

Commonly Misused Words

Interactive quizzes

http://homepage.smc.edu/reading_lab/words_commonly_confused.htm

<http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/notorious2.htm#quizzes>

Quick Clarification of Confused Pairs

Accept, Except:

Accept is a verb meaning to receive. *Except* is usually a preposition meaning excluding. *I will accept all the packages except that one.*

Affect, Effect:

Affect is usually a verb meaning to influence. *Effect* is usually a noun meaning result. *The drug did not affect the disease, and it had several adverse side effects.*

Are, Our:

Proofread to catch this confused pair which is growing in popularity. *Are* is the verb. *Our* is the possessive. *Where are we going for dinner? Our choice Italian food.*

Have, Of:

Sometimes “of” is used incorrectly in the place of “have.”

Ex: I could have (not “could of”) eaten the entire pie.

Its, It's

- [its](#) = possessive adjective (possessive form of the pronoun it):

The crab had an unusual growth on its shell.

- [it's](#) = contraction for it is or it has (in a verb phrase):

It's still raining; it's been raining for three days.

Than, Then:

Than is a conjunction used in comparisons; *then* is an adverb denoting time. *That pizza is more than I can eat. Tom laughed, and then we recognized him.*

Than is used to “compare”; both words have the letter a in them.

Then tells “when”; both are spelled the same, except for the first letter.

There, Their, They're:

There is an adverb specifying place; it is also an expletive. Adverb: *Sylvia is lying there unconscious.* Expletive: *There are two plums left.* *Their* is a possessive pronoun. *They're* is a contraction of *they are*. *Fred and Jane finally washed their car.* *They're later than usual today.*

If you are using **there** to tell the reader *where*, both words have h-e-r-e. *Here* is also a place.

If you are using **their** as a possessive pronoun, you are telling the reader what "they own. **Their** has h-e-i-r, which also means *heir*, as in someone who inherits something. Both words have to do with ownership.

They're is a contraction of they are. Sound out they are in the sentence and see if it works. If it does not, it must be one of the previous versions.

To, Too, Two:

To is a preposition; *too* is an adverb; *two* is a number. *Too many of your shots slice to the left, but the last two were right on the mark.*

Hints:

If you are trying to spell out the number, it is always t-w-o. **Two** has a w which is the first letter in word. The opposite of word is number.

Too is usually used as “also” when adding or including some additional information. Whenever you want to include something else, think of it as adding; therefore you also need to add an extra o.

We're, Where, Were

- [We're](#) = contraction for we are: We're glad to help.
(Pronouns have apostrophes only when two words are being shortened into one.)
- [Where](#) = location: Where are you going?
(This is a place word, and so it contains the word “here”.)
- [Were](#) = a past tense form of the verb be: They were walking side by side.

Your, You're:

Your is a possessive pronoun; *you're* is a contraction of *you are*. *You're* *going to catch a cold if you don't wear your coat.*

Hints: Sound out "you are" in the sentence. If it works in the sentence it can be written as **you're**. If it sounds awkward, it is probably supposed to be **Your**.

EXAMPLE: **You're** shoes are muddy. "You are shoes are muddy" does not work, so it should be written as: **Your** shoes are muddy.

Commonly Misused Words Quiz

Each correct answer is worth ½ point _____/12 total

_____/ 2 Circle the correct word in each sentence below.

1. Television has its (affect/effect) on public opinion.
2. Falling on my head had a bad (affect/effect) on my memory.
3. Smog can (affect/effect) your lungs.
4. This salary cut may (affect/effect) his living habits.

_____/ 2 Fill in the blanks with the appropriate choice—*their*, *there*, or *they're*.

1. Unable to tolerate the dust one moment longer, Elizabeth spent the afternoon cleaning the living room tables and shelves. Now _____ slippery with furniture polish, glowing in the sunlight that spills through the open window.
2. "Oh, no! _____ are lima beans on my plate!" screamed Noel before he fainted with a thud on the dining room floor.
3. Nothing makes Diane's cat Big Toe Joe happier than a laundry basket full of fresh warm towels. _____ he will sleep, purring in contentment and shedding long white hair on the clean terry cloth.
4. Mrs. O'Shea spent the day steam cleaning the living room floor. Now her children can hardly find the kitchen without _____ trail of dirty footprints leading the way.

_____/ 2 Circle the correct word in each sentence below.

1. The editor wrote a rejection letter (two / to / too) the hopeful author.
2. After (two / to / too) helpings of turkey, I left the table.
3. The television was broken; the CD player was broken (two / to / too).
4. She tried to sleep, but she had drunk (two / to / too) much coffee that day.

_____/ 2 Circle the correct word in each sentence below.

1. I have often wondered about (your / you're) state of mental health.
2. But darling, (your / you're) my sunshine!
3. Little Bo Peep, have you lost (your / you're) sheep?
4. Trust me, (your / you're) my best friend.

_____/ 2 Circle the correct word in each sentence below.

1. What (were / we're) you thinking when you let the ponies out?
2. I hope (were / we're) going somewhere wonderful this weekend.
3. (Were / where) are you hoping to visit?
4. I want to go (where / were) the crazy cat lady lives.

_____/ 2 Circle the correct word in each sentence below.

1. I understand that (it's / its) a hard quiz.
2. (it's / its) a good thing that you are smart enough to handle it easily!
3. Please pick up (it's / its) dog toys.
4. The sun is out and (it's / its) time to go skiing.

Extra credit (1/2 point each)

Circle the correct word in each sentence below.

I would rather ride in a balloon (then / than) fly in a plane
If we go to the carnival first, (then / than) what will we do?