

Easily Confused Words Worksheet (Usage)

There are many words that students often confuse for other words when they are writing. This worksheet will aid you in learning the correct meanings for these confusing words while learning how to correctly use them.

To/Too/Two

“To” is a preposition or part of an infinitive. It introduces a prepositional phrase or comes before a verb. It often answers the question *where?*

Example: Jason is going to the store.

“Too” is an adverb meaning *also* or *very*.

Example: Juan felt too confused to ask any questions.

“Two” is an adjective; it is the *name of a number*.

Example: Raphael got two A’s on his report card.

Quite/Quit/Quiet

“Quite” is an adverb meaning *completely*, *very*, or *entirely*. It rhymes with “fight.”

Example: The instructor was quite surprised by the student’s answer.

“Quit” is a verb meaning *stop* or *cease*. It rhymes with “sit.”

Example: I hope Dan can quit smoking this time.

“Quiet” is an adjective meaning *calm*, *silent*, or *noiseless*. As a verb, it means *soothe* or *calm*. As a noun, it means *tranquility* or *peaceful*.

Example: When the professor began handing out the exams, the room suddenly went quiet.

Where/Wear/Were

“Where” is an adverb referring to a *place* or *location*.

Example: The father said, “Where do you think you are going, young man?”

“Wear” is a verb that means *put on* or *tire out*. When it is a noun, it means *weakening*.

Example: The kids will wear (tire out) those shoes if they wear (put on) them too often.

“Were” is a verb; it is the plural past tense of *be*.

Example: The jeans were too tight for him.

Threw/Through/Thru

“Threw” is a verb, the past tense of *throw*, meaning *tossed*.

Example: Michael threw the ball for the winning touchdown.

“Through” is an adverb or a preposition meaning *in one side and out the other*.

Example: The waitress yelled, “Be careful going through the door!”

“Thru” is simply a variation of the word “through”. It is used in very informal writing only; **“thru” is never considered correct in formal academic writing!**

Passed/Past

“Passed” is a verb, the past tense of *pass*, meaning *transferred*, *went ahead* or *by*, *elapsed*, or *finished*.

Example: The first runner passed (transferred) the baton to the second just as she passed (went by) the stands. Three seconds passed (elapsed) before the next runner came by.

“Past” as a noun means *history*; as an adjective, it means *former*.

Example: I must have been a dolphin in a past (former) life.

Avoid digging up the past (history) if possible.

Peace/Piece

“Peace” is a noun meaning *tranquility*.

“Piece” as a noun means *division* or *creation*. As a verb, it means *patch*, *repair*.

Example: If you can piece (patch) together the pieces (divisions) of the story, perhaps we can have some peace (tranquility) around here.

Weak/Week

“Weak” is an adjective meaning *flimsy*, *frail*, or *powerless*.

Example: The patient’s heartbeat was so weak (frail) that the doctor was certain he would be dead soon.

“Week” is a noun meaning *a period of seven days*.

Example: I only have a week to finish the report for my supervisor.

Which/Witch

“Which” is a pronoun dealing with *choice*. As an adverb, it introduces a subordinate (less important) clause.

Example: Which (choice) type of soup do you want?

This car, which (introduces subordinate clause) I have never driven, is the one I’m thinking of buying.

“Witch” is a noun meaning *sorceress* or *enchantress*.

Example: I don’t know which (choice) witch (enchantress) I should consult about my future.

By/Buy/Bye

“By” is a preposition used to introduce a phrase.

Example: We stopped by to visit my grandmother in the hospital.

“Buy” is a verb meaning *purchase*; as a noun, it means *bargain* or *deal*.

Example: That car was a great buy (deal).

“Bye” is an interjection used in place of *goodbye*.

Example: I turned and waved bye to my friends.

Dear/Deer

“Dear” is an adjective meaning *valued* or *loved*.

Example: My dear daughter’s favorite movie is Miss Congeniality.

“Deer” is a noun referring to an *animal*.

Example: Yesterday while I was driving, a deer ran out in front of my car.

Weather/Whether

“Weather” is a noun referring to the *condition outside*.

Example: The weather has gotten gloomy.

“Whether” is an adverb used when referring to a *possibility*.

Example: Let me know whether or not you are interested in the new class.

Than/Then

“Than” is a conjunctive word used to make a comparison.

Example: I like cheese cake better than pie.

“Then” is an adverb telling *when* or meaning *next*.

Example: Then (next), the group discussed the ways in which the new procedures would work better.

Choose/Chose

“Choose” is a verb meaning *select*. It rhymes with “bruise.”

Example: I will choose the same item off the menu that I had last week.

“Chose” is the past tense of *choose*; it means *selected*. It rhymes with “hose.”

Example: Henry chose flex hours on Friday afternoons.

Loose/Lose/Loss

“Loose” is an adjective meaning *free, unrestrained, or not tight*. It rhymes with “goose.”

Example: The chickens ran loose in the yard.

“Lose” is a verb meaning *misplace, to be defeated or fail to keep*. It rhymes with “shoes.”

Example: Where did you lose your umbrella?

“Loss” is a noun meaning *defeat, downturn, or the opposite of victory or gain*. It rhymes with “toss.”

Example: The investors will lose (fail to keep) considerable capital if the market suffers a loss (downturn).

Advice/Advise

“Advice” is a noun meaning *suggestion or suggestions*. It rhymes with “ice.”

Example: That was the best advice (suggestion) I’ve received so far.

“Advise” is a verb meaning *suggest to or warn*. It rhymes with “wise.”

Example: We advise (suggest to) you to proceed carefully.

Affect/Effect

“Affect” is a verb meaning *alter, inspire or move emotionally or imitate*.

Example: How will this plan affect (alter) our jobs?

“Effect” is a noun meaning *consequences*; as a verb, it means *cause*.

Example: What effects (consequence) will this restructuring have on profits?

Accept/Except

“Accept” is a verb meaning *to receive willingly or to approve*.

Example: This instructor accepts late essays.

“Except” is a verb meaning *to exclude or leave out*.

Example: I love all cats, except black ones.

Idea/Ideal

“Idea” is a noun meaning *a concept or notion*.

Example: That is a brilliant idea!

“Ideal” is a noun that means *standard of perfection*; as an adjective it means *conforming to what is viewed as perfect*.

Example: Michelle has the ideal schedule this semester.

Already/All ready

“Already” is an adverb meaning *as early as this, previously, or by the same time*.

Example: We had already (previously) finished the job.

At the age of four, Bridgette is already (as early as this) reading.

“All ready” means *completely ready*.

Example: We are all ready (completely ready) to go to the movies.

Altogether/All together

“Altogether” is an adverb meaning *entirely* or *completely*.

Example: These claims are altogether (entirely) false.

“All together” means *simultaneously*.

Example: The audience responded all together (simultaneously).

Everyday/Every day

“Everyday” is an adjective meaning *ordinary* or *usual*.

Example: These are our everyday (usual) low prices.

“Every day” means *each day*.

Example: The associates sort the merchandise every day (each day).

Maybe/May be

“Maybe” is an adverb meaning *perhaps*.

“May be” is a verb phrase meaning *might be*.

Example: Maybe (perhaps) the next batch will be better than this one. On the other hand, it may be (might be) worse.

Remember: The following words should **always be separated**, even though it is common to see them put together:

All right

Even though we often see this word written in informal documents, there is no such word as “alright.”

A lot

Even though we often see this word written in informal documents, there is no such word as “alot.” The two words must always be separated.

Example: I thought it was all right that we allotted tickets to a lot of our best customers.

Remember: None of the **possessive pronouns** are spelled with an apostrophe: *mine, your, yours, his, hers, their, theirs, ours, and whose*. An apostrophe in a pronoun is **always** replacing a missing letter in a **contraction**. The following are examples of contractions and words that they are commonly confused with.

It’s/Its

“It’s” means *it is* or *it has*.

Example: It’s such a nice day.

“Its” shows ownership before a noun.

Example: Look at my book; its cover is ripped.

You’re/Your

“You’re” means *you are*.

Example: You’re going to need a pen for the exam.

“Your” shows ownership before a noun..

Example: Is this your pen?

They're/Their/There

“They’re” means *they are*.

Example: I found your glasses; they’re on the kitchen table.

“Their” shows ownership before a noun.

Example: Do you have their new address?

“There” is an adverb used to show a place. Sometimes it is also used to start a thought when the true subject follows the verb.

Example: Put the heavy box right there.

I suspect that there are several files missing.

There will be no meeting today.

Who's/Whose

“Who’s” means *who is* or *who has*.

Example: Who’s in charge of ordering the supplies?

“Whose” shows ownership before a noun.

Example: Whose book is on my desk?

Our/Are

“Our” shows ownership before a noun.

Example: Where is our checkbook?

“Are” is a verb.

Example: Where are my keys?

Could've/Could of

“Could’ve” is the contraction for *could have*; therefore, “could of” (or “would of” or “should of”) is **always incorrect!**

Example: If she had known I was worried, I am sure she would’ve (would have) called.

Sources: *Grammar That Works* by Ann Honan Rodrigues

Writing Skills Success in 20 Minutes a Day by Judith F. Olson

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