

Commonly Confused Words

Word List (Part 1)

Word	Explanation	Example
a	used before a word beginning with a consonant	I read a book a day.
an	used before a word beginning with a vowel sound	I eat an apple an hour.
a lot	means "many, much"	I have a lot of homework to do.
allot	means "to distribute"	I will allot \$300 for groceries.
are	a verb meaning "to be"	They are happy.
or	separates two choices	I'll eat rice or potatoes.
our	shows ownership by one's group	Our class meets tomorrow.
accept	means "to receive, to agree as true"	I cannot accept the award.
except	means "to take or leave out"	Everyone except Alice is gone.
affect	means "to influence"	Health affects happiness.
effect	means "a result"	The music had a positive effect.
by	means "next to, close to"	I sit by that guy in class.
bye	a farewell	Juan said, "Bye," and then left.
buy	means "to purchase"	I want to buy an Xbox.
have	a verb used to create conditional statements	If I could have gone, I would have.
of	a preposition indicating belonging	Ann is one of three sisters.
hear	means "to perceive sound"	We can hear loud music.
here	means "this place"	Come here!
it's	a contraction of "it is"	It's my favorite novel.
its	a pronoun that shows ownership	The puppy lost its toy.
knew	the past tense of "know"	I knew you were there.
new	means "never used before, recent"	Is that a new car you're driving?
know	means "to have information or reasoned belief"	I know your secret.
no	used to express refusal, denial	No, it is not raining.
lie	means "to recline"	Lizards lie in the sun.
lay	means "to put something down"	Lay the box on the table.
lose	means "to be deprived of, not to win"	Did the team lose the game?
loose	means "not securely attached"	My shoelace is loose.
passed	the past tense of "to pass," means "to have moved"	We already passed the exit.
past	means "belonging to a former time or place"	Don't forget the past.

Word List (Part 2)

Word	Explanation	Example
quit	means "to stop" or "to leave"	Quit making that noise!
quite	means "actually," "somewhat," or "very"	I was quite full after dinner.
quiet	means "making no noise, silent"	Please be quiet!
sweet	means "having a sugary taste, pleasing"	This dessert is too sweet.
sweat	means "to perspire"	I sweat like a hog.
than	used in comparisons	Driving is faster than walking.
then	used to refer to a particular time	I was much happier back then.
there	means "that place or position"	Meet me over there.
their	a pronoun used to show ownership by a group	The workers love their boss.
they're	a contraction of "they are"	They're very strange.
to	a preposition indicating direction	Javier is going to Seattle
too	means "also" or "excessive"	The rent is too high.
two	a number, the spelling of "2"	Gwen has two llamas.
through	means "in one side and out the other"	Drive through the tunnel.
threw	the past tense of "throw"	She threw a rock at the tree.
thorough	means "careful or complete"	John did a thorough job.
though	means "however, nevertheless"	I have food, though not much.
were	the past tense of "are"	The students were late.
we're	a contraction of "we are"	We're watching a movie.
where	a question word that stands in for a place or position	Where in the world are you?
who	a pronoun for someone <i>doing</i> an action	I like people who like animals.
whom	a pronoun for someone <i>receiving</i> an action	With whom should I speak?
you're	a contraction for "you are"	You're an excellent writer.
your	a pronoun showing ownership	I believe this is your notebook.

This handout was created by the Writing Centers at YVC.
Yakima Campus, Glenn-Anthon 125 | Grandview Campus, Grandview Main 101
Visit us at the [Writing Center's homepage](#).

