

COMMON HOMONYM ERRORS

English 10+ • Writing Workshop

Nothing obscures the message in a written piece as much as grammatical errors. Here are some homonyms—pairs of words with the same pronunciation but different meanings—that are often misused in writing.

AFFECT, EFFECT

Affect is a verb meaning to influence	1. Effect is most often used as a noun, meaning result. 2. In formal English, effect can be used as a verb, meaning to bring about or execute.
“Cold weather can affect the health of elderly people.”	1. “The medicine had an immediate effect.” 2. “The election results will effect a transfer of power.”

IT'S, ITS

It's is the contraction for it is or it has.	Its is a pronoun, the possessive form of it.
“It's a girl!” or “It's been raining for three days.”	“The dog wagged its tail.”

THERE, THEIR, THEY'RE

There is an adverb indicating place (literally or figuratively). “Go there at once.” Or “You have completed enough of the test; you may stop there.”	Their is a pronoun, the possessive form of they. “They like their school and do their lessons well.”	They're is a contraction of they are. “They're spending the holidays at home.”
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TO, TWO, TOO

1. To is either a preposition OR 2. part of an infinitive	Two is the number. two=2	1. Too is either a substitute for “also” OR 2. an expression of degree
1. “Will you come to the dance?” (preposition) 2. “To sleep, perchance to dream” (infinitive- base form of a verb)		1. “I like caffeine too” OR 2. “This is too difficult to understand”

WHO'S, WHOSE

Who's is a contraction of who is. “Who's in charge here?”	Whose is a pronoun, the possessive form of who and which. “Whose shoes are under the couch?”
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YOU'RE, YOUR

You're is a contraction of you are. “You're one of the finalists in the spelling bee.”	Your is a pronoun, the possessive form of you. “Your car is covered with dust from the construction site.”
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THAN, THEN

Than is a word that helps you compare. “That dog is bigger than this dog.” “Sooner rather than later”	Then is a word that explains time or order. “The movie's at 4 pm? OK, I'll see you then.” “First he put on his shoes, then he went for a run”
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Adapted from:

McKenzie, Ian. “Avoid Common Homonym Errors.” Weblog post. [Ian's Messy Desk](http://www.ismckenzie.com/05/27/avoid-common-homonym-errors/). 27 May 2008. 20 Oct. 2008 <<http://www.ismckenzie.com/05/27/avoid-common-homonym-errors/>>.

MORE FREQUENTLY CONFUSED HOMONYMS:

From:

Www.esldesk.com. “Quizzes on Common Errors in English - Homophones and other confusing words.” [Www.ESLdesk.com](http://www.esldesk.com). 2008. ESLdesk.com. 20 Oct. 2008 <<http://www.esldesk.com/common-errors-in-english/index.htm>>.

Accept : (verb) - to receive willingly, to approve, to agree.

Except : (preposition or verb) - exclusion or leave out.

Ad : An advertisement.

Add : to combine, join, unite or to find a sum.

Advice : (noun) - suggestion or recommendation.

Advise : (verb) - to suggest.

Ate : Past tense of verb [to eat].
Eight : number 8.

Buy : (verb) - to purchase.
By : next to something, by way of something.
Bye : Used to express farewell. Short for [goodbye].

Choose : (verb) to make a choice or selection.
Chose : past tense of the verb [to choose].
Choice : (noun) choosing; selection.

Cite : to mention something or to quote somebody as an example or proof.
Site : the location of an event or object. A website.
Sight : ability to see, a thing that can be seen.

Decent : kind, tolerant, respectable, modest.
Descent : family origins or ancestry. Also the process of coming or going down.
Dissent : (verb or noun) disagreement with a prevailing or official view.

Desert : (verb) to leave or abandon. (noun) waterless land with no vegetation and covered with sand.
Dessert : sweet food served after the meal.

Eat : to put food into the mouth, chew it and swallow it.
It : the thing, animal or situation which has already been mentioned.

Four : number 4
For : to indicate the object, aim, or purpose of an action or activity.

Here : in, at, or to this place.
Hear : to perceive (sound) by the ear.

Knew : past simple of the verb [to know].
New : recently created.

Know : (verb) to be familiar with someone or something.
Now : at the present time or moment.
No : negative reply, refusal or disagreement.

Many : consisting of a large number, numerous.
Money : currency or coins issued by a government that can be exchanged for goods and services.

Off : away, at a distance in space or time.
Of : belonging to or connected with someone or something.

Peace : freedom from war and violence.
Piece : a part of something.

Wander : to walk aimlessly or without any destination.
Wonder : (noun) feeling of surprise and admiration. (verb) desire to know.

Weather : the atmospheric conditions in area, with regard to sun, cloud, temperature, wind and rain.
Whether : introduces indirect question involving alternative possibilities.

Where : to, at or in what place.
Were : past tense of the verb [to be]
Wear : to have clothing, glasses, etc. on your body.

Write : (verb) To form letters, words, or symbols on a surface (like paper) with a pen or pencil.
Right : morally good, proper. Also opposite of left.