

COMMONLY MISUSED HOMONYMS AND OTHER WORDS YOU MIGHT MISUSE

WHAT IS A HOMONYM?

The Purdue Owl defines homonyms as, “words that sound the same but have different meanings and spellings.” What does this mean? It means that it’s understandable to mix them up because they sound the same; however, they don’t mean the same things, and some are even different parts of speech.

Affect/effect

- *Affect* is a verb, and it means “to act on”
Ex. Poor grammar **AFFECTS** most Americans.
- *Effect* is a noun, and it means “a result”
Ex. Language skills have a positive **EFFECT** in life.

Too/to/two

- *Too* is an adverb meaning “also” or “as well”
Ex. Are you coming, **TOO**?
- *To* is a preposition used for expressing direction
Ex. I want **TO** go **TO** the beach.
- *Two* is a noun indicating the number which proceeds one.
Ex. I have **TWO** roommates.

Their/there/they’re

- *Their* is a pronoun, which is the possessive case of they
Ex. **THEIR** outlook on life is admirable.
- *There* is an adverb indicating direction or place
Ex. Look over **THERE**!
- *They’re* is a contraction meaning “they are”
Ex. **THEY’RE** some of the greatest people you’ll ever meet.

Accept/except

- *Accept* is a verb meaning “to take” or “to receive”
Ex. I was **ACCEPTED** into the University of my dreams.
- *Except* is a preposition, and it implies exclusion
Ex. Everyone went to the writing center, **except** me.

Hear/here

- *Hear* is a verb meaning “to have listened”
Ex. I didn’t **HEAR** what you said.
- *Here* is an adverb meaning “in this place”
Ex. Could you please come over **HERE**?

Passed/past

- *Passed* is an adjective implying the completion of the act of passing **OR** the past tense of the verb “to pass”
Ex. I **PASSED** my English test!
- *Past* is an adjective meaning “gone by” or “in elapsed time”
Ex. Poor grammar skills are in my **PAST**.

Then/than

- *Then* is an adverb meaning “at that time”
Ex. Read this worksheet, **THEN** watch your English skills improve.
- *Than* is conjunction used to compare two things
Ex. I probably like making this sheet more **THAN** you like reading it.



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PART TWO

Whose/who's

- *Whose* is a pronoun, and it is the possessive case of *who*
Ex. WHOSE jacket is this?
- *Who's* is a contraction meaning "who is"
Ex. WHO'S going to the concert tonight?

Its/it's

- *Its* is the possessive form of *it*
Ex. The book lost ITS value after I spilled my drink on it.
- *It's* is a contraction meaning "it is"
Ex.- IT'S hard to explain how much I love the English language.

Lose/loose

- *Lose* is a verb meaning "to come to be without"
Ex. My mom asked me not to LOSE her car keys, but I did.
- *Loose* is an adjective meaning "free" or "unbound"
Ex. When I lost weight, my jeans were LOOSE on me.

Your/you're

- *Your* is a pronoun, and it is the possessive case of *you*
Ex. I am here to help you with YOUR paper.
- *You're* is a contraction meaning "you are"
Ex. YOU'RE a trooper for making it through this worksheet!

Which/that/who/whom

- *Which* is a pronoun meaning "what one" or "whichever"
Ex. I don't know WHICH ice cream flavor to choose.
- *That* is a pronoun meaning "what thing/idea/state"
Ex. Homonyms are something THAT I mix up a lot.
- *Who* is a pronoun meaning "what person/persons," and it always acts as the subject
Ex. He is the person WHO you want to talk to about interviews.
- *Whom* has the same definition as *who*; however, it acts as the direct object
Ex. To WHOM are you sending that gift?

Whether/weather

- *Whether* is an idiom meaning "regardless"
Ex. I'm going to the store, WHETHER you want me to or not.
- *Weather* is a noun referring to the temperature or climate
Ex. The WEATHER has been lovely lately!

Farther/further

- *Farther* is an adverb describing something that is in the distance. It always refers to a literal distance (something you can measure)
Ex. Upper Deck is FARTHER than the Bistro from Gaige Hall.
- *Further* is an adverb which also describes something that is in the distance. However, *further* refers to an abstract distance (something which cannot be measured).
Ex. I wish to FURTHER my education after Millersville.

* For more help with homonyms, check out Alan Cooper's Homonym list at:
http://www.cooper.com/alan/homonym_list.html

** All definitions gathered from the Dictionary.com iPhone Application

