

Easily Confused Words

Some words can be tough to discern from one another, here are some common examples!

Words with Similar Pronunciation

Are and Our

Are (verb) is the plural form of be:

*The crew members **are** expecting rain within the next couple of hours.*

Our refers to belonging to us:

***Our** science project turned out to be successful!*

Your and You're

Your means to belong to you:

***Your** shoes are near the front door.*

You're is a contraction of you and are:

***You're** running too fast!*

To/Too/Two

To can refer to direction, reaching a state or condition, or as a preposition.

*I went **to** the restaurant **to** get the newest hamburger.*

Too can mean an excess amount or in addition:

*The laptop sustained **too** much damage to run properly.*

Two refers to the number 2.

*There are **two** more minutes until noon.*

Principal and Principle

Principal refers to the primary, or main, authority:

*The **principal** had previously met with the faculty.*

Principle generally refers to an idea, law or concept.

*The institutions follow the same general **principle**.*

Brake and Break

A **brake** is a device or medium used to stop a moving object or process.

*The **brake** functioned smoothly when stopping.*

Break can refer to destruction and damage to an object, or a pause in regular events

*There was a scheduled **break** at 2:00pm for all visitors.*

Who's and Whose

Who's is a contraction of who and is.

***Who's** going with you?*

Whose refers to something belonging to or connected to a person.

***Whose** backpack is over in the corner?*

Words with Similar Spellings

Effect and Affect

Effect (noun) refers to causing a result, or to bring something about (verb)
*The **effect** of having a union was profound in employee morale and efficacy.*

Affect (verb) refers to causing a difference:
*Why did the novel **affect** the readers so much?*

Lose and Loose

Lose (verb) means to be deprived of something or being unable to find:
*I believe that the team will **lose** tonight's game.*

Loose refers to letting something free, or not being fixed in place:
*The barn animals were unintentionally let **loose**.*

Allusion and Illusion

Allusion means to reference something indirectly
*The letter seemed to be an **allusion** to their previous hardships.*

Illusion can mean a false perception, or thing that is likely to be misinterpreted.
*The moving picture was simply an optical **illusion**.*

Where and Were

Where (adverb) means in a place or position
*I can't figure out **where** my keys are!*

Were can refer to the plural past tense
*Where **were** the keys the last time you had them?*

Accept and Except

Accept means to allow the reception of something or recognize a thought as right.
*I am willing to **accept** the job offer.*

Except refers to an exclusion or something other than that.
***Except** for the ride back home, the trip was pleasant.*

Advice and Advise

Advice refers to assistance or guidance in a current or future occurrence
*The English teacher gave me **advice** on how to avoid run-on sentences.*

Advise (verb) is the act of giving information or advice
*I will help **advise** the students on how to avoid comma splices.*

Tips for Easily Confused Words

Use a dictionary, whether physical or virtual, to help find definitions of confusing words.

Write down words that confuse you to help discern them in future writing assignments.

Continue to study the words to help remember them in future use.

If possible, use mnemonic devices to help remember the differences between similar words.