

Misused Words

Accept, Except

accept- to receive or to agree

except- excluding; other than

Advise, Advice

advise- (verb) to recommend, suggest

advice- (noun) an opinion or recommendation about what could or should be done

Affect, Effect

affect- to influence

effect- (noun) result or outcome

effect- (verb) to cause to happen, bring about, or produce results – accomplish

Allude, Refer, Elude, and Evade

allude- to indirectly mention

refer- to specifically mention

elude- to physically or mentally escape from

evade- to escape or avoid by being sneaky or deceitful

All Together and Altogether

all together- everyone or everything

altogether- completely; entirely

Alot

alot- “alot” is a camel

a lot- is many – One thing we do not need in the office is a lot of “alots”

Among, Between

among- when more than two are involved (use “among”)

between- use when comparing two persons, places, or things

And/Or

A shortcut that looks and reads bad can lead to confusion or ambiguity. Avoid using “and/or” whenever possible.

Anybody, Anyone

anybody- is written as one word when it refers to “any person.” “Any body” as two means “any corpse” or “any group.” The same is true for everybody, nobody, and somebody.

anyone- means anybody; “any one” means “any single person” or “any single thing.”

Assure, Ensure, Insure

assure- is to “speak confidently” about something

ensure- is “to make sure” or “to make certain”

insure- is to “protect something against loss or damage with an insurance policy”

Being

being is not need after regard in sentences such as, "he was regarded as being the best." A better way of phrasing – "he was regarded as the best."

Break, Break, and Brake

break- (noun) a rest

break- (verb) to fracture; to interrupt the completeness of

brake- (noun) a device to decelerate

Can, May

can- able to

may- means permit

Can I leave work early? Means- Am I able to leave work early? -- Is all my work done?
Are my legs strong enough to carry me away?

May I leave work early? Means- May I have permission to go home?

Capital and Capitol

capital- city, wealth in business

capitol- a statehouse

Compare to, Compare with

compare to- is to point out the similarities in different things. Life can be compared to a rat race.

compare with- Is to point out the differences between similar things. Rat races can be compared with rush hour traffic.

Complement and Compliment

complement- something that improves or completes

compliment- praise or flattery

Couldn't care less, Could care less

couldn't care less- means you care so little about something it would be impossible for you to care less.

could care less- is an expression that comes from people not hearing the "n't" in "couldn't care less"

Data

data- like "media" and "phenomena," "data" is plural. It refers to more than one fact or piece of evidence.

Disability, Handicap

disability- a physical or emotional impairment.

handicap- occurs when a person cannot overcome his/her disability.

Elicit and Illicit

elicit- to bring forth

illicit- prohibited by law or custom

Farther and Further

farther- more distant

further- more time or quantity

Finalize

finalize- means either “to terminate” or “to put into final form.” Try to avoid using finalize since it is overused and pretentious. Instead use finish or complete.

Gratuitous, Gratuity

gratuitous, means underserved or unearned

gratuity- is a tip for services rendered

Holly, Holy

holly– a plant

holy– sacred, pure

Hopefully

Hopefully- used to mean “with hope;” now it means “I hope,” and it drives grammarians into fits of rage. They reason that if you write “hopefully you will write your proposal on time” then you do not know whether you hope to write your proposal on time or you will write an optimistic proposal.

I, Me

When our parents heard us say “Bob and me played baseball,” they told us to say “Bob and I.” To determine which is appropriate, read the sentence without the other person’s name.

Imply and Infer

imply- to include as a necessary and logical part; to express indirectly

infer- to conclude or surmise from evidence or circumstances – “based on what he said, we can infer that a raise will be coming.”

Irregardless

Irregardless- is NOT a word. “Regardless” is the correct word to use.

Irritate and Aggravate

irritate- to create or cause a negative condition

aggravate- to increase the severity of an existing negative condition

It's and Its

It's- it is

Its- belonging to something; possessed by it

-ize

Many good verbs end in “-ize.” Therefore, we should not add this suffix to other verbs.

Less and Fewer

less- refers to quantity

fewer- refers to numbers

Lie, Lay, and Lie

lie- to be in, or place oneself in, a horizontal position (lie, lay, lain, lying)

lay- to put or cause something to be in a certain position or place; to produce eggs (lay, laid, laying, lays)

lie- to tell or present something that is not true (lie, lied, lying, lies)

Like, As

Except as a term of affection, “like” has to do with comparison. For example: “that was not like him.”

“As” can be used in comparisons. For example: “the two were equally as efficient.”

Plan ahead

Would you ever “plan behind?” Just “plan” is sufficient.

Principle, Principal and Principal

principle- a standard or rule that often pertains to morality or nature

principal- (adjective) most important

principal- (noun) person with highest rank or main participant

Reason is because, Reason is that

“Reason is because” is redundant because reason and because both deal with the cause.

“Reason is that” is correct.

Secondly, Thirdly

You would not say “firstly.” Therefore, use “first,” “second,” and “third.”

Sense, Scents, and Cents

sense- a vague feeling or perception that which enables one to see, feel, touch, hear and taste; something reasonable

scents- perceives an odor or aroma; fills with odor

cents- one hundredth of one dollar (money)

That, Which, and Who

that- referring to an understood place or thing

which- refers to a specific thing or place

who- refers to a person

Then and Than

then- tells when, at another time; next in order

than- used to compare

There, Their, and They're

there- at or towards that place, point, or matter

their- belonging to two or more people, places, or things

they're- they are

Too, To, and Two

too- in addition, more than enough

to- in the direction of, towards (move **to** the left)

two- a number (2)

Try to, Try and

To “try to” is “to attempt.”

“To try and” implies that two separate actions are taking place.

Unique

unique- without equal. Therefore, do not use “most unique” or “very unique.”

Weak, Week

weak- having little strength

week- period of 7 days

Weather, Whether

weather- climate, temperature

whether- (conjunction) – I can't decide whether I should move or stay.

We're, Where, Were

we're – we are

where- location, place

were- past tense form of the verb be-- They were walking side by side.

Wood, Would

wood-lumber

would- used to express -- I would go with you if I could.

Your and You're

your- possessive form of you

you're- you are