

Commonly Confused Words

Homonyms are words that sound alike but are spelled differently and have different meanings. Below are some commonly confused homonyms

Accept

To take or receive.
Ex: Please accept my apologies.

Accept vs.
Except

Except

To leave out; not including.
Ex: You can eat any of the candy you want except for Hershey bar.

Affect

A verb meaning to influence or change.
Ex: A lack of sleep can affect your work performance.

Affect vs.
Effect

Effect

A noun meaning a result or consequence.
Ex: The main side effect of this medication is drowsiness.

Bare

Exposed; to uncover.
Ex: Some cultures do not allow women to have bare shoulders.

Bare vs.
Bear

Bear

The animal; to give birth to, or to carry.
Ex: Bears are very protective of their cubs.
Ex2: I cannot bear this burden.

Break

To shatter into pieces; a separation; or to pause.
Ex: Thankfully, the tree branch did not break the window.
Ex2: I need to take a short break.

Break vs.
Brake

Brake

A mechanism to stop a vehicle; to slow or stop.
Ex: I had to slam on the brake to avoid a collision.

Breath

A noun meaning air that is inhaled or exhaled.
Ex: Take a deep breath and hold it.

Breath vs.
Breathe

Breathe

A verb meaning to inhale or exhale.
Ex: My asthma can make it hard to breathe at times.

Buy

To purchase.
Ex: Would you please go to the store and buy eggs?

Buy vs.
By

By

Near; no later than; or through.
Ex: Let's to lay by the pool.
Ex2: The assignment is due by midnight.
Ex3: We communicate by email.

Choose

To decide or select (present tense).
Ex: It is almost time to choose your classes for next semester.

Choose vs.
Chose

Chose

Decided or selected (past tense).
Ex: I chose to go to the movies instead of the party.

Definitely

For sure; without a doubt.
Ex: You definitely need to go see the doctor.

Definitely vs.
Defiantly

Defiantly

Something or someone who is challenging or boldly opposing an authority figure.
Ex: The child defiantly told his parents that he refused to clean his room.

Desert

To abandon a person, cause, or place; a dry, barren area of land.
Ex: People deserted the park when it began storming.
Ex2: The Sahara is one of the largest deserts in the world.

Desert vs.
Dessert

Dessert

The final part of a meal, such as cookies, cake, or ice cream.
Ex: We are having apple pie for dessert.

Its

The possessive form of the word "it."
Ex: Its color is pink.

Its vs. It's

It's

The contraction for "it is."
Ex: It's raining outside.

Knew

Understood (past tense).
Ex: I knew all of the answers on the test because I studied.

Knew vs. New

New

Recent; not old.
Ex: I need to buy my son new clothes because he has outgrown everything.

Know

To understand (present tense).
Ex: It is important that people know how to read and write.

Know vs. No

No

The opposite of yes.
Ex: No, you may not use your phone during class.

Lead

To go first (present tense; rhymes with "seed."); a soft metal (rhymes with "bed.")
Ex: The teacher asked Bobby to lead the line to the library.
Ex2: The mechanical pencil ran out of lead.

Lead vs. Led

Led

Went first (past tense).
Ex: The softball team led the game by three runs.

Loose

Not tight (rhymes with "goose.")
Ex: His clothes were all loose after he lost thirty pounds.

Loose vs. Lose

Lose

To misplace; to fail or not win (rhymes with "chews.")
Ex: Did you lose your keys?
Ex2: We may lose the game.

Passed

Went beyond or by (past tense); died (passed away).
Ex: The speeding car passed me on the highway.
Ex2: I passed my math course!

Passed vs. Past

Past

Belonging to a former time or place.
Ex: If we don't learn from our past experiences, we'll continue making the same mistakes.

Quiet

Not noisy.
Ex: Please be quiet so I can concentrate on my work.

Quiet vs. Quite

Quite

Very; really.
Ex: He can run quite quickly.

Than

Used in comparisons.
Ex: I like my new English professor much more than my previous one.

Than vs. Then

Then

Indicates time or sequence; next; at that time.
Ex: I have to finish my homework, and then I can watch TV.

Threw

Past tense of "throw."
Ex: The pitcher threw the ball as hard as he could.

Threw vs. Through

Through

In one end and out the other; from beginning to end; finished.
Ex: The tornado plowed through the entire town.
Ex2: I am through with my work.

Waist

The middle part of the body,
Ex: The seamstress measured her around the waist.

Waist vs. Waste

Waste

Use up needlessly; leftovers.
Ex: Take only what you can eat so we do not waste food.

Weak

Not strong; feeble.
Ex: His muscles were very weak after not working out all summer.

Weak vs.
Week

Week

A period of seven days.
Ex: We are going to be going out of town next week.

Wear

To have on clothing.
Ex: Please remember to wear your uniform to practice today.

Wear vs.
Where

Where

Indicates or raises a question about a direction or location.
Ex: Where should we meet for lunch today?

Weather

Atmospheric conditions, like rain, snow, sleet, or hail.
Ex: Florida's weather is almost always hot and humid.

Weather vs.
Whether

Whether

Indicates alternatives or a choice.
Ex: I can't decide whether or not I should go to the game.

Were

Past tense of are or "to be."
Ex: We were unable to play the soccer game last week because there was lightning outside.

Were vs.
We're

We're

Contraction for "we are."
Ex: We're going on a family vacation next summer.

Which

One of a group.
Ex: Which book do you want to read next?
Ex2: Which player scored the winning touchdown?

Which vs.
Witch

Witch

A person, usually a female, thought to practice sorcery or have evil magical powers.
Ex: In *The Wizard of Oz*, Dorothy is trying to escape the Wicked Witch of the West.

Whose

Possessive form of "who."
Ex: Whose books are these?

Whose vs.
Who's

Who's

Contraction for "who is" or "who has."
Ex: Who's going to the parade?

Woman

One female.
Ex: Kamala Harris is the first woman ever elected as Vice President of the United States.

Woman vs.
Women

Women

Multiple females.
Ex: How many women are on the basketball team this year?

Your

Possessive form of "you."
Ex: Don't forget about your dentist appointment this afternoon.

Your vs.
You're

You're

Contraction for "you are."
Ex: I know you're going to do well on your biology exam.

Their

Possessive form of they.
Ex: Their dorm room is a mess.

Their vs.
There

There

In that place; function word that starts a sentence.
Ex: Go over there.
Ex2: There is a snake in the grass.

There vs.
They're

They're

Contraction for "they are."
Ex: I just know they're going to win the game today.

To

Toward; a verb form.
Ex: Please go to the store.
Ex: I need to drive my mom to work because her car broke down.

To vs.
Too

Too

Also; excessively.
Ex: I want some tacos too.
Ex2: It is way too hot outside.

Too vs.
Two

Two

The number 2.
Ex: Two of our key players are sick today.