

Essentials of College English

censer, censor, censure A censer is a vessel in which to burn incense. Censor can be a verb meaning to remove the objectionable, or a noun indicating the person who acts as censor. To censure is to formally reprimand **cereal, serial** Cereal is a grain; serial means happening in a series.

chord, cord A chord is a group of musical notes; a cord is a length of wire or string.

cite, sight, site Cite means to refer to. Sight, as a noun, means vision; as a verb, it means to look at. Site is a noun which indicates a location.

climatic, climactic Climatic indicates forming a climax; climactic relates to climate.

complacent, complaisant Complacent means smug or satisfied; complaisant means eager to please.

complement, compliment A complement is something that adds to something else. A compliment is an expression of praise or admiration.

conscience, conscious Conscience means a sense of right and wrong; conscious means aware.

consequently, subsequently Consequently means as a result of; subsequently means following after.

continual, continuous Continual means occurring intermittently over a long period. Continuous means uninterrupted occurrences over a long period.

council, counsel A council is an advisory group; to counsel is to advise.

currant, current A currant is a dried grape; current means happening now, or a flow of something.

dear, deer Dear is a term of affection; a deer is an animal.

defuse, diffuse To defuse means to make less intense; diffuse means to spread out.

desert, dessert Desert means barren arid land or to abandon. Dessert is a sweet course at the end of a meal.

discreet, discrete Discreet means tactful; discrete means distinctive or a separate entity.

draught, draft A draught is an air current; a draft is a first version of writing.

dual, duel Dual means of two parts; a duel is a fight or contest between two people.

elicit, illicit Elicit means to draw out; illicit is an adjective meaning something that is illegal.

emigrate, immigrate Emigrate means to move away from one's country; immigrate means to move to another country.

eminent, imminent Eminent means outstanding or prominent; imminent means about to occur.

envelop, envelope To envelop means to cover or surround; an envelope is a paper letter container.

exercise, exorcise Exercise means physical activity; to exorcise means to drive out evil spirits.

explicit, implicit Explicit means fully revealed; implicit means suggested but not stated directly.

farther, further Farther indicates distance; further indicates a degree or extent.

fawn, faun A fawn is a young deer; a faun is a mythical being, part man and part goat.

flaunt, flout Flaunt means to show off. Flout means to mock.

forbear, forebear To forbear is to refrain; a forebear is an ancestor.

forward, foreword Forward means onward; a foreword is an introduction.

freeze, frieze Freeze means to turn to ice; a frieze is a decoration along a wall.

gorilla, guerilla A gorilla is an ape. Guerilla means irregular warfare or a combatant in irregular warfare.

grisly, grizzly Grisly means gruesome; a grizzly is a type of bear.

hanged, hung Hanged is used in reference to executions only; hung is used for all other meanings. ("Pictures are hung; people are hanged.")

hoard, horde A hoard is a store of items; a horde is a crowd of people.

idea, ideal Idea means a thought or suggestion. Ideal means perfect.

imply, infer Imply means to suggest. Infer means to derive as a conclusion.

ingenious, ingenuous Ingenious means clever or original. Ingenuous means characterized by innocence and simplicity.

irregardless, regardless Irregardless is a double-negative, non-word. Use regardless.

its, it's Its is possessive. It's is a contraction of it is or it has.

later, latter Later indicates time; latter means the second of two groups or items referred to, or the last item in a series.

loath, loathe Loath means reluctant or unwilling; to loathe is to hate.

loose, lose Loose means unattached or free; lose means to displace.

moral, morale Moral indicates a lesson. Morale means spirit.

palate, palette A palate is the roof of the mouth; a palette is a board for mixing colors.

passed, past Passed is the past tense of to pass, or to have moved; past indicates something belonging to a former time.

pedal, peddle A pedal is a foot-operated lever; to peddle is to operate a pedal or to sell goods.

pole, poll A pole is a long, slender piece of wood or metal; as a noun, poll is the number of votes cast in an election, or the place where voting takes place; as a verb, to poll means to record someone's opinion or vote.

pore, pour A pore is a tiny opening or to study something closely; to pour is to cause to flow.

precede, proceed Precede means to come before. Proceed means to move forward.

prescribe, proscribe To prescribe is to order use of medicine; to proscribe means to forbid.

principal, principle As a noun, principal indicates a head official or an amount of money; as an adjective, it indicates something most significant. Principle means a fundamental law or belief.

right, rite, write Right means correct; rite means a ceremony; write means to form characters on a surface.

seen, scene Seen is the past participle of see. A scene is a stage setting or a subdivision of a play.

sceptic, septic A sceptic is a doubter; septic means infected.

stationary, stationery Stationary means standing still. Stationery is writing paper.

than, then Than is used to compare things; then is used when indicating a sequence of events.

their, there, they're Their is a possessive pronoun indicating belonging to; there indicates a place; they're is a contraction of they and are.

threw, through, thorough Threw is the past tense of throw. Through means finished. Thorough means complete.

to, too, two To is a preposition indicating direction. Too is an adverb meaning also. Two is a number.

who, which, that Who refers to a person or persons. Which refers to things but not to persons. That refers to a specific person or thing.

who, whom Who is a pronoun used as a subject. Whom is a pronoun used as an object.

who's, whose Who's is a contraction of who and is. Whose is a possessive pronoun indicating belonging.

wreath, wreath A wreath is a ring-shaped ornament; to wreath is to surround.

your, you're Your is a possessive pronoun indicating belonging. You're is a contraction of you and are.

Sources

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- Langan, John. *Sentence Structure*. 5th ed. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1995.
- Lunsford, Andrea. *The Everyday Writer*. New York, St. Martin's, c1997.
- <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/words/commonly-confused-words>

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THE PARTS OF SPEECH

There are eight parts of speech in the English language. Each is a group of words that can be distinguished by their function in a sentence, as seen below:

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| adjective | <i>a word that describes or modifies a noun</i> |
| adverb | <i>a word that modifies a verb</i> |
| conjunction | <i>a word that links two parts (or elements) of a sentence</i> |
| interjection | <i>a word that expresses an exclamation</i> |
| noun | <i>a word that names a person, place, or thing</i> |
| preposition | <i>a word that links a noun or a pronoun to another sentence</i> |
| pronoun | <i>a word that is used as a substitute for a noun</i> |
| verb | <i>a word or word group that expresses action or a state of being; it may also show the effect of an action</i> |

BE



Be is the most common verb in the English language. It is also the most irregular, with eight different forms: *be, are, was, is, am, were, being, been*.

CONJUNCTIONS

Conjunctions are words that link the different parts of a sentence together. English conjunctions come in four types:

1. COORDINATING CONJUNCTIONS are used to connect equivalent words, phrases, and clauses.

| | |
|--------------------|-----------------|
| To show | Use |
| contrast | <i>but, yet</i> |
| alternative | <i>or, nor</i> |
| result | <i>so, for</i> |
| addition | <i>and</i> |

2. CORRELATIVE CONJUNCTIONS are words that link other words, clauses, or phrases. These are always used in pairs, as in:

| | | |
|-----------------------|------------------------|----------------------|
| <i>both...and</i> | <i>either...or</i> | <i>neither...nor</i> |
| <i>not only...but</i> | <i>not only...also</i> | <i>whether...or</i> |

3. SUBORDINATING CONJUNCTIONS introduce subordinate clauses where they connect and relate them to other words or clauses.

| | |
|-------------------------|--|
| RELATIONSHIPS OF | CONNECT WITH |
| time | after, as, as soon as, before, since, until, when, whenever, while |
| place | where, wherever |
| cause | as, because, since, in order that, that |
| manner | as, as if, as though |
| condition | if, in case, on condition that, unless, provided that |
| result | so that, that |
| concession | although, even if, even though, though |
| comparison | as, than |

4. CONJUNCTIVE ADVERBS (also known as transitional adverbs) relate clauses or phrases to one another. Because they are modifiers, they cannot be used as conjunctions to join words, phrases, or subordinate clauses.

Relationships of

| | | |
|-----------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Addition | Contrast | Example |
| also | otherwise | for example |
| in addition | nevertheless | for instance |
| moreover | nevertheless | in fact |
| then | on the other hand | specifically |
| next | however | |
| Time | Result | Comparison |
| meanwhile | therefore | likewise |
| subsequently | consequently | similarly |
| finally | then | in comparison |
| then | as a result | |
| next | | |

PREPOSITIONS

A preposition is a word that shows the position of one word in relation to another.

Example: Think of the word *keys*. The prepositions in the following sentences show the position of objects in relation to the keys.

- The keys are **on** the shelf.
- The keys are **under** the bed.
- The keys are **by** the sofa.
- The keys are **beside** you.
- The keys are **in** the bag.
- The keys are **near** the door.

The following are common prepositions and prepositional phrases (i.e., prepositions containing more than one word):

| | | |
|----------------|------------------|-----------------|
| ◆ about | ◆ by means of | ◆ on account of |
| ◆ above | ◆ despite | ◆ onto |
| ◆ according to | ◆ down | ◆ out |
| ◆ across | ◆ during | ◆ outside |
| ◆ after | ◆ except | ◆ over |
| ◆ against | ◆ for | ◆ past |
| ◆ along | ◆ from | ◆ since |
| ◆ among | ◆ in | ◆ through |
| ◆ around | ◆ in addition to | ◆ throughout |
| ◆ at | ◆ in back of | ◆ till |
| ◆ because of | ◆ in spite of | ◆ to |
| ◆ before | ◆ inside | ◆ toward |
| ◆ behind | ◆ instead of | ◆ under |
| ◆ below | ◆ into | ◆ underneath |
| ◆ beneath | ◆ like | ◆ until |
| ◆ beside | ◆ near | ◆ up |
| ◆ between | ◆ next to | ◆ upon |
| ◆ beyond | ◆ of | ◆ with |
| ◆ by | ◆ off | ◆ within |
| | ◆ on | ◆ without |

COMMONLY-CONFUSED WORDS



accept, except Accept means to receive or to agree to. Except indicates exclusion.

adverse, averse Adverse means unfavorable. Averse means having a strong dislike for something.

advice, advise Advice means suggestions or recommendations. Advise means to give advice.

affect, effect Affect means to influence or to give a false display. Effect, as a verb, means to cause; as a noun it means results.

aisle, isle An aisle is a passage between two rows; an isle is an island.

already, all ready Already means by this time; all ready means completely ready.

altogether, all together Altogether means entirely; all together means everything in one place.

along, a long Along indicates moving progressively; a long refers to a length.

allude, elude Allude means to refer indirectly to something; refer means to refer directly. Elude means to evade.

allusion, illusion An allusion is an indirect reference to something. An illusion is a false perception of some kind.

altar, alter Altar is a noun meaning a table for worship or ritual. Alter means to change.

amoral, immoral Amoral means not concerned with right or wrong; immoral indicates not adhering to moral standards.

apart, a part Apart means to be separated; a part means a portion of something larger.

appraise, apprise To appraise is to assess; to apprise is to inform someone of something.

ascend, assent Ascend means to climb; assent indicates agreement.

assure, ensure, insure Assure means to make [someone] feel confident; to ensure and to insure both mean to make certain, but insure is understood as to protect against financial loss.

bare, bear, bear Bare means naked; to bear means to carry; a bear is an animal.

bazaar, bizarre A bazaar is a Middle Eastern market; bizarre means strange.

berth, birth A berth is a bunk; birth means the emergence of a baby from the womb.

born, borne Born means having started life; borne means carried.

brake, break Brake means to stop motion. Break means to suddenly or violently separate into parts.

breach, breech Breach means to break a rule or to create a gap; breech is the back portion of a gun.

broach, brooch To broach means to raise a subject; a brooch is a piece of jewelry.

breath, breathe Breath is inhaled air; to breathe means to draw in and expel air from the lungs.

buy, by, bye Buy means to acquire through payment; by indicates a location; bye is a shortened form of goodbye.

canvas, canvass Canvas is a type of strong cloth; to canvass is to seek votes.

capital, capitol Capital usually indicates a city serving as the seat of government, but can also indicate accumulated goods, a crime punishable by death, or uppercase letters. Capitol means a building in which a state legislature meets, and is the name given to the building where the U.S. Congress meets—and when used in this fashion, it is capitalized.

coarse, course Coarse means rough, inferior; course can mean a path, a part of a meal, or an instructional class.

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