

# Words Often Confused I

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To use a medicine because it looks “something like” the one you need can lead to trouble. To use a word because it sounds “something like” the one you need also leads to trouble.

Some common words, with their frame numbers, are listed above. These words look as harmless as old luggage, yet each should be handled as if it held a little bomb. “A sandy *desert*” is hardly the same as “a sandy *dessert*,” and “*marital* music” is hardly the same as “*martial* music”; so be sure you know your homonyms.

Most of the word pairs in this chapter sound alike or are very similar in sound. You should train both your ear and your eye to notice the slight difference in sound or spelling in each pair, so that you will choose the correct word.

Study carefully the words at the top of each frame. Then fill each blank with the correct word. As always, keep a dictionary near you. A dictionary is bound to be useful, and that's not just a pun.

Enough *foreword*—now go *forward*!

COVER THIS STRIP ▼



## EXERCISES

1. **accept** (ak-sept'): to take or receive. “Accept the lemons of life, and make lemonade.”
2. **except** (ik-sept'): all but; excluding. “This singer has everything *except* talent.” *Except* has to do with an *exception*.

accept  
except

- The church will *ac* \_\_\_\_\_ all your paintings  
*ex* \_\_\_\_\_ the nude.

except, accept

- Every teacher \_\_\_\_\_ Smedley will \_\_\_\_\_ the two percent raise.

accept  
except

- The opera singer was glad to \_\_\_\_\_ the gift package, which was quite ordinary \_\_\_\_\_ for its ticking sound.

except

- Flem had no coins \_\_\_\_\_ a wooden nickel, yet he would never \_\_\_\_\_ a free drink— \_\_\_\_\_ when he was awake.

accept, except

3. **adapt**: to fit for a new use; to adjust to a new situation. “Can man *adapt* to life on the moon?” “This play is an *adaptation* of a novel.”
4. **adopt**: to take into one's family; to pick up and use as one's own. “They found me in a trash barrel and *adopted* me.”

adapt

- I could *ad* \_\_\_\_\_ to army life if they'd let me sleep till noon.

adopt

- If we \_\_\_\_\_ a bright chimpanzee, it would probably \_\_\_\_\_ quickly to California life.

adapt

adapt

- Hollywood wants to \_\_\_\_\_ your life story to film. Better \_\_\_\_\_ a pseudonym because this movie may be X-rated.

adopt

- Who deserves little Ignatz—his natural mother or the couple who happened to \_\_\_\_\_ and raise him?

adopt

5. **advice** (ad-vī's'): *Noun*—counsel. “Dad gives me *advice*, not money.”
6. **advise** (ad-vīz'): *Verb*—to counsel; to recommend. “Please *advise* me.”

- advice ■ As a young singer I asked a vocal critic for *ad* \_\_\_\_\_.  
He said: "I \_\_\_\_\_ you to sell fish."
- advise
- advice ■ Joe's \_\_\_\_\_ costs nothing, and it's worth it.
- advise, advice ■ I \_\_\_\_\_ you to take your teacher's \_\_\_\_\_.
- advise ■ My friends \_\_\_\_\_ me to forget my lost sweetheart.  
Believe me, it's easier to \_\_\_\_\_ than to take  
advice, advice \_\_\_\_\_.
- Advice, advice ■ \_\_\_\_\_ rhymes with "ice"; \_\_\_\_\_ rhymes with  
"eyes."

7. **affect** (ə-fect'): *Verb*—to produce a change; to influence. "The damp air may *affect* Joe's lungs."  
8. **effect** (i-fect'): *Noun*—result. "Physicists study cause and *effect*."  
*Verb*—to cause or bring about. "Dad tried to *effect* a change in my study habits."

- affect ■ Marriage will \_\_\_\_\_ Tony's career. [Verb: means "to influence."]
- effect ■ Marriage will have an excellent \_\_\_\_\_ on Tony. [Noun: means "result."]
- effect ■ Marriage will \_\_\_\_\_ an improvement in Tony's habits. [Verb: means "to bring about."]
- affect ■ The concussion did not \_\_\_\_\_ my academic grades, which were low anyhow, and seemed to have no lasting \_\_\_\_\_.
- effect ■ Baseball representatives can probably \_\_\_\_\_ a compromise, but they must consider the \_\_\_\_\_ on the box office.
- effect ■ Drugs had a tragic \_\_\_\_\_; his hallucinations still \_\_\_\_\_ him day and night.
- affect

## QUIZ

Write the letter that indicates the best definition.

- |        |                             |                                   |
|--------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. (c) | ( ) 1. advise               | a. to receive something offered   |
| 2. (e) | ( ) 2. except               | b. a result                       |
| 3. (d) | ( ) 3. adopt                | c. to recommend; to give opinion  |
| 4. (a) | ( ) 4. accept               | d. to take into one's family      |
| 5. (b) | ( ) 5. effect ( <i>n.</i> ) | e. all but                        |
| 6. (g) | ( ) 6. advice               | f. to produce a change; influence |
| 7. (h) | ( ) 7. adapt                | g. an opinion or recommendation   |
| 8. (f) | ( ) 8. affect               | h. to adjust to a new use         |

illusion

allusion

illusion

illusion

allusion

allusion

illusion

number

number

amount

9. **allusion:** a casual reference. "Flaky resented my *allusion* to his driving record."
10. **illusion:** a misleading image; a misconception; delusion. "The hundred-dollar bill was an optical *illusion*."  
■ I crawled across the hot sand, and horrors! The lake was an \_\_\_\_\_.
- When I made an \_\_\_\_\_ to a ghost I had seen, Tom turned pale. "I've seen it, too," he said. "Then it's not an \_\_\_\_\_ . That's the spirit!"
- Louie had the \_\_\_\_\_ that he'd get better grades if he dropped a casual \_\_\_\_\_ now and then to Bill Shakespeare or Hank Longfellow.
- The bully made a nasty \_\_\_\_\_ to my maternal ancestry, and I, unfortunately, was under the \_\_\_\_\_ that I could knock him down.
11. **amount:** quantity; mass.  
12. **number:** refers to countable objects. "Joe ate a huge *amount* of ice cream and a small *number* [not *amount*] of doughnuts."  
■ Sheila collected an unusual \_\_\_\_\_ of mosquito bites.  
■ The mugger separated me from a large \_\_\_\_\_ of credit cards and a small \_\_\_\_\_ of cash.

- number ■ The sink had no drainpipe, so I washed a great \_\_\_\_\_ of dishes and my feet at the same time.
- number ■ St. Patrick chased a vast \_\_\_\_\_ of snakes out of Ireland, but they return to those who drink a certain \_\_\_\_\_ of whiskey.
- amount
13. **brake:** a device for stopping a vehicle. "Step on the *brake*."
14. **break:** to shatter. "Break the glass."
- brake ■ All my car needs is *br* \_\_\_\_\_ pads and a new motor.
- brake, break ■ Hit the \_\_\_\_\_, or we'll \_\_\_\_\_ our necks!
- break ■ "Waiter," I asked, "did this chicken \_\_\_\_\_ its leg?" "You wanna eat it, mister, or dance with it?"
- brake ■ The emergency \_\_\_\_\_ stopped us in time. Now let's drive so that we don't \_\_\_\_\_ the law.
- break
- break ■ The drug addict couldn't \_\_\_\_\_ his dangerous habit.

## QUIZ

Write the letter that indicates the best definition.

- |        |                 |                                  |
|--------|-----------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. (d) | ( ) 1. illusion | a. countable objects (ex., eggs) |
| 2. (a) | ( ) 2. number   | b. to crack into pieces          |
| 3. (e) | ( ) 3. brake    | c. a reference to something      |
| 4. (f) | ( ) 4. amount   | d. a mistaken impression         |
| 5. (c) | ( ) 5. allusion | e. a car-stopper                 |
| 6. (b) | ( ) 6. break    | f. quantity (ex., dirt)          |

15. **capital:** *Adjective*—excellent; written with large letters; involving execution. "She is against *capital* punishment." *Noun*—accumulated assets; a city which is the seat of government. "The *capital* of Alabama is Montgomery."
16. **capitol:** the statehouse; the building where legislators meet. "The governor stood on the steps of the *capitol*."
- capital ■ A backer of *cap* \_\_\_\_\_ punishment says he has a \_\_\_\_\_ idea: "Suspend the criminal instead of the sentence."
- capital

- capitol ■ Rain leaked through the roof of the \_\_\_\_\_ and soaked a senator making a dry speech.
- capitol ■ "We can repair the dome of this \_\_\_\_\_," said the senator, "but that will take \_\_\_\_\_."
- capital ■ Printed in \_\_\_\_\_ letters above the main entrance to the \_\_\_\_\_ was the word LEGISLATURE.
- capitol
17. **complement:** *Noun*—that which completes a thing; the counterpart. "Her white shoes serve as a *complement* to her black dress." *Verb*—to complete. "Her shoes *complement* her dress."
18. **compliment:** *Noun*—words of praise. "Thanks for the *compliment*." *Verb*—to praise. "Such a dessert! Let me *compliment* the chef."
- complement ■ Gardens *comp* \_\_\_\_\_ the tidy English cottages.
- complement ■ "You have brains, Gwendolyn, and that's not an idle \_\_\_\_\_," said Mother. "You'll be the perfect \_\_\_\_\_ to Sir Percy, who is a shmoe."
- complement ■ "Here's a rosy apple, Teacher, to \_\_\_\_\_ your cheeks."—"What a sweet \_\_\_\_\_, Archy! I hope you can earn an A today to \_\_\_\_\_ that *F* you got yesterday."
- compliment ■ Like perfume, a \_\_\_\_\_ should be inhaled, not swallowed.
- compliment
19. **continually:** often repeated; again and again. "Football players are *continually* breaking arms and legs."
20. **continuously:** without stopping. "The chairman spoke *continuously* for ninety minutes and never grazed a fresh idea."
- continually ■ George Bernard Shaw quoted himself *con* \_\_\_\_\_, claiming, "It adds spice to my conversation."
- continually ■ Blizzards strike Montana *con* \_\_\_\_\_, and one storm raged *con* \_\_\_\_\_ for three days.
- continuously ■ A mountain road winds \_\_\_\_\_ from Crestville to Helengone, and accidents occur on it \_\_\_\_\_.
- continually ■ Louie the Loafer is \_\_\_\_\_ fired from his jobs, and he has never held one job \_\_\_\_\_ for six months.
- continuously

21. **decent:** proper and fitting. "Joe had a *decent* burial."  
 22. **descent:** a coming down; ancestry. "A man of Irish *descent* made a *descent* into the cellar."

- descent ■ The elevator's rapid *de* \_\_\_\_\_ made my stomach hit my tonsils.  
 decent ■ Mary thinks I'm not making a \_\_\_\_\_ salary as a custodian, but I'm cleaning up.  
 descent ■ The parachute slowed Edna's \_\_\_\_\_, and she made a  
 decent fairly \_\_\_\_\_ landing in an elm tree.  
 descent ■ Hugo is of Austrian \_\_\_\_\_, and he bakes a very  
 decent \_\_\_\_\_ apple strudel.

## QUIZ

Write the letter that indicates the best definition.

- |        |                     |  |
|--------|---------------------|--|
| 1. (h) | ( ) 1. continually  | a. in good taste; respectable            |
| 2. (f) | ( ) 2. descent      | b. assets; involving execution           |
| 3. (g) | ( ) 3. complement   | c. words of praise                       |
| 4. (b) | ( ) 4. capital      | d. without stopping                      |
| 5. (d) | ( ) 5. continuously | e. the statehouse                        |
| 6. (a) | ( ) 6. decent       | f. a going down; ancestry                |
| 7. (c) | ( ) 7. compliment   | g. the counterpart; that which completes |
| 8. (e) | ( ) 8. capitol      | h. repeatedly; again and again           |

23. **desert:** *Noun* (dez'ərt)—a dry wasteland. *Verb* (di-zûrt)—to abandon one's post or duty. "She's rich. He won't *desert* her."  
 24. **dessert:** a delicacy served at the end of a meal.

- desert ■ "Only a rat would *des* \_\_\_\_\_," said our sergeant, as he  
 dessert cut a slab of apple pie for \_\_\_\_\_. "Pass me the cheese."  
 desert ■ Crossing the sandy \_\_\_\_\_, we had dates for  
 dessert \_\_\_\_\_.  
 desert ■ I'll never \_\_\_\_\_ my ship," said the brave captain, "glub  
 ... glub ..."  
 dessert ■ What has a double portion of *s*'s and calories? \_\_\_\_\_.

25. **disinterested:** impartial; not biased. "A jury should be made up of *disinterested* citizens."  
 26. **uninterested:** not interested. "Grandma was *uninterested* in the soccer game."

- uninterested ■ I tried to explain calculus to the baby, but she seemed \_\_\_\_\_.  
 disinterested ■ We prefer an honest referee if such exists—a truly \_\_\_\_\_ fellow.  
 uninterested ■ I don't blame you if you're \_\_\_\_\_, but please don't yawn in my face.  
 fair-minded ■ A disinterested judge is \_\_\_\_\_ [excitable / fair-minded];  
 bored an uninterested judge is probably \_\_\_\_\_ [bored / alert].

27. **dual:** *Adjective*—double; twofold.  
 28. **duel:** *Noun*—a combat between two antagonists.

- duel ■ Macbeth and Macduff have a *du* \_\_\_\_\_ to the death.  
 dual ■ In a warplane with \_\_\_\_\_ wings, the Red Baron won many a fiery \_\_\_\_\_.  
 duel ■ Dmitri has a \_\_\_\_\_ personality. You never know whether he's going to embrace you or \_\_\_\_\_ with you.  
 duel ■ When challenged to a \_\_\_\_\_, Mark Twain told the gunslinger, "How about a \_\_\_\_\_ with water pistols at sixty paces?"  
 duel ■ With \_\_\_\_\_ exhaust pipes you can pollute the air twice as fast.

## QUIZ

Write the letter that indicates the best definition.

- |        |                             |                               |
|--------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. (e) | ( ) 1. uninterested         | a. not prejudiced             |
| 2. (c) | ( ) 2. duel                 | b. pie, ice cream, etc.       |
| 3. (d) | ( ) 3. desert ( <i>n.</i> ) | c. a fight between two rivals |
| 4. (f) | ( ) 4. dual                 | d. a dry, sandy region        |
| 5. (a) | ( ) 5. disinterested        | e. bored                      |
| 6. (b) | ( ) 6. dessert              | f. double                     |

every body

Everybody

everybody

every body

everybody

every body

(b)

(a)

forward

foreword

forward

foreword

forward

forward

forward

foreword

imply

infer

imply

29. **every body:** each separate body. "Every body had bruises on it."

30. **everybody:** every person. "Everybody is welcome."

■ The surgeon examined *ev* \_\_\_\_\_ as it was carried in.

■ *Ev* \_\_\_\_\_ who is a nonreader is a threat to civilization.

■ At ballet school *ev* \_\_\_\_\_ exercises daily, and *ev* \_\_\_\_\_ is attractive in its proportions.

■ The butchers killed the pigs, and then \_\_\_\_\_ got busy cutting \_\_\_\_\_ into ham, bacon, and knuckles.

■ *Everybody*, *anybody*, and *somebody* refer to (a) bodies, (b) persons. ( )

■ *Every body*, *any body*, and *some body* refer to (a) bodies, (b) persons. ( )

31. **foreword:** a preface; introductory note.

32. **forward:** onward; toward what lies ahead.

■ Our nation will go *for* \_\_\_\_\_, according to the author in his *for* \_\_\_\_\_.

■ Volunteers, please step *for* \_\_\_\_\_.

■ Read the \_\_\_\_\_ of a technical book before plunging \_\_\_\_\_ into the chapters ahead.

■ My mule is backward about going \_\_\_\_\_.

■ Percival says he's looking \_\_\_\_\_ to his thirtieth birthday. He's looking from the wrong direction.

■ The introduction or "before" word of a book is known as the \_\_\_\_\_.

33. **imply** (im-pli'): to hint at; to suggest without stating; to signify.

34. **infer** (in-für'): to draw a conclusion.

■ These bloodstains *im* \_\_\_\_\_ that the victim may have been knifed. What do you *in* \_\_\_\_\_?

■ Her high grades *i* \_\_\_\_\_ unusual intelligence.

infer

imply

imply

infer

inferred

instance

instants

instance

instants

instance

instants

■ From various evidence I *i* \_\_\_\_\_ that the baseball fans no longer admire Lefty Smeeby. Their jeers *i* \_\_\_\_\_ that they have lost confidence in him.

■ Melvin's smiles \_\_\_\_\_ success. We can \_\_\_\_\_ that Betty has accepted his marriage proposal.

■ Hot tar was spilled at the intersection, from which the police \_\_\_\_\_ *ed* that there was dirty work at the crossroads.

35. **instance:** an example. "She recalled an *instance* of wifebeating in the bridal suite."

36. **instants:** moments. "Tragedy struck within *instants*."

■ The playboy cited an *inst* \_\_\_\_\_ of a New Year's party that broke up in March.

■ The three sprinters hit the tape within *inst* \_\_\_\_\_ of each other.

■ I was worried, for *in* \_\_\_\_\_, when the old plane shook for several *in* \_\_\_\_\_ and a voice said: "This is your pilot, Orville Wright."

■ Using my toothbrush to clean his typewriter keys was another \_\_\_\_\_ of poor manners.

■ The lights turned green, and \_\_\_\_\_ later the horns were honking up a storm.

## QUIZ

Write the letter that indicates the best definition.

- |        |                   |                                     |
|--------|-------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. (e) | ( ) 1. instance   | a. moments                          |
| 2. (g) | ( ) 2. forward    | b. each person                      |
| 3. (h) | ( ) 3. imply      | c. a preface to a book              |
| 4. (c) | ( ) 4. foreword   | d. to judge from evidence; conclude |
| 5. (f) | ( ) 5. every body | e. an example; case                 |
| 6. (a) | ( ) 6. instants   | f. each of the bodies               |
| 7. (d) | ( ) 7. infer      | g. toward what is ahead             |
| 8. (b) | ( ) 8. everybody  | h. to hint or suggest               |



37. **its** (possessive): "The basset hound stepped on *its* ear."

38. **it's** (contraction): it is. "Frankly, *it's* a hot dog."

it's  
its  
■ Surely *it* \_\_\_\_\_ no fun for a rabbit to be held by *it* \_\_\_\_\_ ears. (Hint: Write *it's* only if "it is" can be substituted for it.)

it's  
its  
■ As for this camel, *i* \_\_\_\_\_ a poor specimen; it has bumps on *i* \_\_\_\_\_ back.

its, its  
■ I wanted to be a lion tamer, but when the circus lion bared \_\_\_\_\_ fangs and \_\_\_\_\_ claws, I decided to become a clown.

its  
its  
■ This lake is perfect, except that \_\_\_\_\_ fish are tiny and \_\_\_\_\_ mosquitoes are big as eagles.

it's  
it's  
■ Truly \_\_\_\_\_ lucky to own a shiny penny—if \_\_\_\_\_ wrapped in fifty-dollar bills.

it's  
its  
■ "If \_\_\_\_\_ true that the cow jumped over the moon," Junior asked his teacher, "how did it get \_\_\_\_\_ thrust?"

39. **ladder**: a device with steps for climbing. "Climb a *ladder* and get up in the world."

40. **later**: afterward; more late. "He returned *later*."

41. **latter**: the last mentioned. "Stephen Douglas or Abe Lincoln? Mary Todd married the *latter*."

later  
■ It's *lat* \_\_\_\_\_ than you think.

ladder  
latter, ladder  
later  
■ Moe held the *la* \_\_\_\_\_ for Curly and Jack, and the *la* \_\_\_\_\_ fell off the *la* \_\_\_\_\_ a minute *la* \_\_\_\_\_.

ladder, latter  
■ On his deathbed my grandfather bargained with Sid and Max and sold his old *la* \_\_\_\_\_ to the *la* \_\_\_\_\_.

latter  
later  
■ We're out of dates and figs, but we'll have the \_\_\_\_\_ a little \_\_\_\_\_.

later  
ladder  
latter  
■ An hour \_\_\_\_\_ I knocked the paint bucket off my \_\_\_\_\_ onto the new Persian rug. Mr. and Mrs. Schultz seemed quite unhappy, especially the \_\_\_\_\_.

42. **leave**: to depart. "We will *leave* at dawn."

43. **let**: to allow. "Please *let* us help."

let  
■ Society must *le* \_\_\_\_\_ women develop to their full potential.

leave, let  
■ Before we *le* \_\_\_\_\_, *le* \_\_\_\_\_ us come to an understanding.

let  
leave  
■ The hostess will \_\_\_\_\_ you kiss her when you \_\_\_\_\_.

let, leave  
■ The pacifist would not \_\_\_\_\_ his son \_\_\_\_\_ for the front.

## QUIZ

Write the letter that indicates the best definition.

- |        |               |                           |
|--------|---------------|---------------------------|
| 1. (e) | ( ) 1. let    | a. the last one mentioned |
| 2. (f) | ( ) 2. later  | b. it is                  |
| 3. (g) | ( ) 3. leave  | c. a climbing device      |
| 4. (d) | ( ) 4. its    | d. belonging to it        |
| 5. (c) | ( ) 5. ladder | e. to permit; allow       |
| 6. (a) | ( ) 6. latter | f. afterward              |
| 7. (b) | ( ) 7. it's   | g. to go away             |



## REVIEW TEST

Write in full the word that is indicated in brackets.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Slavery was an [instan-] of low minimum wages.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Felicia made an [-lusion] to her Mayflower ancestor.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. He warned me [contin-ly] not to play Ping-Pong with my mouth open.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Drugs have a bad [-fect] on brains, if you have any.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. I [adv-e] against selling jewelry on credit to hoboes.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. "Pay up," snarled Flem to the pianist, "or we [br-k] your fingers."
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. The yodeler was of Swiss [d-c-nt].
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Two little scholars fought a [du-l] with spitballs.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. I read the book from [for-rd] to index.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. A [compl-m-nt] a day keeps divorce away.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. Spend the interest, but don't touch the [cap-t-l].
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. The orphanage was sure nobody would [ad-pt] me.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. Ben wanted to play chess, but Fifi was [-interested].
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. Life is an elevator. It has [it-] ups and downs.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. Would sudden wealth [-fect] me? I'll never find out.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 16. The grateful native offered me his pet boa constrictor, but I didn't [-cept] it.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 17. Free [advi-e] is often worth what you pay for it.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 18. Presidents have walked the floors of our [cap-t-l].
- \_\_\_\_\_ 19. Having crossed the [des-t] twice without bathing, John was called "a dirty double-crosser."
- \_\_\_\_\_ 20. Buffalo Bill killed the herd and let [ev-body] rot.

Write the correct word in full.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 21. Don't [leave / let] Junior play with those razors.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 22. Medical tests [imply / infer] that I may last until Sunday.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 23. Fay got rid of 279 ugly pounds—[its / it's] her husband.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 24. Our hen had an optical [illusion / allusion] and sat on a snowball.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 25. I ate a large [amount / number] of watermelon slices and my ears got washed.



## KEY TO REVIEW TEST

Check your test answers with the following key. Deduct 4% per error from a possible 100%.

- |                |                  |                |
|----------------|------------------|----------------|
| 1. instance    | 10. compliment   | 19. desert     |
| 2. allusion    | 11. capital      | 20. every body |
| 3. continually | 12. adopt        | 21. let        |
| 4. effect      | 13. uninterested | 22. imply      |
| 5. advise      | 14. its          | 23. it's       |
| 6. break       | 15. affect       | 24. illusion   |
| 7. descent     | 16. accept       | 25. number     |
| 8. duel        | 17. advice       |                |
| 9. foreword    | 18. capitol      |                |

Score: \_\_\_\_\_ %