

Common Confusable

- **accede, exceed**

Accede means to agree, to allow; exceed means to go beyond, to surpass.

- **accept, except**

Accept means to give approval or to receive willingly. Except means to exclude or leave out.

- **adapt, adept, adopt**

Adapt means to adjust, adept means skilled and adopt means to take as your own.

- **adverse, averse**

Adverse means inauspicious, hostile; averse means disinclined, repelled.

- **advice, advise**

Advice is the noun and advise the verb.

- **affect, effect**

Affect is a verb; effect is more usually a noun. When used as a verb it means to achieve, fulfil, realise. Effect means a result or a consequence.

- **aloud, allowed**

Aloud means out loud, speaking so that someone else can hear you; allowed means permitted.

- **already, all ready**

Already means by this time; all ready means prepared.

- **altogether, all together**

Altogether means wholly; all together means everybody in a group.

- **all right, alright**

All right is the correct form; alright is grammatically incorrect.

- **allude, elude**

Allude means to refer to; elude means to dodge or escape.

- **allusion, illusion**

Allusion is an indirect reference or hint; illusion means deception or mirage.

- **all ways, always**

All ways means by every way or method; always means all the time, forever.

- **annual, annul**

Annual means yearly; annul means to make void or invalid.

- **anyone, any one**

Anyone means anybody, any person at all; any one means any one person and is followed by "of".

- **appraise, apprise**

Appraise is to assess or estimate. Apprise is to inform or notify.

- **ascent, assent**

Ascent is an upward movement; assent means agreement.

- **assistance, assistants**

Assistance means help or aid; Assistants is the plural of assistant, one who gives help.

- **assure, ensure, insure**

Assure means to guarantee; ensure means to make sure; insure means to protect against loss or damage.

- **auger, augur**

Auger is a tool; augur means to predict.

- **baited, bated**

Baited usually refers to traps or snares. When the reference is to someone who is hardly daring to breathe, the correct word is always bated.

- **bare, bear**

Bare means naked; bear (apart from being a large animal) means to carry.

- **bazaar, bizarre**

Bazaar is an exhibition or fair; bizarre means weird, grotesque, alien.

- **beside, besides**

Beside means by the side of; besides means in addition to.

- **biannual, biennial**

These two are really tricky! Biannual means happening twice a year; biennial means every two years.

- **blonde, blond**

Because these are borrowed from French there is a feminine and masculine form. Blonde is feminine and blond is masculine.

- **bore, boar, boor**

Bore as a noun is a boring or tiresome person, or something that you don't like doing; boar is a male pig; boor is a rude or insensitive person.

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- **board, bored**
Board is a long sheet of wood, also a group of people as in "Board of Directors", and as a verb means to go onto a ship, plane or other form of public transport; bored means not interested.
- **born, borne**
Born is always the beginning of life, borne means carried.
- **bought, brought**
Bought is the past tense of buy, brought is the past tense of bring.
- **braise, braise**
Braise means to cook slowly in liquid (usually meat); braise most commonly means to solder with an alloy of copper and zinc.
- **brake, break**
Brake means to stop; break means to smash.
- **bridal, bridle**
Bridal has to do with brides and weddings; bridle as a noun means a halter or restraint; as a verb it means to restrain or to draw oneself up in anger.
- **by, buy, bye**
By is a preposition meaning next to; buy means purchase; bye means farewell or good-bye.
- **canvas, canvass**
Canvas is cloth or fabric; canvass means to seek votes, to survey, to sell door-to-door.
- **capital, capitol**
Capital means the seat of government; money invested; excellent. Capitol is the building where government meets.
- **censor, sensor**
Censor as a verb means to officially inspect and make deletions or changes (in books, letters, movies, etc.) usually because the deleted or changed material is regarded as offensive or harmful in some way, though movies these days are more likely to be given a rating instead; as a noun it refers to the official who does the censoring. Sensor is something that senses (for instance a burglar alarm has many sensors: for movement, body heat, etc.)
- **collaborate, corroborate**
Collaborate means to work with someone; corroborate means to establish the truth of something.
- **compliment, complement**
Compliment means praise or congratulate. You always pay someone a compliment, not a complement. Complement means to supplement, round out.
- **continual, continuous**
Continual means something that happens frequently, with breaks between the occurrences. Continuous means something that happens without stopping!
- **co-operation, corporation**
Co-operation (usually spelt without the hyphen in US English) means working together; corporation is a business organisation.
- **correspondence, correspondents**
Correspondence is written communication; correspondents are those who write it.
- **creak, creek**
Creak is both a noun and a verb and means squeak or groan (for instance, rusty hinges and loose floorboards creak); creek is a noun and means a waterway or stream.
- **credible, creditable**
Credible means believable; creditable means praiseworthy or deserving credit.
- **criteria, criterion**
Criterion is singular; criteria is plural.
- **curb, kerb**
Curb means to control, as in "curb your temper", while kerb is the edge of a footpath or sidewalk.
- **desert, dessert**
Desert means to abandon (and can also be a noun, meaning a wasteland); dessert is the sweet course of a meal.
- **device, devise**
Device is a noun, meaning a gadget or (particularly in writing terms) an invention; devise is a verb, meaning to invent or plot.
- **discreet, discrete**
Discreet means respectful, prudent; discrete means separate or detached from others.
- **draft, draught**
Draft refers to the first writing of your novel or story (or any other document). You can also be drafted (enlisted or recruited) into the army, navy, etc. Draught is an air movement, a drink (as in "draught of ale") or refers to a horse (or other animal) used for pulling ploughs, etc (e.g., "draught horse").
- **elicit, illicit**
Elicit means to extract or draw out; illicit means not legal.
- **eminent, imminent**
Eminent means distinguished, famous; imminent means near, close at hand.

- **everyday, every day**
Everyday means commonplace, ordinary; every day is used for something that happens daily.
- **everyone, every one**
Everyone means every person in a group; every one means each person and is always followed by “of”.
- **fair, fare**
Fair means average, good-looking, pale, and unbiased. Fare is the money you pay to go somewhere by bus, train, plane, taxi, etc. It can also refer to a passenger.
- **farther, further**
Farther is used for physical distance; further for non-physical.
- **faze, phase**
The most common error is the use of phase when the writer means faze. To faze someone is to fluster or confuse them, whereas phase is mostly used in reference to a stage in someone’s life—though it can be a stage in almost anything else.
- **flare, flair**
Flare means to flash or blaze and (as a noun) is a pyrotechnic device; flair means ability or skill.
- **forbear, forebear**
Forbear means to refrain from; forebear is an ancestor or forefather.
- **foreword, forward**
Foreword is the preface in a book, usually written by someone who is not the author; forward means ahead, near the front.
- **forth, fourth**
Forth means forward; fourth is after “third”.
- **foul, fowl**
Foul can mean dishonourable (by foul means), disgusting (a foul smell), entangle (rubbish dumped in the river can foul fishing lines); fowl is a bird.
- **found, founded**
Found is the past tense of find; founded means started.
- **gibe, jibe**
Gibe means to taunt; jibe means to agree, correspond or tally; in boating it means to shift the sails.
- **gorilla, guerrilla**
Gorilla is a large ape; guerrilla is a particular kind of soldier.
- **hail, hale**
Hail means to greet or to come from (as in “She hails from Mangalore”) and as a noun it is frozen raindrops; hale means healthy or (as a verb) to haul.
- **hanged, hung**
A criminal is always hanged; a picture is hung.
- **herd, heard**
Herd is a group of animals; heard is the past tense of hear.
- **here, hear**
Here refers to a location (as in “over here”). Hear is always what your ears do.
- **hoard, horde**
Hoard means to stockpile and as a noun it is a cache of stockpiled stuff; horde is a large group.
- **hole, whole**
Hole is an opening; whole means complete.
- **home, hone**
Home is where one lives (or where the heart is!); hone means to sharpen.
- **immemorial, immortal**
Immemorial means ancient beyond memory (as in the cliché “since time immemorial”); immortal means deathless, eternal.
- **intolerable, intolerant**
Intolerable; means tiring, onerous crushing; intolerant means biased, prejudiced. Someone cannot be intolerable of another’s beliefs.
- **irregardless, regardless**
There is no such word as irregardless; the correct word is regardless
- **its, it’s**
It’s is short for ‘it is’ and its is possessive—always.
- **later, latter**
Later means afterwards; latter is the second of two things.
- **lay, laid**
“Our hens lay every day.”
“The hens laid ten eggs yesterday.”
- **lay, lie**
“I lay down because I didn’t feel well” and “I lie on my bed and read”.
- **lead, led**
Lead (pronounced led) is a heavy metal or (pronounced ‘leed’) the present tense of led.
- **lend, loan**
Lend is a verb meaning to give something temporarily to someone; loan is a noun, meaning the temporary transfer of something to someone else.

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- **lessen, lesson**

Lessen means to make less; lesson is something you learn.

- **liable, libel**

Liable means subject to, answerable for or likely; libel is written (as opposed to spoken) untruths about someone, which are injurious to that person's reputation, and for which you may be taken to court – though this distinction in defamation is applicable in English law, not Indian law.

- **licence, license**

In British usage, licence is always the noun and license the verb.

- **lightening, lightning**

Lightening means making lighter or brighter; lightning (which is always a noun) is what comes out of the sky, usually followed by a crack of thunder.

- **lose, loose**

Lose always means mislaying or dropping something and not being able to find it, while loose means slack or free.

- **manner, manor**

Manner means method, appearance, class, character; manor is strictly a large, stately house.

- **mantel, mantle**

Mantel is the shelf above a fireplace, or the fireplace surrounding; mantle is a cloak or blanket.

- **marshal, marshall**

Marshal is a military officer or a sheriff; marshall is a verb.

- **meet, mete, meat**

Meet means to encounter (and can also mean fit or suitable); mete means to allot, apportion or distribute; meat refers to flesh as food.

- **mute, moot**

Mute as a verb means to silence or quieten down, as a noun it's a little gadget used by string players (particularly violinists) to soften the sound from their instruments. As an adjective it means dumb or making no sound, as in "He looked at me in mute appeal." Moot means debatable.

- **no, know**

Sounds silly that someone might mix these up, but it happens! No is always the opposite of yes; know is to be certain (that you know the difference!)

- **overdo, overdue**

It baffles me that people get these mixed up, but they do. Overdo means to exaggerate or carry something

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too far; overdue is what your bills are when you forget to pay them!

- **passed, past**

Passed is the past tense of pass. Past means a time that has gone.

- **peace, piece**

Peace means the absence of war (or even noise); piece is a portion of something.

- **peer, pier**

Peer as a noun means a person who is your equal and as a verb it means to squint or look obliquely at something; pier is a type of wharf or dock. pear (a fruit) and pare (to peel).

- **plain, plane**

Plain means obvious, also unadorned or lacking in good looks; plane is a carpenter's tool or an abbreviation of aeroplane.

- **patience, patients**

Patience means forbearance; patients are people under medical care.

- **peek, pique, peak**

Pique means to excite or irritate; peek means to peep or snoop; peak as a noun means the summit or tip, and as a verb means to climax.

- **pour, pore**

You pour sauces, gravies, etc, over your dinner, while pore means to study something—so, "pore over the book", not "pour over the book", which reads as though you might be damaging the book with an unnamed liquid substance!

- **practice, practise**

In British usage, practice is always the noun and practise the verb.

- **premise, premises**

Premise usually means assumption, supposition, while premises means an apartment, house or building and its grounds.

- **presence, presents**

Presence means being near at hand; presents are gifts.

- **principal, principle**

Principal means chief or main, also the amount borrowed in a loan; principle means regulations or ideals.

- **profit, prophet**

Profit means gain, earnings, advantage, and is usually associated with business. A prophet is a seer, a diviner.

- **quiet, quite**
Quiet means without noise; quite when used in fiction usually means moderately, but can also mean totally or entirely.
- **rain, reign, rein**
Rain is the water that comes down from clouds; reign means to rule; rein is a strap, usually leather, for controlling an animal, especially a horse.
- **raise, raze**
These two are exact opposites. Raise means to lift or build up and raze means to pull down.
- **reality, realty**
Reality is real life; realty is real estate.
- **reference, reverence**
Reference is something referred to, reverence means respect.
- **regimen, regiment**
Regimen is a noun and is mostly used to refer to a prescribed way of life, or diet or exercise. It is also the action of governing. Regiment as a verb means to direct, command; as a noun it refers to a military unit.
- **residence, residents**
Residence is a house; residents are the people who live there.
- **respectfully, respectively**
Respectfully means politely; respectively means in the order stated.
- **retch, wretch**
Retch means to gag or try to vomit; wretch is a grovelling person, a creep.
- **rifle, raffle**
Rifle (apart from being a firearm) means to steal; raffle means to leaf through or browse.
- **right, rite, write**
Right means correct; rite is a ceremony, usually religious; write means to make words.
- **road, rode**
Road is a long surface for cars and other vehicles; rode is the past tense of ride.
- **role, roll**
Role is a part in a play or film; roll as a noun is a document or something that is cylindrical in shape and as a verb it means to make something into a cylindrical shape, to turn or spin.
- **sale, sail**
Sale is either offering something for purchase ("for sale") or offering it at a special price ("on sale"); sail is part of a ship or boat.
- **scene, seen**
Scene is the place where something happens; seen is the past participle of see.
- **seam, seem**
Seam is most often used to refer to the joining of two pieces of fabric with thread, but it can refer to other types of joins; seem means appear.
- **sell, cell**
Sell is to exchange for money; cell is a small room (invariably lacking in comfort); also an organism (as in "stem cells"); the small divisions in something large such as a container or a table in a web page or word-processed document.
- **sever, severe**
Sever means to separate, detach; severe means grim, stern.
- **serf, surf**
Serf means slave or servant; surf is a wave and as a verb is also the action of riding the waves on a board or using a computer to find something on the Internet.
- **shear, sheer**
Shear means to cut or clip; sheer means transparent (as in "sheer nylon hosiery"); steep (as in "a sheer drop"); total or absolute (as in "sheer stupidity").
- **shore, sure**
Shore as verb means to brace or support; as a noun it is usually a beach but can also be a support or a brace; sure means certain, confident. So you do not sure up a company by borrowing more capital; you shore it up.
- **singly, singularly**
Singly means individually, one-by-one; singularly means strangely.
- **site, sight, cite**
Site always refers to location or place: building site; archaeology site. Sight always refers to vision, as in the cliché "a sight for sore eyes".
Cite means to summon, or to refer to a source,
- **some time, sometime**
Some time is a period of time and sometime means at some time not specified.
- **sole, soul**
Sole as an adjective means single, as in "the sole cause of the problem"; as a noun it is a type of fish and the under part of a foot or a shoe. Soul generally refers to the invisible part of you that lives on after you die; also heart or mind; a human being (as in "no living soul").

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- **stationary, stationery**
Stationary means standing still.
Stationery refers to writing paper.
- **statue, statute, stature**
Statue is a carved or moulded likeness; statute is law; stature means height or status.
- **straight, strait**
Straight means without bends; strait is a passage of water.
- **taut, taught, taunt**
Taut means tight or firm; taught is the past tense of teach; taunt equals jeer, insult.
- **tenant, tenet**
Tenant is one who rents a property; tenet is a principle or belief.
- **there, their, they're**
There is a location: "Put it over there."
Their is the possessive of they: "Their coats."
They're is short for "They are ."
- **to, too, two**
To is a preposition meaning towards; too means also or extremely (as in "You are walking too fast for me"); two is the number after one.
- **throes, throws**
Throes are violent spasms or painful struggles, though not always physical. Throws means hurls or tosses. As a noun it means blankets or other types of covering.
- **vane, vain, vein**
Vane is something that shows from which direction the wind is blowing;
vain means too concerned about how one looks (though one can be vain about other things, of course!) and also means useless, as in "a vain attempt"; vein is a blood vessel, a channel.
- **venal, venial**
Venal means dishonest, dishonourable; venial means forgivable, unimportant (as in "venial sins").
- **verses, versus**
Verses is the plural of verse, something a poet writes; versus means against, in comparison with.
- **verse, worse**
Verse is rhythmic writing, worse means of a poorer quality or lesser standard.
- **vicious, viscous**
Vicious means savage, cruel; viscous means thick, gummy.
- **waist, waste**
Waist is the part of your body around which you fasten your belt; waste as a noun mostly refers to stuff that's thrown away. As a verb it usually means to squander.
- **wary, weary**
Wary means careful; weary means tired.
- **wave, waive**
Wave means to flap your hand in farewell and as a noun is also a breaker on the beach; waive means to give up one's rights or claim.
- **waver, waiver**
Waver means to be undecided; waiver means the giving up of rights or claims.
- **weak, week**
Weak is the opposite of strong; week is seven days, Sunday to Saturday.
- **wet, whet**
Wet as a verb means strictly to pour liquid on something. Whet means to sharpen or stimulate.
- **which, witch**
Which is one of a group; witch is a sorcerer.
- **whose, who's**
Whose is possessive, and who's is short for "who is".
- **wont, won't**
Wont means accustomed; won't is short for "will not".
- **yoke, yolk**
Yoke as a verb means to bind or confine. Yolk is the yellow part of an egg.
- **your, you're**
Your is possessive and you're is short for "you are".