” or “should.” Remember to always include the “d.”

I was **supposed** to take the online exam last night.

Rather/Whether

Rather means on the contrary or preferably:

Would you **rather** go to Paris or Berlin?

Whether means if:

Shane did not know **whether** Anne was a good boyfriend or not.

Their/They’re/There

Their is a possessive pronoun.

Their relationship was unhealthy.

There’re is a contraction of **they are**.

They’re an odd couple.

There may indicate location.

The book is over **there** on the table.

There may also be used as an introductory word.

There is a fly in my soup.

Then/Than

Then refers to a certain time.

I asked Jeremiah what he meant; **then** he yelled at me.

Than is used to compare.

Jeremiah is louder **than** Phing.

Through/Though/Threw

Through means “in one side and out the other.” It also means “finished.”

It is hard for Luis to pass the thread **through** the needle.

I am **through** proofreading my essay.

Though means “although”; as though means “as if.”

Though Fred has never taken a signing lesson, he sings well.

Lupe acts as **though** the money she is giving out is coming out of her own pocket.

Threw is the past tense of throw:

The quarterback **threw** an incomplete pass.

Too/To/Two

Too means “excessively” or “also.”

Angelica sings **too** loudly, and she is a lousy singer too.

To is used for expressing motion or direction toward a point.

Jeni is going **to** yell at Drew if he does not go **to** school.

Two is the number.

Even if Drew takes **two** classes, Jeni will be happy.

Use/Used

Use is a noun that means “purpose.” It is also a verb that means “make use of.”

What possible **use** could this have?

How do you **use** this contraption?

Used is the past tense and past participle form of the verb to use. It also means “adjusted” or “accustomed”; in this case it is followed by to.

The little boy **used** the towel and threw it on the floor.

I am not **used** to Fred’s singing.

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Where / Were / We're

Where is a question word

Where did I put my book?

Were is a verb, the plural past tense of **to be**

Were you at school yesterday?

We're is a contraction of **we are**

We're going to leave for school now.

Who / Whom

Use the *he/him* method to decide which word is correct.

He = who

Him = whom

Who wrote the letter? (**He** did.)

For **whom** should I vote? (Should I vote for **him**?)

Whose / Who's

Whose is a possessive pronoun

Whose book is this?

Who's is a contraction of **who is** or **who has**

Who's going to the picnic Saturday?

Your/You're

Your is a possessive pronoun.

Your car was stolen the other day.

You're is a contraction of you are.

You're a terrific person.