

## Easily confused words

Computer spell-checkers will *not* help you tell these words apart—you just have to learn them! To this list, add any other words you often confuse or misspell.

### Accept and except

*Accept* is a verb and means *to receive, agree, or believe*:  
*I generally **accept** the truth.*

*Except* is a preposition which means *but not or other than*:  
*He is a great guy **except** for his temper.*

### Affect and effect

*Affect* is a verb meaning *to influence or act on*:  
*How did the teachings of Mahatma Gandhi **affect** you?*

*Effect* is usually a noun meaning *result*:  
*The acupuncture had a positive **effect** on my headaches.*

(Note: a less-common use of *effect* is as a verb meaning *bring about*:  
*Widespread criticism finally **effected** a change in procedures.*)

### All right and “alright”

*All right* is the only correct choice. *Alright* is not a word (maybe you’re thinking of *already*?):

*It turned out **all right** in the end.*  
***All right**, we’ll go with you.*

### Are and our

*Are* is a verb, a plural form of *be*:  
*They **are** expecting a quiz on Thursday.*

*Our* means *belonging to us*:  
***Our** winter break starts in mid-December.*

### Break and brake

*Break* means *to separate into parts, especially by force*:  
*I hope you didn’t **break** my phone when you dropped it.*

*Brake* means *to slow or stop*:  
*If you **brake** slowly, you have more control over your car.*

### Cite, site, and sight

*Cite* is a verb that means *tell where you learned something*:  
*My instructor told me to **cite** my sources.*

*Site* is a noun that means *place or location*, including online locations:  
*The construction **site** is marked with a sign.*  
*That **website** (or **site**) will be a good resource for your paper.*

*Sight* is the ability to see:  
*You can protect your **sight** by wearing sunglasses.*

### Its and it’s

*Its* is a pronoun showing possession:  
*The door had **its** lock replaced.*

*It’s* is a contraction that means *it is*:  
***It’s** too bad she didn’t get the job.*

### Principal and principle

*Principal* is an adjective meaning *primary* or a noun meaning *chief administrator*:  
*Japan’s **principal** export is electronics.*  
*The **principal** spoke to the assembly about drinking and driving.*

*Principle* is a noun. It means *a rule, idea, or general law*:  
*The unions fought for the **principle** of collective bargaining.*

### Than and then

*Than* means *when compared to*:  
*Your purse is heavier **than** my backpack.*

*Then* means *next, at that time or in that case*:  
*We had dinner; **then** we went to the movies.*  
*If the car isn’t running, **then** we should take the bus.*

## There, their, and they're

*There* is an adverb meaning *in* or *at that place*:

The cookie is *there* on the plate.

*Their* means *belonging to them*:

The students presented *their* views on the issue.

*They're* is a contraction of *they are*:

*They're* a great inspiration for the rest of us.

## Though and thought

*Though* is an adverb meaning *even if*.

*Though* I applied to UC Santa Cruz, I decided to go to Sac State.

*Thought* is a noun meaning *an idea, belief, or intention*. It is also the past-tense form of the verb *think*:

My *thought* is that we should wait for them here.

I *thought* you were finished.

## Through and threw

*Threw* is the past tense of *throw*—to *make something fly quickly through the air using your arm*:

He *threw* the Frisbee downfield.

*Through* shows *movement from one end of something to another*. It also means *because of*:

We searched *through* the database but never found the book.

I'm graduating early *through* the support of my family.

## To, too, and two

*To* shows *location, direction, and other relationships in a prepositional phrase*; with a verb it marks an infinitive:

We'll be going *to* the movies tomorrow. We want *to* go early.

*Too* means *also* or *in excess*:

I would go, *too*, but it costs *too* much money.

*Two* means 2:

She lives only *two* miles from campus.

## Weather and whether

*Weather* is a noun; it is the *conditions of the atmosphere* such as temperature, clouds, wind, or rain:

The *weather* is expected to be warm on Saturday.

*Whether* means *if* and indicates choices, alternatives, or possibilities:

I don't know yet *whether* I got in the class.

## Where and were

*Where* is an adverb meaning *in what place*:

He didn't say *where* he put the keys.

*Were* is a plural past tense of *is*:

They *were* afraid to stay any later than ten o'clock.

## Which, witch, and sandwich

*Which* means *what particular one out a group*. It also replaces the name of something previously mentioned:

*Which* sunglasses do you think look better on me?

I bought the black sunglasses, *which* looked better.

*Witch* refers to *a woman with magic powers, or an adherent of Wicca, or an unpleasant woman*:

She says she is a *witch* in the Wiccan church.

My neighbor can act like a real *witch* when my dog goes in her yard.

*Sandwich*, on the other hand, is just w-i-c-h!

## Who's and whose

*Who's* is a contraction of *who is*:

*Who's* there?

*Whose* means *belonging to someone or belonging to something*. It is a possessive form of *who* or *which*:

I work at the desk *whose* inbox is full.

## You're and your

*You're* is a contraction of *you are*:

*You're* supposed to keep your promises.

*Your* means *belonging to you*:

That is *your* decision.

