



# Commonly Confused Words

## Homonyms

Most commonly confused words are homonyms—words that are similar in sound, but different in their meaning and spelling.

**Accept-** to agree to receive or do  
**Except-** not including

**Affect-** to influence  
**Effect-** result; to accomplish

**Allusion-** an indirect reference  
**Illusion-** a false perception of reality

**All together-** gathered; all in one place  
**Altogether-** completely; on the whole

**Bare-** naked; to uncover  
**Bear-** to carry; to put up with

**Born-** having started a life  
**Borne-** carried

**Brake-** a device for stopping a vehicle; to stop a vehicle  
**Break-** to separate into pieces; to pause

**Cereal-** a breakfast food made from grains  
**Serial-** happening in a series

**Complement-** an addition that completes; to complete  
**Compliment-** praise; to praise

**Conscience-** sense of right and wrong  
**Conscious-** awake

**Council-** a group who manage or advise  
**Counsel-** to advise

**Discreet-** careful not to attract attention  
**Discrete-** separate and distinct

**Dual-** having two parts  
**Duel-** a fight or contest between two people

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

**Further Assistance:** For more help with transitional words and phrases, visit the Writing Center located in the Lewis University Library on the first floor in the LRC.

## Quick Tip

A dictionary is the best way to make sure you are using the correct word.

**Envelop-** to cover or surround  
**Envelope-** a paper container for a letter

**Fawn-** a young deer; light brown  
**Faun-** a mythical being; part man, part goat

**Foreword-** an introduction to a book  
**Forward-** onwards, ahead

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

**Loath-** reluctant, unwilling  
**Loathe-** to hate

**Loose-** to unfasten; to set free  
**Lose-** to be deprived of; to be unable to find

**Passed-** past tense of “to pass”, to have moved  
**Past-** belonging to a former time or place

**Pour-** to flow or cause to flow  
**Pore-** a tiny opening; to study something closely

**Prescribe-** to authorize use of medicine; to order authoritatively  
**Proscribe-** to officially forbid something

**Principal-** most important; the head of a school  
**Principle-** a fundamental rule or belief

**Stationary-** not moving  
**Stationery-** writing materials

**Than-** use with comparisons  
**Then-** at that time; next

**Their-** possessive form of they  
**There-** indicates location  
**They're-** contraction for “they are”

**Who-** used as a subject or as a subject complement  
**Whom-** used as an object