# ACADEMIC CENTERS for ENRICHMENT MIDDLESEX Community College

# **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 <u>than</u> his sister.

#### They're, There and Their

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

✓ <u>They're</u> looking for you.

There usually refers to a place.

✓ My shoes are over <u>there</u>.

**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."

✓ <u>It's</u> okay to be different.

# Accept vs. Except

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

- ✓ He <u>accepts</u> her words as truth.
- ✓ The actor <u>accepted</u> 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 <u>effect</u> 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 <u>affect</u> 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 <u>your</u> choice on how you want to live <u>your</u> life.

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

✓ You're very enthusiastic.

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#### 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 <u>well</u> again.
- ✓ The instructions say to shake <u>well</u> before using.
- ✓ Organizing a successful fundraiser was a difficult task <u>well</u> done.

#### Between vs. Among

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

- ✓ He stood <u>between</u> two of his colleagues.
- ✓ What is the difference <u>between</u> 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 <u>among</u> 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 <u>ensure</u> 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 <u>insured</u>.

#### 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 <u>less</u> money than a CEO.
- ✓ Sue has <u>less</u> 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.

✓ <u>Fewer</u> 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 <u>too</u> 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.

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