

Glossary of Usage

a lot: *A lot* is always two words. *I eat a lot of red meat.*

a, an: Use *a* before a consonant sound, *an* before a vowel sound.

a history a university a C
an hour an undertow an F

accept, except: *Accept* means to receive. *I accepted the gift with pleasure. Except* means to exclude. *Except for the pets, everyone received a gift.*

adverse, averse: *Adverse* means unfavorable. *Adverse conditions caused the race to be canceled. Averse* means reluctant. *I am averse to joining that group.*

affect, effect: *Affect*, a verb, means to influence. *The bad weather will affect the party. Effect*, as a verb, means to cause. *The new president will effect many changes in the country. Effect*, as a noun, means result. *He underestimated the effect of his harsh words.*

all right: Not *alright*.

all together, altogether: *All together* means in a group, gathered in one place, or in unison. *They made the trip all together rather than in teams. Altogether* means wholly or completely. *I did not altogether approve the plan.*

allude, refer: To *allude* to something is to speak of it without specifically mentioning it. *The poem alludes to the horrors of war. To refer* to something is to mention it directly. *The senator referred to the war on terror in his speech.*

allusion, illusion: *Allusion* means an indirect reference to something. *The allusion was to the opponent's losing record. Illusion* means an unreal or deceptive impression. *The director created the illusion of a snowstorm.*

among, between: *Among* is used to refer to three or more people or things. *The drinks were divided among the team members. Between* is used with two people or things. *The bathroom is between the two classrooms. Between* may be used with more than two if the relationship concerns individual members of a group with each other. *Between the two of us, we should be able to reach a decision.*

amount, number: *Amount* refers to a quantity of something that cannot be counted. *The amount of sugar he consumes is unhealthy. Number* refers to things that can be counted. *The number of players on the court caused the penalty.*

anyone, any one: *Anyone* means any person at all. *Anyone can join the club. Any one* refers to a particular thing or person in a group. *Any one of those animals will bite.*

awhile, a while: *Awhile* is an adverb. *I met him awhile later.* *A while* is an article and a noun. *We will meet in a while.*

because, since: Use *because* to denote a specific cause-effect relationship. *We went to the park because it was the last day of the festival.* *Since* is used in a casual sense with events in sequential order. *He went to the movies twice since he had been back in town.*

beside, besides: *Beside* means next to. *Sit beside me.* *Besides* means except and in addition. *Besides the fact that I won't know anyone, I don't like the food at that restaurant.*

can, may: *Can* indicates ability and *may* indicates permission. *I can run 5 miles. May I run on the track at your club?*

complement, compliment: *Complement* is a noun and verb denoting completeness or the process of supplementing something. *The tie complements his suit.* *Compliment* is a noun or a verb that denotes praise or the expression of courtesy. *She received compliments on her new haircut.*

disinterested, uninterested: *Disinterested* means impartial. *I am disinterested in what he cooks for dinner.* *Uninterested* means that someone lacks interest. *He is completely uninterested in politics.*

ensure, insure: Use *ensure* to mean guarantee. *He ensured us the problem would be fixed.* *Insure* refers to insurance. *I am insured against wind damage to my home.*

farther, further: *Farther* refers to actual distance. *It is one mile farther to the shoe store.* *Further* refers to additional time, amount or other abstract matters. *I don't want to discuss the matter further.*

faze, phase: *Faze* means to embarrass or disturb. *The comment didn't faze her.* *Phase* denotes an aspect or stage. *They are in a new phase of development.*

fewer, less: *Fewer* refers to items that can be counted. *I want fewer roses in the arrangement.* *Less* refers to a collective quantity that cannot be counted. *She has less time to get ready.*

flair, flare: *Flair* is conspicuous talent. *She has a flair for dancing.* *Flare* is a verb meaning to blaze with a sudden bright light or to burst out in anger. It is also a noun meaning a flame. *His temper flared at the remark.*

flaunt, flout: To *flaunt* is to make an ostentatious or defiant display. *She flaunted her good looks.* To *flout* is to show contempt for. *He flouts his parents' rules.*

flounder, founder: A *flounder* is a fish; *to flounder* is to move clumsily or jerkily, to flop about. A fish flounders on land. *To founder* is to bog down, become disabled or sink. *The committee was foundering under all the regulations.*

forego, forgo: *To forego* means to go before. *It was a foregone conclusion that I would chair the event.* *To forgo* means to abstain from. *He has to forgo caffeine on his diet.*

good, well: *Good* is an adjective that means something is as it is or should be. *It is a good book.* *Well* is an adverb. *Well* should be used to refer to health. *I am feeling well today.*

hangar, hanger: A *hangar* is a building. A *hanger* is used for clothes.

imply, infer: *Imply* means to suggest. *He implied he wouldn't be attending.* *Infer* means conclude. *Based on his expression, I inferred he wouldn't be attending.*

in, into: *In* indicates a location or position. *He is in his room.* *Into* indicates movement or change. *He moved from the kitchen into the garage.*

lie, lay: *Lie* means to “recline” and *lay* means “to place.” The past tense of *lie* is the same as the present tense of *lay*. *Lay* is also a transitive verb, and so, takes an object. *Today I laid the tile and tomorrow I'll be laying the carpet.* *Lie* is intransitive and never takes an object. *The envelope lay on the desk for weeks. I've lain in bed too long.*

lay	laid
lain	laid
<i>lie (recline)</i>	<i>lay (place)</i>
lie	lay
lying	laying

like, as, as if, as though: *Like* is a preposition and introduces a prepositional phrase. *He dances like a wild monkey.* *As, as if, and as though* function as subordinating conjunctions and introduce dependent clauses. *The sky looks as if the end of the world is near.*

mantel, mantle: A *mantel* is a shelf. A *mantle* is a cloak.

may be, maybe: *May be* is a verb phrase. *The war may be over after the summit.* *Maybe* is an adverb meaning perhaps. *Maybe the war will be over in my lifetime.*

may have, might have, must have: Do not use *of* in place of *have*.

myself, herself, himself, itself, yourself: These pronouns refer to a noun or another pronoun in the sentence. *The family was arguing among themselves.*

off of: The *of* is not necessary. *He fell off the chair.*

palate, palette, pallet: *Palate* is the roof of the mouth. A *palette* is an artist's paint board. A *pallet* is a bed.

pretense, pretext: A *pretense* is a false show, a more overt act intended to conceal personal feelings. *My great happiness was all pretense.* A *pretext* is something that is put forward to conceal a truth. *He was fired for tardiness, but the reason was pretext for his unpopularity in the office.*

principal, principle: *Principal* is a noun or adjective meaning someone or something first in rank, authority, importance or degree. *She is the school's new principal. He is the principal player in a Broadway show.* *Principle* is a noun that means a fundamental truth, law, doctrine, or motivating force. *One's principles dictate what to do in a given situation.*

ravage, ravish: To *ravage* is to wreak great destruction or devastation. *Union troops ravaged Atlanta.* To *ravish* is to abduct, rape or carry away with emotion. *Soldiers ravished the women.*

regardless: Not *irregardless*. *I am going to the party regardless of what he does.*

reign, rein: The *rein* is a leather strap for controlling a horse. It can be used figuratively: *seize the reins, give free rein to.* *Reign* is the period a ruler is on the throne. *The king began his reign.*

reluctant, reticent: *Reluctant* means unwilling to act. *He is reluctant to enter the race.* *Reticent* means unwilling to speak. *The candidate's wife is reticent.*

rifle, riffle: To *rifle* is to plunder or steal. To *riffle* is to leaf rapidly through a book or pile of papers.

shall, will: Use *shall* to express determination. *You shall stay.* Either shall or will may be used in first-person constructions that do not emphasize determination. *We will hold a meeting. We shall hold a meeting.* For second- and third-person constructions, use will unless determination is stressed. *She will not like the cake.*

should, would: Use *should* to express an obligation. *We should feed the homeless.* Use *would* to express a customary action. *In the spring, we would spend hours in the garden.*

stanch, staunch: *Stanch* is a verb. *He stanched the flow of blood.* *Staunch* is an adjective. *She is a staunch supporter of the team.*

suit, suite: *Suit* of clothes, *suit* of cards, or *lawsuit*. *Suite* of music, rooms, or furniture.

than, that: *Than* is comparative. *I'd rather walk than ride a horse.* *That* is a pronoun, adjective or conjunction. *I live in that house, not this one.*

their, there, they're: *Their* is a possessive pronoun. *That is their dog.* *There* is a directional adverb. *There is the bank.* *They're* is the conjunction of they are. *They're running out of the bank.*

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