

Writing: Homonyms

Spelling Surprises

Homonyms are words that sound alike but have different meanings. Many homonyms are also spelled in two or three different ways, so choosing and using the correct one can be tricky! Look below for some of the most common homonyms.

ACCEPT - *To receive willingly:* I will accept your offer of help with my math problems.

EXCEPT - *Not including; other than:* I will eat anything except meat loaf.

ADVICE - *Recommendations or direction:* My sister always gives good advice.

ADVISE - *To counsel, to recommend, to give advice:* Let me advise you of your rights.

AFFECT - *A verb meaning to influence:* Seeing pictures of starving children really affects me.

EFFECT - *A verb meaning to bring about; to cause to happen:* Congress effected a change in the law. Also, a noun meaning *the result of*: The effect of exercise is fitness.

ALTER - *To change in some way:* Mr. Austin decided to alter his will.

ALTAR - *A structure used in worship:* The people knelt at the altar.

BREATH - *Air taken into the lungs:* I took a deep breath.

BREATHE - *To exhale and inhale:* Smog makes it hard to breathe.

CAPITAL - *Chief, leading or governing city:* The capital of California is Sacramento. Also, *wealth or resources:* He needed more capital to start his company.

CAPITOL - *A building that houses state or national officials:* Have you been to the Capitol in Washington D.C.?

CITE - *To use as an example; to quote:* Lynda loves to cite Shakespeare.

SITE - *Location:* This is the site where they will build the new house.

SIGHT - *Something seen or the process of seeing:* She was a sight for sore eyes. Let's put all the papers and magazines out of sight.

CONSCIENCE - *That which causes one to recognize right and wrong:* Mark had a clear conscience since he kept his word to Laura.

CONSCIOUS - *To be aware of, or to be awake:* The boxer was knocked off his feet but he was still conscious.

COUNCIL - *An assembly of lawmakers or an advisory group:* The student council met to discuss a new proposal.

COUNSEL - *Advice or to give advice:* We should have followed his wise counsel.

DESERT - *A dry region:* Cacti grow in the desert. Also, *to abandon:* She felt alone and deserted after her husband left on the business trip.

DESSERT - *A sweet at the end of a meal:* My favorite dessert is rice pudding.

DYING - *Ceasing to live:* Mary's dog is dying.

DYEING - *The process of coloring something:* She is dyeing her hair bright green tonight.

EMIGRATE - *To leave one country to settle in another:* My aunt emigrated from Sweden.

IMMIGRATE - *To enter and settle in a country where you were not born:* After leaving Sweden my aunt immigrated to Canada.



HEAR - *To receive sound:* Did you hear what she said?

HERE - *In a certain place:* I live here.

ITS - *The possessive form of "it," belonging to "it":* The dog broke its leg.

IT'S - *A short form of "it is":* It's a beautiful day.

KNOW - *To comprehend or understand:* Bill knows how to fix a car.

NO - *The opposite of yes:* No, I don't want to go to the show.

LATER - *Refers to time:* It's later than you think.

LATTER - *The second of two persons or things named:* Joe and Sally are teachers, and the latter works at a local high school.

LOOSE - *Not tight:* My watchband is loose.

LOSE - *To suffer a loss or misplace:* I hope I don't lose the job.

NAVAL - *Pertaining to a navy:* Skip is wearing a naval uniform and several medals.

NAVEL - *"Bellybutton":* Your navel is in the middle of your abdomen.

PEER - *To look at:* She peered at me around the door. Also, *one of the same rank:* Legally, you are entitled to a jury of your peers for your trial.

PIER - *A dock:* We tied the boat to the pier.

PERSONAL - *Of, relating to, or affecting a person:* It was done purely for personal financial gain.

PERSONNEL - *(per-son-NELL) Persons employed in any occupation, service or work:* All the personnel at ABC Enterprises have completed their orientation training.

PRINCIPAL - *Chief, most important:* Jill understood the principal idea. Also, *a school official:* Bob is the principal of the school.

PRINCIPLE - *A belief, rule of conduct or thought:* Most organizations are founded on sets of principles which determine practices.

THAN - *Used for comparisons:* Oranges are sweeter than lemons, but not sweeter than honey.

THEN - *Refers to time:* First make your bed, then we will go to the beach.

THEIR - *The possessive form of "them" or belonging to "them":* Their dog ran away.

THERE - *At or in a certain place:* The Homecoming Dance will be held there.

THEY'RE - *A short form of "they are":* They're out for a jog around campus.