

Confusing Word Pairs

accept vs. except

to **accept** is a verb meaning “to receive.”

except as a preposition means “with the exception that, or but.”

For example: Everyone **accepted** the offer to work overtime **except** Tim.

access vs. excess

access is used as a noun referring to the ability to enter, as in “**access** to the building,” and as a verb meaning **to enter**, as in “**access** the stage from the rear.”

excess functions as a noun or adjective that typically has to do with an amount that is more than usual or necessary, as in “an **excess** of salt” and “**excess** baggage.”

addition vs. edition

addition and **edition** are both nouns.

addition refers to something added, as in “**new additions** to the museum's collection” and “an **addition** to the house.” It also refers to the process of adding, as in “**the addition** of cream to the soup,” and math problems involving **addition** and subtraction.

edition refers to a particular version of a book, product, newspaper, etc., as in “an illustrated **edition**,” or to something presented as one of a series, as in “tonight's **edition** of the show.”

advise vs. advice

to **advise** is a verb.

advice is a noun.

For example: We **advised** the man to take our **advice** about the restaurant.

affect vs. effect

If you find yourself stumped about which one to use in a sentence, try substituting the word “alter” or “result.”

affect is usually a verb.

For example: Chester's humming **affected** Posey's ability to concentrate.

If “**alter**” fits (Chester's humming **altered** Posey's ability to concentrate), use **affect**.

effect is usually a noun.

For example: Chester was sorry for the **effect** his humming had.

If “**result**” fits (Chester was sorry for the **result** his humming had), use **effect**.

a lot vs. alot vs. allot

a lot is often misspelled as **alot**

For example: There are **a lot** of pencils in the package.

allot means “to distribute, parcel out, give, or apportion (something) to someone as a share or task.”

For example: **Allot** no more than 30 percent of your income for rent.

all right vs. alright

all right is often misspelled as “**alright**.” **All right** means someone or something is satisfactory or agreeable.

For example: **All right**, everyone: listen up.

allude vs. elude

allude is a verb that means "to speak of or mention something or someone in an indirect way," as in "they **alluded** to difficulties at their former school."

elude is a verb that most often means "to avoid or escape someone or something by being quick, skillful, or clever," as in "a criminal who has **eluded** capture."

allusion vs. illusion

allusion is a noun that means "a statement that refers to something without mentioning it directly," as in "a colleague's **allusion** to a former spouse."

illusion is a noun that refers to something that looks or seems different from what it is, as in "paint that creates the illusion of metal" and "an optical **illusion**." It also refers to an idea that is based on something that is not true, as in "they were under the **illusion** that the car was brand new."

among vs. amongst

among is the preferred and most common variant of this word in **US English**.

amongst is more common in **British English**. Neither version is wrong, but *amongst* may seem fussy to American readers.

among vs. between

among expresses a collective or loose relationship of several items.

For example: Chester found a letter hidden **among** the papers on the desk.

between expresses the relationship of one thing to one or more other things.

For example: Posey spent all day carrying messages **between** Chester and the other students.

The idea that **between** can be used only when talking about two things is a myth—it's perfectly correct to use **between** if you are talking about multiple binary relationships.

amount vs. number

amount describes objects that cannot be counted.

For example: The **amount** of time you spend studying determines your grades.

number describes countable objects.

For example: The **number** of hours you spend studying determines your grades.

Note:

the number is singular

Example: **The number** of students going to the prom is overwhelming.

a number is plural.

Example: **A number** of those students will be arriving in limousines.

as vs. like

as is a subordinating conjunction.

For example: She runs **as if** she were a deer

like is a preposition.

For example: She runs **like** a deer.

assure vs. ensure vs. insure

assure means to tell someone that something will definitely happen or is definitely true.

For example: Posey **assured** Chester that no one would cheat at Bingo.

ensure means to guarantee or make sure of something.

For example: Posey took steps to **ensure** that no one cheated at Bingo.

insure means to take out an insurance policy on something of value.

For example: Posey was glad the Bingo Hall was **insured** against damage caused by rowdy Bingo players.

base vs. bass

base is a noun, verb, and adjective.

The noun has a variety of meanings, several of which refer to a literal or figurative foundation or bottom, as in "the lamp's **base**," "the **base** of a mountain," "the company's customer **base**," and "**base** of operations." It's also used in various phrases like "touch **base**" and "on **base**."

The verb **base** means "the main place where a person works or lives or where a business operates," as in "a company **based** in Iowa." It is also used in phrases with *on* and *upon*: "an economy **based** on tourism."

The adjective **base** means "not honest or good," as in "**base** motives."

bass when pronounced to rhyme with *case* is a noun that refers to a low or deep sound or voice, or to a musical instrument.

Another word, **bass** rhymes with *pass* and refers to a kind of fish.

breath vs. breathe

breath is a noun; it's the air that goes in and out of your lungs.

For example: Chester held his **breath** while Posey skateboarded down the stairs.

breathe is a verb; it means to exhale or inhale.

For example: After Posey's spectacular landing, Chester had to remind himself to **breathe** again.

bridal vs. bridle

bridal is an adjective that is used to describe things relating to a bride or wedding, as in "a **bridal** gown" and "**bridal** party."

bridle is a noun that refers to a device that fits on a horse's head and that is used for guiding and controlling the horse.

bridle is also a verb with two meanings: one is "to put a **bridle** on a horse"; the other is "to react in an angry way," as in "he **bridled** at their criticism of his methods."

can vs. may

can denotes the ability to do something.

For example: I **can** play the piano well.

may indicates permission, possibility, or probability:

For example: I **may** play the piano at next year's recital.

capital vs. capitol

capital has several meanings. It can refer to an uppercase letter, money, or a city where a seat of government is located.

For example: Chester visited Brasilia, the **capital** of Brazil.

capitol means the building where a legislature meets.

For example: Posey visited the cafe in the basement of the **capitol** after watching a bill become a law.

climactic vs. climatic

climactic and climatic are both adjectives.

climactic is related to the word *climax*; it means "most exciting and important," as in "the movie's **climactic** chase scene."

climatic means "of or relating to climate," as in "**climatic** conditions in the region that make it an ideal place to grow grapes."

coarse vs. course

coarse means "rough, unrefined."

For example: The gardener had a **coarse**, stubby beard.

course means "path or accustomed procedure."

For example: Is this **course** of action acceptable?

collaborate vs. corroborate

collaborate and **corroborate** are both verbs.

collaborate means "to work with another person or group in order to achieve or do something," as in "**collaborating** on a book about dogs."

corroborate means "to support or help prove a statement, theory, etc. by providing information or evidence," as in "two witnesses **corroborated** her story" and "a theory **corroborated** by recent studies."

complement vs. compliment

A **complement** is something that completes something else. It's often used to describe things that go well together.

For example: Chester's lime green boots were a perfect **complement** to his jacket.

A **compliment** is a nice thing to say:

For example: Posey received many **compliments** on her purple fedora.

continual vs. continuous

continual means "frequently repeated, habitual."

For example: The children **continually** turned on the lights.

continuous means "uninterrupted, without cessation."

For example: The waterfall **continuously** roared over the cliff.

currant vs. current

currant is a noun that refers to a small raisin or berry.

current is a noun that refers to a continuous movement of water or air in the same direction, as in "ocean **currents**," and also to a flow of electricity, as in "a strong/weak electrical **current**."

current also functions as an adjective meaning "happening or existing now," as in "the **current** month" and "the magazine's **current** issue."

defense vs. defence

defense is standard in **US English**.

defence is found mainly in **British English**.

desert vs. dessert

desert functions as a noun referring to an area of very dry land that is usually covered with sand and is very hot.

desert is also a verb that means "to leave a place," as in "residents **deserted** the town," or "to leave someone or withdraw support for someone," as in "a promise to never **desert** them."

dessert is sweet food that is eaten after a meal: "ice cream for **dessert**."

detract vs. distract

detract and **distract** are both verbs.

detract means "to reduce the strength, value, or importance of something," as in "a minor error that does not **detract** from the overall quality of the report."

distract means "to cause someone to stop thinking about or paying attention to someone or something and to think about or pay attention to someone or something else instead," as in "noises in the hallway **distract** the students."

device vs. devise

device is a noun that most often refers to an object, machine, or piece of equipment that has been made for some special purpose, as in "electronic **devices**."

devise is a verb that means "to invent or plan something that is difficult or complicated," as in "**devising** a new method for converting sunlight into electricity."

disinterested vs. uninterested

disinterested means "detached, objective, impartial."

uninterested means "not interested."

For example: The **disinterested** judge read the verdict to the **uninterested** jury.

e.g. vs. i.e.

e.g., is the abbreviation from the Latin phrase "**exempli gratia**" and means "for example,"

It introduces one or more examples that illustrate something stated, as in "Submit a sample of academic writing—**e.g.**, a dissertation chapter."

i.e., abbreviates the Latin "**id est**," meaning "that is." It introduces a rewording or a clarification, as in "The cough may last for a short period of time—**i.e.**, three to five days."

emigrate vs. immigrate

emigrate means "to move away from a city or country to live somewhere else."
For example: Chester's grandfather **emigrated** from Canada sixty years ago.

immigrate means "to move into a country from somewhere else."
For example: Posey's sister **immigrated** to Ireland in 2004.

eminent vs. imminent

eminent and **imminent** are both adjectives.

eminent means "successful, well-known, and respected," as in "an **eminent** physician."

imminent means "happening very soon," as in "awaiting their **imminent** arrival" or "their arrival is **imminent**."

empathy vs. sympathy

empathy is the ability to understand another person's perspective or feelings.

sympathy is a feeling of sorrow for someone else's suffering. A **sympathizer** is someone who agrees with a particular ideal or cause.

envelop vs. envelope

envelop is a verb that means "to completely enclose or surround someone or something," as in "she **enveloped** the baby in the blanket" and "mist **enveloping** the mountains."

envelope is a noun that refers to an enclosing cover for a letter, card, etc. The word is also used in the phrase "push the **envelope**," which means "to go beyond the usual or normal limits by doing something new, dangerous, etc.," as in "a writer whose new novel pushes the **envelope**."

farther vs. further

farther refers to space or physical distance.

For example: Posey can run **farther** than Chester.

further refers to metaphorical distance such as time, quantity, or degree.

For example: Chester is **further** away from finishing his project than Posey is.

feel vs. think

feel means "to perceive by sensation."

For example: The sun **feels** too hot.

think means “to perceive by cognition.”

For example: I **think** his position on the war is wrong.

fewer vs. less

fewer means “a smaller number.”

less means “a smaller amount.”

For example: Even though tickets cost **less** this year, we still went to **fewer** games.

flaunt vs. flout

flaunt means “to show off.”

For example: Chester **flaunted** his stylish new outfit.

flout means “to defy, especially in a way that shows scorn.”

For example: Posey **flouted** the business-casual dress code by wearing a tiara and flip-flops.

formally vs. formerly

formally and **formerly** are both adverbs.

formally means “according to established rules and conventions.” It is used to describe things done in a serious and proper or official way, as in “guests were dressed **formally**” and “she has **formally** announced her candidacy.”

formerly means “at an earlier time,” or previously as in “this car was **formerly** owned by my neighbor.”

forth vs. fourth

forth is an adverb used especially in literary contexts to mean “out into notice or view,” as in “spring’s blossoms bursting **forth**,” and “onward or forward in time or place,” as in “from this day **forth**.” It is also used in various phrases such as “and **so forth**,” “back and **forth**,” “bring **forth**,” and “set **forth**.”

fourth is used as a noun, an adjective, and an adverb with meanings that relate to the number four. As a noun it can mean “number four in a series,” as in “arriving on the **fourth** of May,” and “one of four equal parts of something,” as in “cut the cake into **fourths**.” As an adjective it means “occupying the number **four** position in a series,” as in “the **fourth** day”; as an adverb it means “in the **fourth** place,” as in “he finished **fourth** in the race.”

gaff vs. gaffe

A **gaff** is a type of spear or hook with a long handle.

For example: Chester completed his sailor costume with a **gaff** borrowed from his uncle’s fishing boat.

A **gaffe** is a faux pas or social misstep.

For example: Posey made a **gaffe** when she accidentally called Chester by the wrong name.

gray vs. grey

gray is the standard **American English** spelling.

grey is the standard **British English** spelling.

hanged vs. hung

People are **hanged**. **Hanged** is the past tense form of the verb to **hang**.

It refers to when a person dies by **hanging** from his or her neck.

For example: In the past, many men were **hanged** for their crimes.

Objects are **hung**. **Hung** is the past tense form of the verb to **hang**.

Meaning: To fasten from above with no support from below; suspend.

For example: Will you **hang** this picture on the wall? I already did. I **hung** the picture on the wall for you yesterday.

historic vs. historical

Historic means "famous, important, and influential."

For example: Chester visited the beach in Kitty Hawk where the Wright brothers made their **historic** first airplane flight.

Historical means "related to history."

For example: The **historical** Punjab region, now divided between India and Pakistan, is defined by the Indus River and these five tributaries.

hoard vs. horde

hoard is used as a noun to refer to a large amount of something valuable that is kept hidden, as in "a dragon's **hoard** of treasure," and as a verb to mean "to collect and hide a large amount of something valuable," as in "a dragon **hoards** treasure."

horde is a noun that refers to a large group of people, as in "a **horde** of shoppers crowded the store."

imply vs. infer

imply means "to hint or suggest at something without saying it directly."

For example: The newspaper **implied** that the police knew the identity of the victim.

infer means "to deduce or conclude something that hasn't been stated directly."

For example: I **inferred** from the newspaper that John was the victim.

inquiry vs. enquiry

inquiry and **enquiry** both mean "a request for information."

inquiry is the standard **American English** spelling.
enquiry is the **British English** spelling.

irregardless vs. regardless

irregardless is the nonstandard form for **regardless**.

For example: **Regardless** of suspicion, we can never assume, let alone point at someone until an accusation is proven.

isle vs. aisle

isle is a variant of "island," meaning "land surrounded by water."

For example: My dream vacation is a week with you on a desert **isle**.

an **aisle** is "a passage between seats (theater) or shelves (department store or supermarket)."

For example: Cat food is located on **aisle** 17 in Publix.

incredible vs. incredulous

Incredible and **incredulous** are both adjectives.

Incredible means "difficult or impossible to believe," as in "a movie telling an **incredible** story of survival," and "extremely good, great, or large," as in "the musician's **incredible** skill" and "a place of **incredible** beauty."

Incredulous means "not able or willing to believe something," as in "people were **incredulous** that the child had achieved the feat."

it's vs. its

It's is a contraction of "it is."

Its is a possessive pronoun that means "belonging to it."

For example: The dog is playing with **its** ball; **it's** a joyful dog.

lay vs. lie vs. lie

to **lay** means "to put or to place."

One way to remember this is that there is an a in both to **lay** and to **place**.

For example: Posey will **lay** out her outfit before she goes to bed.

Be careful, though. The past tense of to **lay** is **laid**.

For example: Posey **laid** out her outfit.

to **lie** means "to recline."

One way to remember this is that there is an e in both to **lie** and to **recline**.

For example: Chester will **lie** down for a nap.

The past tense of **lie** is **lay**.

For example: Chester **lay** down for a nap over an hour ago.

"

to **lie** also means to make an untrue statement with intent to deceive."

For example: She was **lying** when she said she didn't break the vase. He **lied** about his past experience.

to **lie** also means to create a false or misleading impression.

For example: Statistics sometimes **lie**. The mirror never **lies**.

lead vs. led

lead, a noun when it rhymes with "bed," refers to a type of metal.

For example: **Lead** is a heavy, soft, malleable metal.

For example: Posey wore a **lead** apron while the dentist X-rayed her teeth.

to **lead** is the present tense of the verb, rhyming with "feed." It means to guide or to be first; **led** is the past tense.

For example: Chester will **lead** the hikers.

For example: Chester **led** the way.

learned vs. learnt

learned is standard in **US English**.

learnt is standard in **British English**.

liable vs. libel

liable is an adjective that can mean "legally responsible for something," as in "determining who is **liable** for the damage;" or "likely to be affected or harmed by something," as in "a condition that makes her **liable** to illness;" or "likely to do something," as in "you're **liable** to fall if you're not more careful."

libel is a noun and a verb. As a noun it refers to the act of publishing a false statement that causes people to have a bad opinion of someone, as in "a newspaper found guilty of **libel**." As a verb it means "to write and publish a false statement that causes people to have a bad opinion of someone," as in "the jury found that the article **libeled** him."

loose vs. lose

loose is most often used as an adjective with a variety of meanings that have to do, either literally or figuratively, with something not being tight or tightly fastened, attached, or held.

Some examples are: "a **loose** tooth," "a **loose** belt," "**loose** rocks/papers," "a **loose** coalition." It is also used in various phrases like "break **loose**," "cut **loose**," and "let **loose**."

Additionally, it can be used as a verb meaning "to release or untie an animal or person" and "to make something less tight."

lose is a verb with various meanings, typically having to do with being unable to find, keep, or hold something, as in "I keep **losing** my keys," "**losing** power," "**lose** money," "**lost** an advantage," and with failing to win something, as in

"**losing** a game." It also appears in common phrases like "**lose** out," "**lose** it," "**lose** contact," and "**lose** your way."

median vs. medium

median and **medium** both function as nouns and adjectives.

As a noun, **median** can refer to a grassy or paved area that divides a highway (also called "a **median** strip"), or, in mathematics, to the **middle** value in a series of values arranged from smallest to largest.

The adjective **median** is usually used in mathematics to mean "having a value that is in the **middle** of a series of values arranged from smallest to largest," as in "the median price of homes in the area."

medium as an adjective means "in the middle of a range of possible sizes, amounts, etc.," as in "a person of **medium** height" and "a **medium** blue."

The noun **medium** has several meanings, among them "something that is sold in a **medium** size," as in "I wear a **medium**," and "a particular form or system of communication (such as newspapers, radio, or television)," as in "an effective advertising **medium**."

moral vs. morale

moral is a noun and an adjective.

The noun refers to a lesson that is learned from a story or an experience, as in "the **moral** of the story is to appreciate what you have," and in its plural form, "**morals**" indicates proper ideas and beliefs about how to behave in a way that is considered right and good by most people, as in "I don't question her **morals**."

The adjective is used with a variety of meanings having to do with right or wrong behavior, as in "**moral** issues/standards" and "**moral** conduct."

morale is a noun referring to the feelings of enthusiasm and loyalty that a person or group has about a task or job, as in "employee **morale** was high in the wake of the project's success."

most vs. almost

most is an adjective.

For example: Ex: **Most** of her Halloween candy is chocolate.

almost is an adverb.

For example: She was so eager to eat her Halloween candy that she **almost** ate the foil around the chocolates.

passed vs. past

passed is the past tense of the verb **to pass**.

the noun **past** means "a former time."

For example: It was just **past** six o'clock when we **passed** Times Square station.

peace vs. piece

peace is a noun that has several meanings relating to an end to war or fighting or to a state of calm, as in "a wish for world **peace**," "looking for some **peace** and quiet," and "**peace** of mind." It is also used in phrases like "hold your **peace**" and "make **peace** with."

piece is a noun and a verb.

As a noun, **piece** has various meanings most of which have to do with a part, amount, or type of something, as in "a **piece** of pie," "a large **piece** of land," or "**pieces** of paper," and "a **piece** of land."

It's also used in various phrases including "to **pieces**" and "say your **piece**." The verb **piece** is typically used with "**together**" to express the idea of assembling parts or bringing them in close proximity, as in "**piecing together** scraps for the quilt" and "we **pieced** the facts of the story **together**."

pedal vs. peddle vs. petal

pedal is a noun that most often refers to a flat piece of metal, rubber, etc., that you push with your foot to make a machine move, work, or stop, as in "the bike's **pedals**" and "the car's brake **pedal**."

As a verb it typically means "to push the **pedals** of something, such as a bicycle," as in "**pedaling** faster and faster."

peddle is a verb that is usually used to mean "to sell something usually in small amounts and often by traveling to different places," as in "**peddling** fruits and vegetables from a roadside cart."

petal is one of the often brightly colored parts of a flower, as in "the **petals** on a rose are often red."

personal vs. personnel

personal is an adjective often used to describe what belongs to or relates to a particular person, as in "**personal** property" and "my **personal** opinion," or to a person's private thoughts, feelings, etc., as in "a very **personal** question."

personnel is a noun most often used to refer to people who work for a particular company or organization as in "all **personnel** must complete training."

plain vs. plane

plain functions as an adjective, adverb, and noun.

plain as an adjective often describes what lacks decoration, pattern, extra features, etc., as in "**plain** paper" or "a pair of **plain** shoes."

plain as an adverb, means "truly, completely," as in "it's just **plain** wrong."

The noun **plain** refers to a large area of flat land without trees.

plane most often functions as a noun referring to an airplane or to a flat surface.

pole vs. poll

pole is a noun. It can refer to a long, straight piece of wood, metal, etc., that is often placed in the ground so that it stands straight up.

pole can also refer to either end of the imaginary line around which something (such as the earth) turns, as in "the north/south **pole**"; to either one of the two ends of a magnet; to the positive point or the negative point on a battery; or to either one of two opposite positions, situations, etc., as in "opposite **poles** of an argument."

poll functions as both a noun and a verb.

As a noun it refers to an activity in which several or many people are asked a question or a series of questions in order to get information about what most people think about something. This noun use has a related verb use: a magazine might "conduct a **poll**," and a magazine might "**poll** its readers."

The noun **poll** in its plural form "**polls**" refers to the record of votes that were made by people in an election or to the places where those people vote.

pore vs. poor vs. pour

pore functions as a verb meaning "to read or study something very carefully," as in "spent hours **poring** over the map."

As a noun it refers to a very small opening on the surface of your skin, which is called a **pore**.

poor is an adjective used to mean "having little money or few possessions," as in "a **poor** person," or to describe something of low quality like "**poor** soil", or someone of low skill such as "a **poor** player."

pour is a verb that means "to cause something to flow in a steady stream from or into a container or place," as in "**pour** a cup of coffee."

pray vs. prey

pray is a verb that is used to mean "to speak to a deity, especially in order to give thanks or to ask for something," as in "**praying** for forgiveness," as well as "to hope or wish very much for something to happen," as in "**praying** they will succeed."

prey is used as a noun to refer to an animal that is hunted or killed by another animal for food, as in "the owl's **prey**," or to someone who is a victim. It also functions as a verb meaning "to hunt," or "to hurt, cheat, or steal from someone," as in "thieves who **prey** on the city's tourists."

preposition vs. proposition

preposition and **proposition** are both nouns.

preposition refers to a word (such as *in*, *on*, or *to*) that is used with a noun, pronoun, or noun phrase to show direction, location, or time, or to introduce an object.

proposition is a noun that most often refers to a plan or offer that is presented to a person or group of people to consider, as in "a business **proposition**."

precede vs. proceed

The verb **precede** means "go before, to be more important than."

For example: Studying **precedes** knowledge.

the verb **proceed** means "go forth (after an interruption), to issue from a source, and to advance along a course."

For example: Knowledge **proceeds** from studying.

prejudice vs. prejudiced

prejudice is a noun.

For example: **Prejudice** has no place in a civilized society.

prejudiced is an adjective.

For example: To avoid a **prejudiced** jury pool, the judge moved the trial to another city.

principal vs. principle

principal means three things: "first in order of importance" or "main," the administrator of a school," and "the amount of an investment."

For example: My **principal** ally at the school is the **principal**.

the noun **principle** means "a rule or law."

For example: My **principles** don't allow me to steal pencils from work.

quiet vs. quite

quiet functions as an adjective, verb, and noun.

As an adjective, it mostly describes things or people who make little noise, as in "a **quiet** engine" and "a **quiet** person," or a situation or event in which there is little noise," as in "a **quiet** dinner for two."

As a verb, it means "to make or become calmer or less noisy," as in "a lullaby **to quiet** the crying baby."

The noun **quiet** refers to the quality or state of being without noise, as in "the **quiet** of the house at midnight."

quite is an adverb that most often means "very," as in "**quite** tired;" "completely or entirely," as in "we **quite** agree;" or "exactly or precisely," as in "not **quite** what I said."

resume vs. résumé

resume is a verb that is usually used to mean "to begin again after stopping," as in "the musicians **resumed** playing."

résumé is a noun used to refer to a short document describing your education, work history, etc., that you give an employer when you are applying for a job.

right vs. rite vs. write

right functions as an adjective, adverb, noun, and verb.

Some common adjective uses are "morally or socially correct or acceptable," as in "the **right** thing to do," and "accurate or correct," as in "the **right** answer."

Adverbial uses include the directional "toward **the right**," as in "turn **right**," and "correctly," as in "you guessed **right**."

Among meanings of the noun **right** are "behavior that is morally good or correct," as in "knowing **right** from wrong," and "something that a person is or should be morally or legally allowed to have, get, or do," as in "human **rights**."

As a verb, **right** often means "to correct something wrong or unjust," as in "trying to **right** a wrong."

rite is a noun that refers to an act that is part of a ceremony, often religious, as in "funeral **rites**."

write is a verb with various meanings including "to form letters or numbers on a surface with a pen, pencil, etc.," as in "learning to **write** the alphabet," and "to create a book, poem, story, etc.," as in "**writing** a book about parrots."

role vs. roll

role is a noun that refers to the character played by an actor, or to a part or function that someone has in a group, situation, etc., as in "scientists who had a **role** in finding a cure to the disease."

roll functions as a verb and a noun.

As a verb it has various meanings relating to movement, especially by turning over and over, as in "a ball **rolling** down a hill," or in a smooth continuous movement, as in "clouds **rolling** past" and "a car **rolling** to a stop."

As a noun, **roll** often refers to a long piece of cloth, paper, film, tape, etc., that is **rolled** to form the shape of a tube or ring, as in "a **roll** of tape," or to a round sweet cake ("a cinnamon **roll**"), or to a deep continuous sound, as in "a **roll** of thunder."

stationary vs. stationery

stationary means unmoving.

For example: The revolving door remained **stationary** because Posey was pushing on it the wrong way.

stationery refers to letter writing materials and especially to high quality paper.

For example: Chester printed his résumé on his best **stationery**.

statue vs. stature vs. statute

statue, **stature**, and **statute** are all nouns.

statue refers to a figure, usually of a person or animal, that is made from stone, metal, etc.

stature refers to the level of respect that people have for a successful person, organization, etc., as in "a writer of her **stature**," as well as to a person's height, as in "a person of rather short **stature**."

statute refers to a written law that is formally created by a government, or to another kind of written rule or regulation.

than vs. then

than is used for comparisons.

For example: Posey runs faster **than** Chester.

then is used to indicate time or sequence.

For example: Posey took off running, and **then** Chester came along and finished her breakfast.

their vs. there vs. they're

their is the possessive form of "they."

For example: Chester and Posey took **their** time.

there indicates a place:

For example: It took them an hour to get **there**.

they're is a contraction of "they are."

For example: Are Chester and Posey coming? **They're** almost here.

Ex: **There** are the bunnies that lay **their** own chocolate eggs; **they're** going to be very popular at Easter time.

to vs. too vs. two

to is a preposition that can indicate direction.

For example: Posey walked **to** school.

to is also used in the infinitive form of verbs.

For example: Chester waited until the last minute **to** do his homework.

too is an adverb meaning "extremely, excessively, or in addition."

For example: Posey waited **too** long to do her homework, **too**.

two is the cardinal number **2**.

For example: The **two** girls were almost **too** giddy **to** go **to** the party.

toward vs. towards

toward is standard in **US English**.

toward is the preferred spelling in the United States and Canada.

towards is standard in **British English**.

In other English-speaking countries, such as the United Kingdom and Australia,

towards is the more common spelling.

track vs. tract

track functions as a noun and a verb.

As a noun, it often refers to a mark left on the ground by a moving animal, person, or vehicle, as in "tire **tracks**," or to a pair of metal bars that a train, trolley, or subway car rides along, as in "train **tracks**."

The verb **track** often means "to follow and try to find an animal by looking for its tracks and other signs that show where it has gone," as in "hunters **tracking** deer," or "to follow and find someone or something especially by looking at evidence," as in "**tracking** the suspect."

tract is a noun that usually refers to a system of body parts or organs that has a particular purpose, as in "the digestive **tract**," or to an area of land.

try to vs. try and

Try to remember to use **try to**, not **try and**, as “and” indicates success at something, negating the need for the word “try.” “Try” indicates an attempt, not a success.

utmost vs. upmost

Both of these words can be used as adjectives, and they have similar meanings.

utmost as an adjective means “situated at the farthest or most distant point” as in “the **utmost** distance from the sun.” It’s also used in the sense “of the greatest or highest degree, quantity, number, or amount” as in “with the **utmost** respect.”

utmost can also be used as a noun meaning “the most possible; the extreme limit; the highest attainable point or degree” as in “presenting the **utmost** in modern technology” and “the highest, greatest, or best of one's abilities, powers, and resources” as in “the **utmost** in customer care service.”

upmost is a shortening of the word “**uppermost**” and means “situated in the highest or most prominent position” as in “the **upmost** floor of the house.”

One way to remember the difference is that **upmost** cannot be used as a noun.

waist vs. waste

waist is a noun that refers to the middle part of your body between the hips and chest or upper back, or to the part of a piece of clothing that fits around your **waist**.

waste is a verb that means “to use something valuable in a way that is not necessary or effective,” as in “trying not to **waste** water.”

As a noun, **waste** often refers to material that is left over or that is unwanted after something has been made, done, used, etc., as in “industrial **waste**.”

wander vs. wonder

wander is a verb used to mean “to move around or go to different places usually without having a particular purpose or direction,” as in “**wandering** through the meadow.”

wonder functions as both a noun and a verb.

As a noun it often means “a feeling caused by seeing something that is very surprising, beautiful, amazing, etc.,” as in “staring up at the monument in **wonder**.”

As a verb it frequently means “to think about something with curiosity,” as in “**wondering** about the city's history.”

weather vs. whether

weather means “atmospheric conditions.”

whether is the first part of the correlative *whether...or*.

For example: We couldn't tell **whether** or not the **weather** was going to improve enough to play frisbee.

where vs. were

where is an adverb expressing place, not time or circumstance.

For example: "**Where** is the end of this absurdly long line?" she asked.

Example when **where** is misused: He was in a predicament **where** his patience was tested.

Correct usage should be: He was in a predicament **in which** his patience was tested.

Another correct example: He was in a place **where** a suit was considered an alien fashion form.

were is a verb and is the simple past of "to be."

For example: The people in line **were** not answering her question.

who vs. which vs. that

The relative pronoun **who** refers to people.

For example: Students **who** eat in class must do extra homework.

which and **that** refer to animals and things.

For example: The cat to **which** I am referring is very cute.

For example: The book **that** is on the end table is a thriller.

who's vs. whose

who's is the contraction of "**who is**."

For example: **Who's** at the door?

whose is a possessive pronoun that means "belonging to (someone)."

For example: **Whose** keys are in the refrigerator?

your vs. you're

your (plural "**yours**") is the possessive of **you**.

For example: Here are **your** keys. They are **yours** not mine.

you're is the contraction of **you are**.

For example: **You're** correct when you say that **your** temper is unpredictable.

Sources:

Grammarly blog and Merriam Webster online dictionary