

Commonly Confused Words

Then vs. Than

Then refers to time.

- ✓ It was then that she realized she needed to eat.

Than, however, is used as a comparison. It's commonly seen with the words fewer, less, and more.

- ✓ He has less hair than his sister.

They're, There and Their

They're is a contraction for "they are."

- ✓ They're looking for you.

There usually refers to a place.

- ✓ My shoes are over there.

Their is a possessive adjective.

- ✓ It's their fault that they lost the bet.

Its vs. It's

Its is used as a possessive adjective; it's similar to "their."

- ✓ The cat has its own house.

It's is a contraction for "it is."

- ✓ It's okay to be different.

Accept vs. Except

Accept means to hold something as true, to receive something willingly, or to answer yes.

- ✓ He accepts her words as truth.
- ✓ The actor accepted the award at the ceremony.

Except means apart from, but or 'if not for the fact that', or to exclude.

- ✓ I like all vegetables, except broccoli.
- ✓ I would go swimming, except I am afraid of sharks.

Effect vs. Affect

Effect is a *noun* meaning outcome, consequence, or appearance..

- ✓ What effect did your presentation have on the audience?

Affect is a *verb* (to *affect*) meaning to transform or to change.

- ✓ Adding salt to the recipe will affect the taste.

Your vs. You're

Your is a *possessive* adjective, indicating ownership. It's similar to the words: my, his, her, their, and its.

- ✓ It's your choice on how you want to live your life.

You're is a contraction for "you are."

- ✓ You're very enthusiastic.

Good vs. Well

Good is an *adjective* which refers to something that is of a fair or high standard.

- ✓ He always tries to show good judgment.

Well can be used as an *adjective* meaning in good health, or an *adverb* meaning thoroughly, carefully, commendably, or in a satisfactory manner

- ✓ After taking some medicine, she was feeling well again.
- ✓ The instructions say to shake well before using.
- ✓ Organizing a successful fundraiser was a difficult task well done.

Between vs. Among

Between is used to describe being in the middle of two or more separate and distinct things.

- ✓ He stood between two of his colleagues.
- ✓ What is the difference between anger, love, and fear?

Among is used to portray the idea of being in a group or in the midst of a group.

- ✓ I want to live peacefully among these people.

Assure, Ensure, and Insure

Assure means to promise or to say with confidence. *Assurance* is a noun implying a belief in ability.

- ✓ I can assure you that I know what I am doing.

Ensure (*to ensure*) is to make certain that something will happen.

- ✓ Medicine will ensure that you recover after your surgery.

Insure (*to insure*) is to arrange for compensation in the event of damage, loss, injury, or death.

- ✓ After the accident, he felt lucky that his car had been insured.

Fewer vs. Less

Generally, **less** refers to things that are not countable (e.g., time or space). However, **less than** is used in front of a plural noun that refers to a measure of distance, amount, or time.

- ✓ A receptionist would make less money than a CEO.
- ✓ Sue has less concern for her dog's safety now that the backyard fence is completed.
- ✓ We had less than 25 miles to go but ran out of gas.

Fewer should be used when there is more than one item.

- ✓ Fewer people will vote in the upcoming elections.

Too vs. To

Too means as well or also, and it portrays the idea of in excess or more than it should be.

- ✓ I can do it too.
- ✓ The shoes were too expensive.

To is used with *verb* expressions (to walk) and as a *preposition*, showing the relationship between words

- ✓ She handed the package to the stranger
- ✓ I am going to the park.