

Commonly Misused Words



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Misused Words

too, to, and two

too - in addition, more than enough, as well

to - in the direction of, towards, in contact with, for the purpose of, or to the extent of

two - number succeeding the number one; the sum of one plus one

Example: Tina had fifty-two pairs of shoes, which was **too** many **to** fit on her shoe rack. Tina brought fifty of the pairs **to** a homeless shelter. Afterwards, Tina only had **two** pairs of shoes.

there, their, and they're

there - at or towards that place, point, or matter

their - belonging to two or more people, places, or things

they're - they are

Example: I went **there** because I had heard that **their** grilled cheese sandwiches are sensationally scrumptious. The moment that **their** homemade cheese touches your tongue, you can't question that **they're** apt to get a five star rating from the critics.

irritate and aggravate

irritate - to create or cause a negative condition

aggravate - to increase the severity of an existing negative condition

Example: SusyQ **irritated** her skin when she picked up a cactus with her bare hand. Susy **aggravated** the cuts when she accidentally cleaned her cuts with a household cleaning solution instead of rubbing alcohol.

allude, refer, and elude

allude - to indirectly mention

refer - to specifically mention

elude - to physically or mentally escape from

Example: At first, Ms.Pea **alluded** to Mr.Pea's bad breath when she offered him some mints. Ms.Pea could not **elude** smelling Mr.Pea's odorous breath when he embraced her, so she bluntly **referred** to it as repulsive.

evade and elude

evade - to escape or avoid by being sneaky or deceitful

elude - to physically or mentally escape

Example: Georgie, who failed many classes last semester, **evaded** showing his parents his report card. He told them silly stories and the report card issue **eluded** his parents' minds.

affect, effect, and effect

affect - to influence

effect - (noun) result or outcome

effect - (verb) to cause to happen, bring about, or produce results

Example: Movie stars can **affect** children's clothing preferences. Dwardie Boops, a cartoon character, has **effected** change in my children's wardrobe. Their teachers notified me about the **effects** of the character on my children.

farther and further

farther - more distant

further - more time or quantity

Example: Polly's mother discouraged Polly from going **farther** away from home to **further** her pursuit of education.

imply and infer

imply - to include as a necessary and logical part; to express indirectly

infer - to conclude or surmise from evidence or circumstances

Example: Intelligence **implies** the ability to be successful in school. Because this student has earned the best grades in the school, we **infer** that she is intelligent.

lie, lay, and lie

lie - to be in, or place oneself in, a horizontal position (lie, lay, lain, lying)

lay - to put or cause something to be in a certain position or place; to produce eggs (lay, laid, laying, lays)

lie - to tell or present something that is not true (lie, lied, lying, lies)

Example: Betty decided to **lie** down next to her husband who **lay** asleep.

Yesterday, the couple had **lain** asleep for hours. They had been so tired that, if

the housekeeper had not come in, they would still be **lying** in bed.

Before Betty went to sleep, she had made it a point to **lay** her glasses on her bedside table. Her husband had already **laid** his glasses on his bedside table.

The housekeeper is **laying** a tablecloth on the table. The milkman **lays** the milk on the doorstep.

The milkman rings the doorbell and the housekeeper **lies** to him when she says her name is Betty. The housekeeper is an expert at **lying**. She has **lied** about her identity many times. The housekeeper always **lies** to her husband about the price of her shoes.

less and fewer

less - not as great in amount or quantity (of something that is unable to be counted)

fewer - not as great in number

Example: The Big Bad Wolf is sad because there is **less** wind today to help him blow down the pigs' houses. The wolf is also melancholy because most of the pigs in the valley moved away and now there are **fewer** pigs to eat.

then and than

then - at another time; next in order; in that case

than - in a comparison of unequal components, "than" precedes the second component being compared to the first component

Example: Spike won't wag his tail **then** because he hates our neighbors more **than** I hate our neighbors. If I don't invite the neighbors to the barbeque, **then** Spike will be more pleasant to all of the guests.

nauseous and nauseated

nauseous - causing sickness in the stomach or disgust

nauseated - to feel sickness in the stomach or disgust

Example: The cruise was only a **nauseous** experience when the eye of the tornado was within ten miles of the ship. Captain Ron was able to steer the ship back to safety because, unlike the passengers, he did not become **nauseated!**

that, which, and who

that - referring to an understood place or thing; indicating something/someplace less immediate (used in an essential clause)

which - refers to a specific thing or place out of an understood collection; being the thing or place previously mentioned

who - referring to an understood person

Example: I came to **that** conclusion when I saw Pippy, **who** is twenty-two years old, crumple her homework. The classes that Pippy attends at college, **which** is an Ivy league school, have not improved her despicable organizational skills.

Which class can Pippy take to teach her to be more organized?

tortuous and torturous

tortuous - marked by turns, bends, or curves; twisting or winding; complex

torturous - involving severe pain or anguish

Example: Cuety became nauseated while riding in the taxi up the **tortuous** mountain roads. The loud country music caused Cuety to develop a **torturous** headache.

vice and vise

vice - degrading or immoral conduct or practice

vise - clamping device or a grasp

Example: Freddy's worst **vice** is nose picking. When Freddy picks his nose, his parents threaten to put a **vise** on his hands to teach him a lesson.

it's and its

it's - it is

its - belonging to something; possessed by it

Example: **It's** not apt to be the tastiest entree at the pot luck dinner. **Its** main ingredients are mayonnaise, sardines, and watercress.

accept and except

accept - to receive with approval

except - excluding; other than

Example: Pастey College must approve of an applicant's financial status, high school activities, and grades before the applicant may be **accepted**. All criteria **except** the financial criterion must fulfill the college's predetermined acceptance requirements.

capital and capitol

capital - city at the center of a political or industrial entity; wealth in business or trade

capitol - a statehouse

Example: Washington, DC is the **capital** of the United States of America. My uncle, who is a congressman, gave me a tour of a **capitol**.

elicit and illicit

elicit - to bring forth; to arrive at or deduce by reasoning

illicit - prohibited by law or custom; unlawful

Example: The nosy mother tried to **elicit** information from her young daughter about her relations with boys. The girl told her mother not to worry that she would become pregnant because her relations with them were not **illicit**.

your and you're

your - possessive form of you

you're - you are

Example: You're an extraordinarily talented and accomplished person. In spite of this, it is because of your dedication that you are being presented with the most valuable player award.

all together and altogether

all together - everyone or everything

altogether - completely; entirely

Example: The Parsons were all together in one room. The gathering was altogether crazy because it had thirty clowns hired for a birthday party that had twelve guests.

principle, principal, and principal

principle - a standard or rule that often pertains to morality or nature

principal - (adjective) most important

principal - (noun) person with highest rank or main participant

Example: A leader should be able to justify his or her actions with principles rather than desire. The principal role of the principal of Poppo's school is to oversee the activities of students and staff.

break, break, and brake

break - (noun) a rest

break - (verb) to fracture; to interrupt the completeness of

brake - (noun) a device to decelerate

Example: My sister wants me to take a **break** from learning to sing high notes before I **break** a window. I will be a talented singer before I am tall enough for my feet to reach the **brakes** in the driver's seat of a car.

complement and compliment

complement - something that improves or completes

compliment - praise or flattery

Example: The waiter suggested that we order wine to **complement** the flavor of our entrees. The chicken parmesan was scrumptious so we told the waiter to forward our **compliment** to the chef.

sense, scents, and cents

sense - a vague feeling or perception; that which enables one to see, feel, touch, hear, and taste; something reasonable

scents - perceives an odor or aroma; fills with odor

cents - one hundredth of one dollar

Example: Bernie has a **sense** of guilt when he steals and devours the cookie. The cookie **scents** his breath with a chocolate aroma. His mom kisses him and she **scents** the chocolate in Bernie's breath. His mom also uses her **senses** to see the chocolate on his hands. It makes **sense** that Bernie was not hungry for dinner. Bernie's mom promised to raise Bernie's allowance by seventy-five **cents** if he would promise to stop eating sweets before dinner.