

Th– Words for English Language Learners

We recognize and read many common words by sight and shape. So when words look similar, it is easy to mix them up. Many common words in English begin with th– but have different meanings and uses. Here are some of these common th– words.

The (adjective)

The marks certain nouns (singular, plural, and non-count) when they are specific or already identified in a text or conversation. We also use *the* to mark unique natural objects like the sun or moon.

The cat we found is yellow and brown.
The cats we found seem to be siblings.
*The men had already moved **the** furniture.*
*The sun is the center of **the** solar system.*

This (adjective or pronoun)

This marks a singular or non-count noun to refer to something you've already mentioned, or to indicate it if it is nearby. As a pronoun, it can also replace the noun.

This book is my favorite one.
This water is cold.
This is my car; that one over there is his.
This is my favorite.

These (adjective or pronoun)

Use *these* like the plural of *this* before a plural noun. (Note: you can't use *these* with a non-count noun such as *milk*, because a non-count noun has no plural form.) As a pronoun, it can replace a plural noun.

These books are my favorite ones.
These parking spaces are for motorcycles; those are for staff.
These are for motorcycles.

That (adjective or pronoun)

That marks a singular or non-count noun representing something that is not near at hand. As a pronoun, it can also replace the noun.

That book was already checked out.
*Put **that** milk in the refrigerator.*
*This is his car; **that** car over there is mine.*
That is mine.

Those (adjective or pronoun)

Those is a plural of *that*—it marks a plural noun representing something not near at hand. (Note that you can't use *those* with non-count nouns such as *milk*, because non-count nouns have no plural form.) It also can replace the plural noun.

Those books were already checked out.
Those were already checked out.

Than (conjunction)

Than is used to compare things. It is also used to express preferences; when you state a preference, *than* marks the thing you DON'T prefer.

*You are taller **than** he is.
I'd rather drink water **than** soda.*

Then (adverb)

Then indicates time. It shows that something occurs after something else.

*First I'll finish my homework; **then** we can go to the movies.*

Their (adjective)

Their shows plural possession or ownership.

*We'll stop at **their** house first.*

There (adverb)

There means "at that place" or "to that place." It also begins certain common expressions, causing the subject to follow the verb.

*We camp **there** every July; we go **there** to fish.
There are a lot of people waiting in line.
There is no good reason for him to be late*

They (pronoun)

They replaces a plural noun that functions as the subject of a sentence.

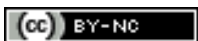
***They** [Rina and Steven] will help us move in March.*

Them (pronoun)

Use *them* to replace a plural noun functioning as an object (direct object, indirect object, or object of a preposition) in a sentence.

*We'll help **them** [Steven and Rina] move soon.
She'll give **them** the rental forms **then**.
Your help means a lot to **them**.*

Contributed by Rosemary McKeever



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