Commonly Confused Words



Most commonly confused words are homonyms— words that are similar in sound, but different in their meaning and spelling. A dictionary is the best way to make sure you are using the correct word. Keep in mind that this list is not exhaustive; there are multiple meanings for some of these words.

Accept (verb) - to agree to receive or do Except (preposition) - not including

Affect (verb) - to influence Effect (noun) - result; to accomplish

Allusion (noun) - an indirect reference
Illusion (noun) - a false perception of reality

All together (phrase) - gathered; all in one place Altogether (adverb) - completely; on the whole

Bare (adjective) - naked; to uncover Bear (verb) - to carry; to put up with

Born (verb) - having started a life Borne (adjective) - carried

Brake (noun) - a device for stopping a vehicle Break (verb) - to separate into pieces; to pause

Cereal (noun) - a breakfast food made from grains Serial (adjective) - happening in a series

Complement (verb) - an addition that completes; to complete Compliment (verb) - praise; to praise

Conscience (noun) - sense of right and wrong Conscious (adjective) - awake

Council (noun) - a group who manage or advise Counsel (verb) - to advise

Discreet (adjective) - careful not to attract attention Discrete (adjective) - separate and distinct

Dual (adjective) - having two parts

Duel (noun) - a fight or contest between two people

Ensure (verb) - to make sure that something happens
Insure (verb) - to provide compensation if a person dies or property is damaged

Envelop (verb) - to cover or surround Envelope (noun) - a paper container for a letter

Fawn (noun) - a young deer; light brown
Faun (noun) - a mythical being; part man, part goat

Foreword (noun) - an introduction to a book Forward (adverb) - onwards, ahead

Lay (verb) - to put an object down
Lie (verb) - to lie down (a person or animal)

Loath (adjective) - reluctant, unwilling Loathe (verb) - to hate

Loose (verb) - to unfasten; to set free Lose (verb) - to be deprived of; to be unable to find

Passed (verb) - past tense of to pass to have moved

Past (adjective/noun) - belonging to a former time or place

Pour (verb) - to flow or cause to flow Pore (noun/verb) - a tiny opening; to study something closely



Prescribe (verb) - to authorize use of medicine; to order authoritatively Proscribe (verb) - to officially forbid something

Principal (noun) - most important; the head of a school Principle (noun) - a fundamental rule or belief

Stationary (adjective) - not moving Stationery (noun) - writing materials

Than (conjunction/preposition) - use with comparisons Then (adverb) - at that time; next

Their (determiner) - possessive form of they
There (adverb) - indicates location
They Bre (contraction) - contraction for "they are"

Who (pronoun) - used as a subject or as a subject complement Whom (pronoun) - used as an object

Further Assistance: For more detailed help or if you have questions, visit the Writing Center located in the Lewis University Library or call 815-836-5427.