



NOVA SOUTHEASTERN  
UNIVERSITY

College of Undergraduate Studies

## Tutoring and Testing Center

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# HOMOPHONES

## (Words that Sound Alike)

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Many words sound alike but mean different things when put into writing. This list will help you distinguish between some of the more common words that sound alike.

### accept, except

**accept** = verb meaning to receive or to agree: He accepted their praise graciously.

**except** = preposition meaning all but, other than: Everyone went to the game except Bill.

### affect, effect

**affect** = verb meaning to influence: Will lack of sleep affect your game?

**effect** = noun meaning result or consequence: Will lack of sleep have an effect on your game?

A memory-help - RAVEN: **R**emember, **A**ffect is a **V**erb and **E**ffect is a **N**oun.

### advise, advice

**advise** = verb meaning to recommend, suggest, or counsel: I advise you to be cautious.

**advice** = noun meaning an opinion or recommendation about what could or should be done: I'd like to ask for your advice on this matter.

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

### lead, led

**lead** = noun referring to a dense metallic element: The X-ray technician wore a vest lined with lead.

**led** = past-tense and past-participle form of the verb 'to lead', meaning to guide or direct: The evidence led the jury to reach a unanimous decision.

### loose, lose

**loose** = adjective meaning not securely fastened. Are your pants too loose?

**lose** = a verb meaning to misplace or to not win. Did you lose the game?

### **passed, past**

**passed** = the past tense of the verb 'to pass'. The quarterback passed the ball.

**past** = belonging to a former time or beyond a time or place. The hotel is just past the next intersection.

### **sometime/some time**

**sometime**: an adverb meaning at an indefinite or unstated time. I will see you sometime soon.

**some time**: a paired adjective and noun meaning a period of time. I have not lived there for some time.

### **than, then**

**than** = a conjunction used in comparison statements: He is richer than I. Than is also used in statements of preference: I would rather dance than eat. Than is also used to suggest quantities beyond a specified amount: Read more than the first paragraph.

**then** = an adverb denoting time. He was younger then.

### **their, there, they're**

**their** = possessive adjective (possessive form of the pronoun they) : They bought their books.

**there** = that place: My house is over there. This is a place word and thus contains the word *here*.

**they're** = contraction for they are: They're making dinner.

### **to, too, two**

**to** = preposition, or first part of the infinitive form of a verb: They went to the lake to swim.

**too** = very, also: I was too tired to continue. I was hungry, too. 'Too' you might say contains an extra o ("one too many").

**two** = the number 2: Two students scored below passing on the exam.

### **we're, where, were**

**we're** = contraction for 'we are': We're glad to help.

**where** = location: Where are you going? This is a place word and thus contains the word *here*.

**were** = a past tense form of the verb 'to be': They were walking side by side.

### **weather, whether**

**weather** = a noun referring to the state of the atmosphere. The weather is unseasonably hot.

**whether** = a conjunction referring to a choice between alternatives. I will go swimming whether it rains or not.

### **who's, whose**

**who's** = a contraction for 'who is'. Who's coming to the store with me?

**whose** = a possessive adjective (possessive form of the pronoun who or which). Whose ball is this?

### **your, you're**

**your** = possessive adjective (possessive form of the pronoun you): Your shoes are untied.

**you're** = contraction for you are: You're walking around with your shoes untied.

## One Word or Two?

### all ready/already

**all ready** = used as an adjective to express complete preparedness

**already** = an adverb expressing time At last I was all ready to go, but everyone had already left.  
(You can test usage by substituting the word 'ready' for your choice in the sentence. If the sentence still makes sense, all ready is the correct choice. If it does not, then already is the word you need.)

### all right/alright

**all right** = used as an adjective or adverb; older and more formal spelling, more common in scientific & academic writing: Will you be all right on your own?

**alright** = Nonstandard spelling of all right; less frequent but used often in journalistic and business publications, and especially common in fictional dialogue: He does alright in school.

### all together/altogether

**all together** = an adverb meaning considered as a whole, summed up: All together, there were thirty-two students at the museum.

**altogether** = an intensifying adverb meaning wholly, completely, entirely: His comment raises an altogether different problem.

### anyone/any one

**anyone** = an indefinite pronoun meaning any person at all: Anyone who can solve this problem deserves an award.

**any one** = a paired adjective and noun meaning a specific item in a group; usually used with of: Any one of those papers could serve as an example.

### anyway/any way

**anyway** = an adverb meaning in any case or nonetheless: He objected to her going, but she went anyway.

**any way** = a paired adjective and noun meaning any particular course, direction, or manner: Any way we chose would lead to danger.

### awhile/a while

**awhile** = an adverb meaning for a short time; cannot be the object of a preposition: Won't you stay awhile? Stay awhile.

**a while** = a paired article and noun meaning a period of time; usually used with for: We talked for a while, and then we said good night. Stay for a while.

### everyone/every one

**everyone** = an indefinite pronoun. Everyone wanted to go.

**every one** = a paired adjective and noun usually followed by 'of', meaning "each individual or thing in a particular group." Every one of the missing books was found.

### maybe/may be

**maybe** = an adverb meaning perhaps: Maybe we should wait until the rain stops.

**may be** = a form of the verb 'to be': This may be our only chance to win the championship.

## And watch out for these:

### bad vs. badly

**bad** = an adjective used to modify a noun. This example is bad. (Modifies EXAMPLE)

**badly** = an adverb used to modify a verb. Her arm hurt badly after she fell. (Modifies HURT)

### good vs. well

**good** = an adjective used to modify a noun. She had good intentions. (Modifies INTENTIONS)

Can be used after linking verbs, the verbs that connect nouns and adjectives. I feel good.

The flower smells good.

**well** = can be an adverb (I write well) or an adjective (I am well, thank you.).

### lie vs. lay

**lie** = an intransitive verb meaning to recline or rest on a surface. Its principal parts are *lie*, *lay*, *lain*. An intransitive verb does not need an object, so you can simply “lie” down.

**lay** = a transitive verb meaning to put or place. Its principal parts are lay, laid, laid.

A transitive verb must have an object. In other words, you must lay *something somewhere*.

### real vs. really

**real** = an adjective. This is a real gun. (Modifies GUN)

‘Real’ is sometimes used informally as an adverb, but avoid this use in formal writing. Do not write “she was real angry” in formal writing.

**really** = an adverb. She runs really fast. (Modifies FAST: how she runs)