



Commonly Confused Words



1. Allusion vs. Illusion

An *allusion* refers to implying or referring to something, especially in literature.

Ex. The horse mentioned in the text is clearly an allusion to the Trojan horse.

An *illusion* refers to a misleading image, object, or idea that does not exist as it appears.

Ex. The magician created the illusion of a disappearing coin.

2. Among vs. Between

Among is used when referring to three or more.

Ex. Among the paintings was an original Picasso.

Between is used when referring to two.

Ex. I am stuck in traffic between Alden Rd. and Pennell Dr.



3. Effect vs. Affect

An *effect* is a result or a consequence. (*usually* a noun)

Effect may also function as a verb meaning “to bring about something.”

Ex. The effect was catastrophic. OR He effected the change in the existing system.

An *affect* is to have an impression, influence, or effect on something. (*usually* a verb)

Ex. This greatly affected his mental state that evening.

4. Fewer vs. Less

Fewer is used when referring to things that can be counted.

Ex. There were fewer customers than anticipated.

Less is used when referring to uncountable and usually abstract nouns.

Ex. I have less patience than Ted.

5. Hanged vs. Hung

Hanged refers to the past tense and past participle of hang (to put to death).

Ex. Many people were hanged during the Salem Witch Trials.

Hung refers to the past tense and past participle of hang (to suspend).



Ex. He hung the picture on the wall.

6. **Imply vs. Infer**

To *imply* means to suggest something without specifically stating it.

Ex. Are you implying that I did something wrong?

To *infer* means to draw a conclusion about something that hasn't been directly stated.

Ex. From your statement, I can infer that you believe he is guilty.

7. **Lie vs. Lay**

Use *lie* when the object is laying itself down.

Ex. I am going to lie down. OR Go lie down on the couch.

Use *lay* when the object is being laid down.

Ex. I will lay the book on the table. OR Now I lay me down to sleep.



8. **Many vs. Much**

Many is used when referring to a large but definite number. *Many* refers to things that can be counted.

Ex. I have too many shoes.

Much is used when referring to something great in quantity, amount, extent or degree. *Much* refers to things that can not be counted.

Ex. You have too much time on your hands.

9. **Rise vs. Raise**

Use *rise* when the object is lifting itself. *Rise* is an intransitive verb.

Ex. I rise each morning at six.

Use *raise* when the object is being risen by another force. *Raise* is a transitive verb.

Ex. She raised her hand at the teacher's request.

10. **Than vs. Then**

Than is used to draw a comparison.

Ex. I like vanilla more than chocolate.

Then is used to refer to time/at that time.



Ex. I went to the store; then I went to David's graduation.

11. Their vs. They're vs. There

Their is the third person plural pronoun. It indicates a possession or relationship.

Ex. Their dog was in the backyard.

They're is the contraction of "they" and "are."

Ex. They're going to the amusement park on Friday.

There is used to refer to a specific location, position, or time. It may also be used to introduce a sentence or clause when the verb has no definite subject.

Ex. The books are over there. OR There will be cake at the party.



12. To vs. Too

To is used with verbs to form the infinitive or as a preposition expressing movement towards something.

Ex. It is important to tell the truth. OR We went to the mall.

Too is used to show an extensive degree or as a synonym of "also."

Ex. He is too young for that ride. OR I am going to the movies too.

13. Who vs. Whom

Who is used when it is the subject of a sentence or a predicate noun.

Ex. Who wants ice cream?

Whom is used when it is the direct object, the indirect object, or the object of a preposition.

Ex. Whom did you ask to the dance? OR You are giving the ring to whom?

14. Whose vs. Who's

Whose is a pronoun expressing possession.

Ex. Whose car are we taking?

Who's is the contraction of who is.

Ex. Who's going to the concert?





Commonly Confused Words Practice Exercises



For each of the following sentences, circle the correct word choice:

1. We discussed the multiple literary (illusions/allusions) within the text.
2. (Among/Between) me and you, I think Kallie won the contest.
3. She had too (many/much) sweaters in her closet.
4. Alex was (to/too) excited to sleep.
5. (Their/They're/There) going to the amusement park tomorrow.
6. The sugar had a negative (effect/affect) on the science experiment.
7. Nicole has (fewer/less) shoes than Sara.
8. The gas prices continue to (raise/rise).
9. Michael (hanged/hung) the picture for his mother.
10. Cindy, (lay/lie) the book on the table.
11. John scored higher on the exam (then/than) I did.
12. (Who/Whom) wants to go to the mall tonight?
13. Haley did not mean to (infer/imply) that Jenny was to blame.
14. John had (less/fewer) travel time because he lives closer to the airport.
15. (Whose/Who's) watch is this on the counter?
16. I am going to (lie/lay) down for an hour.
17. The disappearing penny was simply an optical (allusion/illusion).
18. The book is on the table over (their/there/they're).
19. (Whose/Who's) responsible for the advertising of the event.
20. From your words, I can (infer/imply) that you think he is guilty.
21. The weather greatly (effected/affected) the outcome of the race.
22. (Their/They're/There) books are on the bottom shelf.
23. Earlier today we walked (to/too) the ice cream parlor.
24. The prisoner was (hung/hanged) last night.
25. There are red roses scattered (among/between) the carnations.
26. Kelly ordered her lunch, and (then/than) she went back to work.
27. Mark wanted (to raise/to rise) the flag at the assembly today.
28. (Who/Whom) did you ask to the party?
29. There was too (much/many) chlorine in the pool.



Commonly Confused Words Practice Answers



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| 1. Allusion | |
| 2. Between | |
| 3. Many | |
| 4. Too | |
| 5. They're | |
| 6. Effect | |
| 7. Fewer | |
| 8. Rise | |
| 9. Hung | |
| 10. Lay | |
| 11. Than | |
| 12. Who | |
| 13. Imply | |
| 14. Less | |
| 15. Whose | |
| | 16. Lie |
| | 17. Illusion |
| | 18. There |
| | 19. Who's |
| | 20. Infer |
| | 21. Affect |
| | 22. Their |
| | 23. To |
| | 24. Hanged |
| | 25. Among |
| | 26. Then |
| | 27. Raise |
| | 28. Whom |
| | 29. Much |

