**Air vs heir**

**Air** is 1.) the invisible substance that surrounds Earth, consisting of oxygen, nitrogen and other invisible gases 2.) the space above Earth, 3.) to give expression to 4.) a distinctive quality 5.) a simple tune 6.) to ventilate something. *Air* is one of the top one thousand frequently used words in the English language according to the Oxford English Dictionary.

An **heir** is someone legally entitled to property or a title upon a certain person’s demise. *Heir* may also be used figuratively to refer to someone who carries on a the tradition or legacy of a predecessor. The*h* in *heir* is not pronounced, making *air* and *heir* homophones.

# Aisle vs. isle

An **aisle**is (1) a passageway separating seating areas; (2) a passageway for people to walk through, such as in a grocery store; or (3) a longitudinal division of an interior area. Aisle is sometimes [figurative](http://grammarist.com/usage/literally-figuratively/), especially in [politics](http://grammarist.com/usage/politics/), where it denotes the imaginary dividing line (based on the real one in the legislative chamber) between parties.

An **isle**is an island. The word is often used for small islands, but it is not incorrect in reference to big islands (for example, the main islands in the [British Isles](http://grammarist.com/usage/england-great-britain-united-kingdom/) are big).

# Aloud vs allowed

**Aloud** means not silently, spoken out loud. Aloud may be used as an adverb or as an adjective. Aloud comes to us in the late fourteenth century by adding the prefix a- to the word loud.

**Allowed** is the past tense of the verb allow, meaning 1.) to permit, 2.) to let happen, 3.) to permit entrance, 4.) to acknowledge the truth or acceptability of something. Related words are allows, allowing, allowedly. Allow comes into the English language in the fourteenth century as *allouen*, from the the Latin word allaudare meaning to praise and the medieval Latin word allocare which means to place.

# Bail vs. bale

**Bale**is the word for (1) tightly bound clumps of hay, cotton, or other materials, and (2) the making of such bundles. **Bail**is the correct word (1) in relation to sums of money given in exchange for prison release, (2) for the act of using containers to remove water from a boat, and (3) for the crossbars at the top of a wicket in the game of cricket.

Bale has a second sense that is much rarer and mostly archaic—namely, evil. And bail has several senses springing from the main ones (as well as many other obscure definitions that we won’t list here). For instance, we often talk about bailing people out of bad situations—i.e., helping remove them from trouble—even when the situations have nothing to do with prison or money. And the [phrasal verb](http://grammarist.com/grammar/phrasal-verbs/) bail out has a second figurative sense—to abandon something. This comes from the literal sense, to abandon an aircraft, especially by parachuting.

One more for fans of quirky words: Bale is also the word for a group of [turtles](http://grammarist.com/usage/turtle-tortoise-terrapin/).

# Ball vs bawl

A **ball** is a round sphere, either hollow or solid. A ball is an object that is thrown, kicked or hit in a game such as soccer, football, baseball or rugby. In North America, any game that employs the use of a ball may be referred to as ball, but especially, baseball. Any substance that is shaped in a round sphere, either hollow or solid, may be referred to as a ball.Another definition of ball is a highly formal dance or social gathering. Ball may be used as a verb to describe the act of forming something into a round shape. Ball comes from the Old Norse bolr, meaning ball. The first mention of a ball as an item in a game is in 1200.

**Bawl** is a verb that means to shout, to emit loud cries without restraint. Bawl also means to cry noisily, the adjective form is bawling. Bawl came into use in the middle of the fifteenth century, originally meaning to howl like a dog, from the Old Norsebaula, meaning to low like a cow and the Medieval Latin baulare, to bark like a dog. The first use of bawl to mean reprimand loudly appears in 1908, in American English.

# Bare vs. bear

As an [adjective](http://grammarist.com/grammar/adjectives/), ***bare***means lacking clothing, naked, exposed to view, or lacking adornment. As a verb, it means to make bare, to uncover, or to expose. Its past tense is bared.

**Bear**has no adjectival definition. When not referring to the large mammal, it is a verb with a variety of meanings, none of which relate to uncovering or exposing. A few of its meanings are to hold, to support, to exhibit, to carry oneself in a specified way, to endure, to give birth to, and to yield (especially fruit). Its past tense is bore (e.g., it bore fruit), and its past participle is [*borne*](http://grammarist.com/usage/borne-born/) (e.g., it has borne fruit).

So bear is the correct spelling in the [phrasal verbs](http://grammarist.com/grammar/phrasal-verbs/) bear down, bear out, and bear up. It’s also the correct word in the phrases bear down on, bear fruit, bear in mind, and bring to bear and in the common phrases grin and bear it and bear the brunt of. Bare wouldn’t make sense in any of these phrases or expressions

# Beach vs beech

A**beach** is an area of sand or pebbles that exists beside a body of water, especially an ocean. A beach may also be beside a lake or river. Beach may also be used as a verb to mean to run a boat up on the shore, or to describe an aquatic animal which has become stranded on the shore. Related words are beaches, beached, beaching. Beach comes from the Old English words bæce and bece, which mean brook or stream.

A **beech** is a species of tree that has smooth, gray bark and glossy leaves. The fruit of the beech tree is called the beechnut, and is a source of food for many wild birds and animals. Beech trees are found in Australia, Asia, North America, South America and Europe. Beech comes from the Old English word bēce.

# Bell vs belle

A **bell** is a hollow cup-like object, usually metal,  that rings when struck by means of a clapper on the inside of it. An electronic tone simulating the sound of a bell is also called a bell, as is an object which is shaped like a bell. Bell may be used as a verb to mean attaching a bell to an animal or object, related words are bells, belled, belling.

A **belle** is an extremely attractive young lady or woman, or the most popular or attractive young lady or woman at a social function.

# Blue vs Blew

**Blue**” means

**(a)**‘of the colour blue; the colour of the clear sky’, **(b)** ‘(said of people) sad; without hope’,e.g.

I like her most when she is dressed in **blue**.

You always see him in his **blue** shirt.

The old lady looks **blue** (sad) whenever her son’s letter is delayed.

“**Blew**” is ‘the past tense form of the verb ‘blow’ which means “to move as a result of the current of air; to pass air or gas through something; to move about actively’

blow —**blew**– blown – blowing

e.g. The wind **blew** the leaves off the trees.

The policeman **blew**his whistle to warn the pedestrians.

David **blew**his cheeks when he saw a pretty girl.

# Bore, boor, boar

A **bore**is someone or something that is boring. A **boor**is a clumsy or ill-mannered person. A **boar**is (1) a species of wild pig, and (2) the adult male of several species of mammals.

Bore also has several definitions relating to holes—most generally, (1) to make a hole through, and (2) a hole made by boring. It’s also the past tense of the verb bear, and it’s a noun for a tidal wave that travels up a river or narrow bay. In modern English, boor has no definitions unrelated to clumsiness or poor manners, and boar has no definitions unrelated to animals.

**Board vs bored**

A **board**is a planed piece of wood, a ruling body for some organizations, or a verb that means to get in or on a form of transportation, such as a plane or ship. It also has varied other definitions.

The homonym **bored**is an adjective that means to feel restless or antsy as a result of lack of activity or interest in current activity.

A related word, *bore*can either be a noun or a verb. One can be a *bore*if he or she lacks energy or enthusiasm, or if he or she seems to take enthusiasm away from others. As a verb, *bore*means to drill a hole, usually into a hard material like metal or rock.

# Bough or bow

A **bough**(pronounced /bau/) is a main branch of a tree. Its homonym **bow**has several meanings including: to quit a competition, to bend the body in an act of submission or reverence, to acknowledge applause, or debut.

**Bow**can be pronounced /bo/ and has an alternate meaning. It can be a tie of a ribbon, a weapon made to shoot arrows, or a rod strung with hair to play a stringed instrument

**Boy vs Buoy**

1. :: *noun -* A male child.
2. :: *noun -* A son: his youngest boy.
3. :: *noun -* Often Offensive A man, especially a young man.
4. :: *noun -* Informal A man socializing in a group of men: a night out with the boys.

**buoy**

1. :: *noun -* A float moored in water to mark a location, warn of danger, or indicate a navigational channel.
2. :: *noun-* A life buoy.
3. :: *verb-transitive -* To keep afloat or aloft: a glider buoyed by air currents.
4. :: *verb-transitive -* To maintain at a high level; support: "the persistent ... takeover speculation, which has buoyed up the shares of banks” ( Financial Times).

# Buy, by or bye

**Buy**, **bye** and **by** are **homophones**. These words are all pronounced in the same way but are spelled differently and have different meanings. We’ll look at the difference in meaning between buy, bye, and by, where these words are derived from and some examples of their use in sentences.

**Buy** means to **acquire** **something** in exchange for **payment**. **Buy** is also used figuratively to mean to acquire someone’s favor or loyalty by means of bribery, or to acquire something through extreme effort or sacrifice. Buy is one of the Oxford English Dictionary’s one thousand most frequently used words in the English language, it is used as a noun or a verb. Related words are buys, bought, buying. The word buy is derived from the Old English word bycgan, which has a Germanic origin.

**Bye** is a term often used as an abbreviation of the word **goodbye**. A bye is also a round in a competition in which a team or player does not play a game or have a competitor. When a team or player has a bye, that means they may proceed to the next round of competition without opposition. The use of bye to mean goodbye dates back to the early 1700s, its use as a sporting term dates back to lawn-tennis in the 1880s.

**By** is a **preposition**. By is used after a passive verb in order to signify the person who performed an action. By may also be used when identifying the author of a creative project. By also means via, beside, near, past, no later than, extent, aside, multiplied by, between measurements, and many other meanings. Considering the vast ways in which the word by may be used, it should be obvious by now that by is one of the one thousand most frequently used words in the English language, according to the Oxford English Dictionary. By is derived from the Old English words bī, bi, be.

# Ceiling vs sealing

**Ceiling** and **sealing** are two words that are pronounced in the same way but are spelled differently and have different meanings. They are homophones. We will look at the difference between the words ceiling and sealing, where the words come from and some examples of their use in sentences.

A ceiling is the upper, inner surface of a room. The word ceiling is also used figuratively to mean an upper limit, the maximum altitude that a plane may reach or the base altitude of a cloud layer. The word ceiling is derived from the Middle English word ceil, which meant to plaster over or panel a room.

Sealing may be a substance that joins two items together in a tight bond. Sealing might also mean to close off access to a document or other media. The word sealing is derived from the Old French word seel and the suffix -ing.

# Cellar vs seller

**Cellar** and **seller** are two words that are pronounced the same way but are spelled differently and have different meanings. They are homophones. We will examine the definitions of cellar and seller, where these words come from and some examples of their use in sentences.

A *cellar* is a room or a floor built beneath the ground floor of a building, a cellar is a basement. *Cellar* may also be used to mean the place where wine is stored or the inventory of wine. The word *cellar* first appears in the 1200s, derived from the Latin word *cellarium* which means a storeroom, a pantry.

A seller is someone who peddles good or services. Seller is also used to describe an item that is sold in a particular fashion, such as best seller. The word seller also first appeared in the 1200s, derived from the Old English word sellan which means to supply, to deliver, to give and the suffix -er which means a person who performs a specific action.

# Cereal vs serial

**Cereal** is an edible grain, the grasses that produce an edible grain or the food product composed of an edible grain. Some cereals are wheat, oats, corn, rye, millet, etc. Cereal may be used as a noun or an adjective, the plural is cereals. Cereal comes from the Latin word cerealis which means of grain, derived from the name of the Roman goddess of **agriculture, Ceres.**

**Serial** means arranged in successive parts in successive intervals, or a behaviour that occurs repeatedly in a predictable fashion. Serial may be used as a noun or adjective, the adverb form is serially, the verb form is serialize. In the mid 1800s, many of Charles Dickens’ novels were first published in magazines in serial form, popularizing the use of the word serial, a word made by combining the word series and the suffix -al.

# Cheap vs cheep

**cheap**

1. :: *adjective -* Relatively low in cost; inexpensive or comparatively inexpensive.
2. :: *adjective -* Charging low prices: a cheap restaurant.
3. :: *adjective -* Obtainable at a low rate of interest. Used especially of money.
4. :: *adjective* Devalued, as in buying power: cheap dollars.

**cheep**

1. :: *noun -* A faint, shrill sound like that of a young bird; a chirp.
2. :: *verb-intransitive -* To make a faint, shrill sound or sounds; chirp.

# Check vs. cheque

In American English, **check**is the standard spelling of the [noun](http://grammarist.com/grammar/nouns/) referring to a written order for a bank to pay a specified amount from deposited funds. Outside the U.S., the word is spelled **cheque**. But cheque is confined to this very narrow banking-related sense. All varieties of English use check for the many non-banking-related senses of the word—including (1) a restraint, (2) a pattern of small squares, (3) to halt, and (3) to inspect for accuracy or correctness.

# Coarse vs. course

**Coarse** is only an [adjective](http://grammarist.com/grammar/adjectives/). Its main senses in today’s English are (1) of low quality, (2) lacking refinement or vulgar, and (3) rough in texture or composed of large particles. For example, a movie regarded as obscene or lowbrow might be called coarse, as might a person who speaks in a rude or off-color way. In the third sense, the adjective’s applications are broad. Most commonly, it tends to describe rougher varieties of sand, asphalt, soil, and fabric.

**Course**, which works only as a [noun](http://grammarist.com/grammar/nouns/) or a [verb](http://grammarist.com/grammar/verbs/), has many definitions. It refers to paths, durations, academic classes, golf playing fields, and parts of incrementally consumed meals, among other things. As a verb, it means, primarily, to move along a course. Blood, for instance, is often described as coursing through the veins. The word also appears in the idiom of course, which means naturally, obviously, or certainly.

# Core, corps and corpse

**Core** is a noun which means the center part of something, whether it be the tough pith of a fruit, the dense central region of a planet or the most important part of an idea or discussion. Core also describes the central part of a nuclear reactor that contains the fissile material. The muscles of the human torso are referred to as the core. Core may be used as a transitive verb which is a verb which takes an object, to describe the action of removing the core of something, such as an apple. Related forms are cores, cored, coring. Core also functions as an adjective meaning central or basic.

**Corps** is a noun that means a military body comprised of two more more divisions, or a military body that performs a specific function, such as an intelligence corps or medical corps. Corps may also be used with adjective or noun modifier to describe any group of people who are associated, such as the press corps. Corps is pronounced with a silent “p” and silent “s” (kor). The plural is also spelled corps, but is pronounced with a silent “p” and with a “z” sound. (korz)

A **corpse** is a dead body, usually referring to a human being. **Corpse** is also British theater slang for laughing or causing another to laugh involuntarily while performing.

**Council**is always a [noun](http://grammarist.com/grammar/nouns/). It refers to an assembly of people brought together for discussion or deliberation. **Counsel**also has a couple of noun senses—it refers to (1) the act of exchanging ideas or giving advice, and (2) a lawyer or group of lawyers giving legal advice and conducting cases in court—but it’s primarily used as a [verb](http://grammarist.com/grammar/verbs/) meaning to advise.

The inflected forms of counsel are spelled differently in the U.S. than everywhere else. In the U.S., they have one l—counseled, counseling, and counselor. In Canada and outside North America, they have two *l*‘s—counselled, counselling, and counsellor.

# Crews vs. Cruise

[***Crews***](http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/crews?s=t)*is a plural form of the noun crew. Crews are people who work on boats, planes, or other vessels.*

[***Cruise***](http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/cruise%20?s=t)*is a noun, meaning a slow journey, typically on a boat. But cars also have “cruise control”, a setting meaning the speed is maintained at a steady pace with no noticeable acceleration.*

*The following sentence uses both words correctly:*

*Cassie’s dream after high school was to join one of the crews on a local cruise ship, ultimately becoming a bartender so she could talk to lots of people and hear their stories*

**Currant vs current**

A**currant** is a small dried fruit which is raisin-like, made from a Mediterranean grape, the zante. A *currant i*s also a berry from a *currant* shrub such as a *blackcurrant, redcurrant* or *whitecurrant.* They are often used in baking and in jellies and jams. *Currant* comes from the mid-fourteenth century term *raysyn of Curans*, literally *raisins of Corinth*, referring to the zante. In the 1570s *currant* was also applied to the Northern European berry.

**Current** is a flow of water or air that moves in a definite direction, usually in a swift manner. *Current* is also a flow of electricity between conductors, it is measured in amperes. Used as an adjective, *current* means happening in the present or in general use, the adverb form is *currently. Current* comes from the Old French word *corant*, which means *running*.

# deer vs dear

**Deer**– an animal the female of which is a doe. As in “doe a deer, a female deer”

“deer” is also the plural version of the word so stop using  “deers”

*He wasn’t paying attention and almost got hit by a deer.*(happens a lot here in Ohio) *Look at that group of deer in the woods.*(more than one)

**Dear**– *a salutation (a greeting),  an annoying term of endearment it is better than*darling*at least*

Oh my dear, I love you.

# Dyeing vs. dying

**Dying**relates to death. **Dyeing**relates to soaking items in colored solutions. Dieing is a misspelling.

A similar distinction applies to the past participles died and dyed. Die becomes died, and dye becomes dyed.

# Draft vs. draught

In British English, **draught**is used primarily for (1) a current of air, (2) an animal that pulls loads, (3) a load pulled by such an animal, (4) a portion of liquid, and (5) the act of drawing liquid into the mouth. And British writers use **draft**for (1) a written plan or preliminary sketch, (2) an order for a bank to pay money, (3) conscription into the military, and (4) the act of selecting someone for a role.

American and Canadian publications use draft for all these purposes. Draught occasionally appears in reference to beer, but mainly in product marketing. Non-British varieties of English from outside North America tend to use the British spellings.

# Plough vs. plow

In American and Canadian English, **plow**is the preferred spelling of the farm implement and its related [verbs](http://grammarist.com/grammar/verbs/). **Plough**is the preferred spelling in the main varieties of English from outside North America.

The spelling distinction applies to all senses of the word, including [figurative](http://grammarist.com/usage/literally-figuratively/) ones. British and Australian writers always use plough, along with ploughed and ploughing; American and Canadian writers always use plow, plowed, and plowing. Both spellings are pronounced the same.

Example

In winter he plows the streets, and in spring he trims the trees. [[The Atlantic](http://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2011/05/flooded-lives-the-fight-to-survive-devils-lake/239368/)]

Russell confronted a man who had stolen a snow plow and was driving across the city. [[Toronto Sun](http://www.torontosun.com/2011/05/01/ryan-russells-name-added-to-long-list)]

Plowing through a stack of mail, he came to an envelope that read “This is not a bill.” [[Washington Post](http://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/style/frank-stewarts-bridge-pushing-the-envelope/2011/04/27/AFD8Dg3G_story.html)]

# Ewe, yew or you

A **ewe** is a female sheep. The word ewe is derived from the Old English word eowu, which means female sheep.

A **yew** is an evergreen tree or bush, it is a coniferous tree or bush of the genus Taxus. Yews have long, flat needles and berries, which are poisonous. The word yew may refer to the wood of this type of tree or bush or to the tree or bush itself. Certain types of yews are very long-lived, the Fortingall Yew is estimated to be between 3,000 and 9,000 years old, perhaps making it the oldest living thing in Europe. The word yew is derived from the Old English words īw and ēow.

**You** is a pronoun that refers to the person or people one is speaking to. You may be used as a singular pronoun or a plural pronoun. The word you is one of the one thousand most commonly used words in the English language, according to the Oxford English Dictionary. You comes from the Old English word eow.

# Faint vs feint

**Feint** is a pretended attack used to distract an enemy. In boxing, a feint may be a blow that provokes a defensive action to one part of the opponent’s body while the boxer delivers a more destructive punch to another part of the opponent’s body. A feint may be a fencing thrust that draws an opponent to protect one part of his body while the fencer delivers a fatal stroke to another part of the opponent’s body. In war, a feint is a troop maneuver that distracts the enemy from the real attack. Feintmay also be used as a verb, meaning to make a feint.

**Faint** is used as a verb to mean to pass out or lose consciousness temporarily. As a noun, faint means a sudden loss of consciousness.  Faint, as an adjective, means dim or hardly perceptible, vague, slight, feeble, lacking enthusiasm or half-hearted.

# Fair vs. fare

**Fair**has many definitions, the main ones being (1) of pleasing appearance, (2) just to all parties, (3) moderately good, and (4) an event or gathering held for the selling of goods or for public entertainment. **Fare**has fewer definitions. As a [verb](http://grammarist.com/grammar/verbs/), it means to get along, as in, “How are you faring this morning?” As a [noun](http://grammarist.com/grammar/nouns/) it means (1) a transportation charge, (2) a passenger who pays a transportation charge, and (3) food and drink.

So, for example, on a fair day you might pay a fare to take a bus to the fair, where you spill ketchup on your shirt while sampling the fare.

# Feet vs feat

**Feet** is the plural form of the word foot, which is the appendage at the end of a leg which people or animals walk upon. Footand feet are also used to mean the lowest part or parts of an item, or measurements of twelve inches. Changing the vowel in a word to pluralize it is called umlaut, it was common practice in Old English and survives in the words foot and feet.

A **feat** is an achievement that requires enormous skill, bravery, imagination or brawn. Feat describes an accomplishment that is above and beyond, extraordinary, remarkable or noteworthy.

# Flue vs flew

**Flue** and **flew** are two words that are pronounced in the same way but are spelled differently and have different meanings. They are homophones. We will examine the difference between the definitions of flue and flew, where these words came from and some examples of their use in sentences.

A flue is a pipe, duct, or tube through which exhaust gases from a fireplace, furnace, or boiler exit a building. The plural form is flues. The origin of the word flue is uncertain, though it is thought to have been derived from the Middle English words flue and flewe, which means the mouthpiece of a horn used during hunting. It may be related to the  Old French word fluie,which means stream.

Flew is the past tense of the verb fly, related words are flies, flying, flown. The verb to fly means to rise into the air, to travel through the air through the use of wings, to transport quickly, to travel via airplane. The word flew, past tense of the word fly**,** is derived from the Old English word fleogan which means to rise into the air or to soar through the air.

**Flower vs flour**

A **flower** is the part of the plant that bears seeds. The *flower* includes sepals, petals and stamens and is often large in proportion to other parts of the plant and colorful. The *flower* is the blossom.*Flower* can also mean the finest example of something or a time of optimum growth, *flower* also means the time at which a plant blooms. Related words are *flowers, flowered, flowering, flowerless* and *flowerlike. Flower* is a word in English as early as 1200, from the Latin *flos* meaning flower.

**Flour** is grain or another comestible ground into powder. *Flour* is usually made from wheat. *Flour* may also come from a number of other sources such as barley, corn, oat, chickpea, almond, coconut, etc. *Flour* is used in baking bread, pastries and cakes, among other things, or as a thickener. The word *flour* is also used as a verb to mean applying *flour* to a surface. *Flour*was spelled as *flower* until 1830, when the spelling was changed to avoid confusion. *Flower* and *flour* sound similar when pronounced, but the word *flower* consists of two syllables and the word *flour* consists of one syllable.

# Foul vs. fowl

**Fowl**refers to birds, especially chickens and game birds. It has no non-bird-related definitions. **Foul**has many definitions, including (1) offensive to the senses, (2) morally detestable, (3) a violation of rules of play, (4) to make dirty, and (5) to commit a violation against rules of play.

Foul is the correct spelling in the phrasal verb foul up (meaning mess up) and in the phrases foul play (meaning illegal activity); foul-mouthed (meaning tending to use offensive language); no harm, no foul (meaning no serious damage done); and cry foul (meaning to accuse someone of unfair practices or wrongdoing).

# Gait vs gate

A **gait**is a way of walking, either an individual’s particular way of moving from one place to another, or an animal’s pace of moving, such as a trot, gallop, or canter. It can be used as a verb to train an animal to walk a certain way.

Incidentally gait did come from **gate**, which meant way. While gate, which is an opening in a barrier, usually a fence, came from the Norse gat, which meant opening.

Gate can also be a verb, meaning to put a gate in something. In Britain it can mean to lock down a university or dorm.

# Gambol vs. gamble

To **gambol**is to playfully skip or frolic. It is spelled as *gamboling*and*gamboled* inside the US, and makes gambolling and gambolled outside the United States. However, it is gambol everywhere.

To **gamble** is to bet money or take a risky action. It makes gambled and gambling and is spelled the same everywhere.

A gamble is something that is especially risky or without assurance. Usually it is paired with the verb take, as in taking a gamble.

A *gambler*is someone who gambles.

# Gilt vs guilt

**Gilt** refers to something covered in gold, whether gold leaf or gold paint. Gilt means gilded. Gilt may be used as an adjective or noun. Gilt is the past participle of the Middle English word gilden. Gilt may also refer to a young female pig, or gilts, fixed-interest loan securities secured by the British government.

**Guilt** is the fact of being responsible for wrongdoing or the feeling of being responsible for wrongdoing or failing at some responsibility. Guilt is primarily used as a noun, though guilt as a verb has been gaining favor since the 1990s. Guilt comes from the Old English word gylt, meaning crime, sin, moral defect, failure of duty.

# Grate vs great

A **grate** is 1.) a metal frame, especially one used to confine a fire 2.) a fireplace 3.) to shred a material by rubbing 4.) to make an annoying, rasping sound 5.) to irritate. Grate may be used as a noun or verb, related words are grates, grated, grating. Grate has been used since the fifteenth century to mean cagework across a door or window, from the Latin word cratis which means wickerwork or hurdle. In the fourteenth century, grate also came to be used to mean scrape, scratch, from the Old French word grater.

**Great** means 1.) of much more than average size, volume, or extent 2.) intense, distinguished, imposing 3.) excellent 4.) skilled, expert 5.) the main or chief item. Great is one of the Oxford English Dictionary’s one thousand most frequently used words, it may be used as an adjective, adverb, and occasionally, a noun. Great is an Old English word derived from the German word grautaz meaning coarse, thick.

# Groan vs grown

A **groan** is a cry of distress, pain, complaint or disapproval. A groan may also be a low creaking sound made by something under pressure. Groan may be used as a verb to mean crying in distress, pain, complaint or disapproval. Related words are groans, groaned, groaning and the noun groaner. Groan comes from the Old English word granian which means to make a low sound expressing grief or pain,  to murmur, to lament.

**Grown** is the past participle of the verb grow, which means to spring up, to develop into maturity, to cultivate. Grown may also be used as an adjective. Grown derives from the Old English word growan, meaning to grow. Related words are grew, growing and the noun grower.

# Hail vs. hale

**Hail**is a [noun](http://grammarist.com/grammar/nouns/) referring to precipitation in the form of spherical pellets of ice, and it’s a [verb](http://grammarist.com/grammar/verbs/) meaning (1) to salute or greet, (2) to call out in order to catch the attention of, and (3) to come or originate from. The precipitation-related sense can also be used as a verb. **Hale**usually means free from infirmity or illness, but it also has a rarer verb sense—to compel to go (usually to court).

# Hair vs hare

**Hair** refers to the threadlike strands that grows out of the skin of humans, mammals and other animals as well as plants. Hair may refer to one strand or hair may be used as a collective noun to refer to all of the growth covering a head or other body part. Hair may be used as a noun or an adjective, it comes from the Old English word hær.

A **hare** is a small mammal related to the rabbit. Hares have longer ears and legs than a rabbit, are larger, and make nests on top of the ground rather than underground. Hare comes from the Old English word hara.

# Hear, hear vs. here, here

**Hear, hear** (usually with a [comma](http://grammarist.com/grammar/commas/) and set apart as a self-contained [sentence](http://grammarist.com/grammar/sentences/)) is the conventional spelling of the colloquial exclamation used to express approval for a speaker or sentiment. It’s essentially short for hear him, hear him or hear this, hear this, where these phrases are a sort of cheer.

***Here, here*** is widely regarded as a misspelling, although it is a common one, and there are ways to logically justify its use. But for what it’s worth, hear, hear is the original form (the Oxford English Dictionary cites examples going back to the 17th century) and is the one listed in dictionaries. English reference books mention here, here only to note that it’s wrong.

The verb **hear** means to perceive sound or to listen. **Hear** also means to receive a message or gain information. The past form of **hear** is heard. The adverb **here**means at, in, or toward a place or a particular point in a process.

# Heard vs herd

**Heard** is the past and the past participle form of the verb hear, meaning to perceive a sound with one’s ear, to listen to, to receive information, to listen to a legal case. The root word of heard, hear, is one of the Oxford English Dictionary’s one thousand most frequently used words. The word heard is derived from the Old English word herde. Related words are hears, hearing, hearer, hearable.

**Herd** refers to a large group of animals that live together. Usually, the word herd refers to hoofed mammals or livestock. Herd may also be used derogatorily to describe a group of people sharing a characteristic. Herd may also be used as a verb to describe the act of  gathering a group of animals or people into a group and moving them in a certain direction. Related words are herds, herded, herding. The word herd is derived from the Old English word heord.

**Higher vs Hire**

#### Higher : Definition: advanced in complexity or elaboration

#### Examples: higher finance

**Hire : Definition:** engage or hire for work

#### Examples:They hired two new secretaries in the department

**Him vs Hymn**

**Him** is a pronoun that is used as the object of a verb or preposition to refer to a male person or animal previously mentioned or easily identified; often used in place of “he” after the verb “to be” and after “than” or “as” to refer to a male person or animal.

**Hymn** is a noun that means a religious song or poem, typically of praise to God or a god.

# Hoard vs. horde

**Horde** refers to a large crowd or mob. It is always a noun (with rare exceptions).

**Hoard**can be either (1) a noun referring to an accumulated store or cache, or (2) a [verb](http://grammarist.com/grammar/verbs/) meaning to accumulate a hoard. If you have a hoard of something, a horde of people might try to take it from you.

# Hole vs whole

A **hole** is (1.) a cavity, a hollowed-out place (2.) an opening passing through an object (3.) an animal burrow (4.) in the United States, a hole may be a cove or small bay (5.) a cylindrical cup sunk into a golf green in which a ball is to be hit, or holemay refer to one of the eighteen distinct sections of a regulation golf course (5.) a small, dingy, squalid room or house. Holemay be used as a transitive verb describing making a hole or driving into a hole. Related words are holes, holed and holing. Hole comes from the Old English word holian, which means to hollow out, scoop out.

A **whole** means all the parts of a thing. Whole may be used as a noun or an adjective to signify (1.) completeness, entirety (2.) that an item is undamaged (3.) health (4.) without fraction. Whole may also be employed as an adverb to emphasize novelty. A derived word is wholeness. Whole comes from the Old English hal meaning entire, whole, unhurt, safe, sound, genuine, straightforward.

# Hour vs our

**Hour** and **our** are two words that are pronounced in the same way but are spelled differently and have different meanings. They are homophones. We’ll look at the definitions of hour and our, where the words came from and some examples of their use in sentences.

An hour is a measurement of time. An hour is sixty minutes long, or one twenty-fourth of a day. The word hour may also be used to indicate a certain time of day according to the clock or a certain period of time that is allotted for a particular activity.Hour is also often used to describe the distance someone may travel in that period of time. The word hour is derived from the Greek word hōra, which means season.

# Cay, quay and key

A **cay** is a naturally occurring low island, either a sandbar or a coral reef. Cay is most often applied to Caribbean islands, the preferred pronunciation is “key” Cay comes from the Spanish word, cayo, which means key. Its first use to refer to an island occurred in 1707.

**Key** also may refer to a naturally occurring low island, either a sandbar or a coral reef. Key is most often applied to Caribbean islands. Key also comes from the Spanish word, cayo, which means key.

A **quay** is a man-made platform that is built along the water or extends into the water for use in loading and unloading ships. A quay is a wharf that is most often constructed of concrete or stone. The word quay comes from the Middle English kai, with the spelling influenced by the French word, quai.

# Knew vs new

**Knew** is the past tense of the verb know, which means to be certain of a particular truth or fact, to be acquainted or familiar with, to understand or experience. Related words are knows, knowing, knowable. Knew comes from the Old English word cneow, the past tense of the Old English word cnawan, which means to know, to acknowledge, to declare.

**New** means fresh, not previously in existence, recently invented or discovered. New may also mean unused or not previously owned. New is primarily used as an adjective, though occasionally it is used as an adverb in combination of other words. Words related to the word new are newly, newness and newish. New comes from the Old English words neowe and niowe, which mean new, fresh, recent, novel, inexperienced. New is one of the one thousand most frequently used words, according to the Oxford English Dictionary.

# Knight vs night

**Knight** and **night** are two words that are pronounced the same way but are spelled differently and mean two different things. They are homophones. We’ll examine the difference between the words knight and night, their origins, and look at a few examples of their use in sentences.

A knight was a man who served as a mounted, armored soldier during the Middle Ages. Today, a knight is a gentleman bestowed with the rank of knight by a sovereign because of his service or because of his merit. A man who attains such a rank may use the title Sir before his name. The word knight is also used to designate a particular chess piece that sports a horse head. Knight is also used figuratively to mean a man who is a champion or a protector. Knight is also used as a verb to describe bestowing the title of knight upon someone. Derived from the Old English word *cniht*, the k sound in knight has long gone silent. Related words are knights, knighted, knighting, knighthood.

Night is the time between sunset and sunrise, the opposite of day. Night may be used as an adverb to signify that something takes place at night. The word night is also used to describe something that is gloomy or dark. Night is derived from the Old English words neaht, niht.

# Knot vs not

**Knot** :: noun A compact intersection of interlaced material, such as cord, ribbon, or rope.

A fastening made by tying together lengths of material, such as rope, in a prescribed way.

A decorative bow of ribbon, fabric, or braid.

A unifying bond, especially a marriage bond.

**Not** :: adverb

In no way; to no degree. Used to express negation, denial, refusal, or prohibition: I will not go. You may not have any.

**Leak vs leek**

A**leak** is a crack or hole in a container through which the contents escape. A *leak* is an accident.*Leak* may also refer to proprietary information that has been released into the public domain. *Leak* may be used literally or figuratively, and as a noun or a verb. Related words are *leaks, leaked, leaking, leaky, leaker. Leak* comes from the Middle Dutch word*leken*meaning to drip, to leak, and the Old English word *leccan* which means to moisten.

A **leek** is a vegetable related to the onion, a *leek* looks somewhat like a large green onion. *Leek* comes from the Old English words *læc* and *leac*, meaning onion or garlic.

Lightening vs. lightning

**Lightening**is a [present participle](http://grammarist.com/grammar/participles/) corresponding to the [verb](http://grammarist.com/grammar/verbs/) lighten, where to lighten is to make light or lighter. For example, we might say that a person who has been losing weight is lightening, or that an [aging](http://grammarist.com/spelling/ageing-aging/) man’s hair is lightening to [gray](http://grammarist.com/spelling/gray-grey/).

**Lightning**refers to an abrupt, discontinuous natural electric discharge in the atmosphere—i.e., the flash of light associated with thunder.

Loan vs Lone

Loan - the temporary provision of money (usually at interest) - loan me some money

Lone - lacking companions or companionship - the lone skier on the mountain

Loot vs Lute

**Loot** :: *noun* Valuables pillaged in time of war; spoils.

Stolen goods.

Informal Goods illicitly obtained, as by bribery.

Informal Things of value, such as gifts, received on one occasion.

**Lute** :: *noun*

A stringed instrument having a body shaped like a pear sliced lengthwise and a neck with a fretted fingerboard that is usually bent just below the tuning pegs.

A substance, such as dried clay or cement, used to pack and seal pipe joints and other connections or coat a porous surface in order to make it tight. Also called luting.

:: *verb-transitive -* To coat, pack, or seal with lute.

# Made vs Maid

**Made** :: *verb -*Past tense and past participle of make.

:: *adjective -* Produced or manufactured by constructing, shaping, or forming. Often used in combination: handmade lace; ready-made suits.

:: *adjective-*Produced or created artificially: bought some made goods at the local store.

:: *adjective-* Having been invented; contrived: These made excuses of yours just won't wash.

**Maid** :: *noun -* An unmarried girl or woman.

:: *noun -* A virgin.

:: *noun -* A woman servant.

:: *noun -* A housemaid or chambermaid.

# Mail vs male

**Mail** is a letter or a parcel sent by postal service. Mail may also describe the postal service, especially in the United States, the individual delivery of a batch of mail or the individual collection of a batch of mail. Mail is also used as a verb to describe sending a letter or parcel through the postal service. Related terms are mails, mailed, mailing. A second definition of the word mail is a type of flexible armor consisting of metal rings or metal plates. In addition, mail may be used in Scotland to mean payment of rent.

**Male** refers to the sex that fertilizes an ovum. The word male describes men and boys in the human species and the corresponding sex in all other species. Machine fittings that fit into hollowed fittings are referred to as male. Male may be used as a noun or an adjective.

# Main, mane and Maine

**Main** is an adjective which means the thing of principal importance, central. Main may be used as a noun to refer to the principal pipe or cable carrying utilities such as water, gas or electricity, to a building. In British English, these pipes are called the mains. Archaically, main means the open ocean. The word main comes into use in the early thirteenth century to mean large, bulky, strong, from the Old English maegen meaning power, strength, force. By the fifteenth century, main also meant chief.

A **mane** is the long, flowing hair that grows along the neck of a horse, lion or other furred animal. Mane may also refer to a person’s hair if it is long and thick. Mane comes from the Old English word manu, meaning mane.

**Maine** is one of the fifty states of the United States of America. Maine is part of the New England area, it was probably named by French explorers after the Mayne region in France. An alternative theory for the origin of the name Maine is that explorers used the word to distinguish it as the mainland, as opposed to the offshore islands.

# Mare vs Mayor

## As nouns the difference between mayor and mare

# is that mayor is the leader of a city, or a municipality, sometimes just a figurehead and sometimes a powerful position in some countries, the mayor is elected by the citizens or by the city council while mare is an adult female horse or mare can be (obsolete|outside|dialects) a type of evil spirit thought to sit on the chest of a sleeping person; also the feeling of suffocation felt during sleep;

# a nightmare or marecan be (planetology) a dark, large circular plain; a “sea”.

# Meat, Meet, Mete

**Meat** :: *noun*

The edible flesh of animals, especially that of mammals as opposed to that of fish or poultry.

The edible part, as of a piece of fruit or a nut.

The essence, substance, or gist: the meat of the editorial.

Slang Something that one enjoys or excels in; a forte: Tennis is his meat.

**Meet** :: verb-transitive

To come upon by chance or arrangement.

To be present at the arrival of: met the train.

To be introduced to.

To come into conjunction with; join: where the sea meets the sky.

**Mete** :: *noun* A boundary line; a limit.

:: verb-transitive - To distribute by or as if by measure; allot: mete out justice.

Archaic To measure.

# Medal, meddle, metal, mettle

## Definitions

**Medal**has one narrow definition. It refers to a flat piece of metal stamped with an inscription and given (1) as an award for placing high in a competition or (2) to commemorate brave performance in war.

**Metal**refers to any of a category of elements that usually have shiny surfaces, conduct heat and electricity, and can be melted. Metal is also a genre of music (short for heavy metal).

**Mettle**refers to (1) courage and fortitude, and (2) inherent quality of character and temperament.

A fourth word in this group of homophones is **meddle**, a verb meaning to intrude on another’s affairs or to tamper. It does not function as a noun, so it is easy to keep separate from the others.

## Origins

Metal and mettle are closely related, with shared roots in the Latin metallum. In fact, they were variants of each other in their main senses until around the 17th century, when they began to differentiate. Medal, meanwhile, has a separate source—the French médaille, which in turn has roots in Italian and ultimately the Latin medallia. Since its use in Vulgar Latin, it has always related to coins. Meddle has a long history in English, but it derives ultimately from Latin words having to do with mixing.

# Mist, Midst, Missed

Mist or mist means water vapor close to the ground, or rising from the ground--  
It was a damp morning, with a fine mist over everything.  
Mist may also mean a fine spray or a light, fine rain--  
He used the garden hose to mist the plants.  
  
Midst or midst means among or in the center of a group of people or things--  
There was a large crowd, and in their midst a man waving frantically.  
"...in the midst of life we are in death..."  
  
Missed or missed ( rhymes with mist ) is the past tense ( yesterday, or some time ago ) of "miss" meaning to aim at something and fail to hit it; to fail to show up for something; or to feel the absence of something or someone--  
He swung at the ball and missed.   
He missed his train, and was late for work.  
They had a carnival last week, but we missed it.  
He missed his wife while she was away.  
  
Now that you know that, you can say--  
"In the midst of a group of coworkers, he told how he got lost in the early morning mist and missed his train."

# Muscle vs mussel

**Muscle** is the fibrous tissue in an animal or human body that contracts and expands in order to create movement, either internal or external. The word muscle is also used to describe someone or something that is powerful or influential or something that is accomplished through force. Informally, muscle also indicates a person who is physically strong or whose job it is to enforce rules. Muscle is derived from the Latin word musculus.

A **mussel** is a bivalve mollusk of the marine genus Mytilus or the freshwater genera Anodonta or Unio. A mussel has an elongated shell and attaches to piers or rocks, or lies in the beds of rivers. Not all mussels are edible. The word mussel is also derived from the Latin word musculus.

# Oar, ore and or

An **oar** is a long pole with a flat blade affixed or carved into one or both ends, used to propel a boat or raft through the water. An oar is a very long paddle. Oar may be used as a noun or a verb, related words are oars, oared, oaring, oarless, oarsman. Oar comes from the old English word *ār.*

**Ore** is the solid material from which precious minerals and metals are extracted. The word ore is derived from the old English word ōra, which means unwrought metal.

**Or** is a conjunction, which is a word used to join two words, phrases or sentences. Or is used to link two words, phrases or sentences that are alternatives to each other.  Or comes from a contraction of other, derived from Old English oththe.

# Pail vs pale

**Pail** and **pale** are two words that are pronounced in the same manner but are spelled differently and have different meanings. They are homophones. We will examine the difference between the definitions of pail and pale, where these two words came from and some examples of their use in sentences.

A pail is a bucket, most often made out of metal or wood, with a half-circle handle. Pails are used for a variety of things, but most often, to carry liquids such as water or paint, or animal feed. The word pail is derived from the Old French words paeleand paelle, meaning cooking pan or a liquid measure.

Pale describes something light in color or something with little or no pigment, something white or near-white. Pale may describe the complexion of a person who is ill or in shock, or it may describe something of a light color, nearly pigmentless. Pale may also describe something that is inferior to another thing. Pale also may be used as a noun to mean a stake, that along with other stakes, makes up a fence. Pale also means a boundary or enclosure. Pale is used as a noun, an adjective or an intransitive verb, which is a verb that does not take an object. Related words are pales, paled, paling, paler, paleness. The word pale meaning light in color is derived from Latin word pallidus, meaning without color, pallid. The word pale to mean fence stake is derived from the Latin word palus, meaning wooden post or stake.

**Pain vs pane**

**Pain** and **pane** are homophones, which are words that are pronounced in the same manner but are spelled differently and have different meanings and origins. We will look at the definitions of *pain* and *pane*, the origins of these two words and some examples of their use in sentences.

*Pain* is is an unpleasant sensation that is caused by injury or illness. *Pain* may also refer to suffering due to mental or emotional distress. *Pain* may also be used informally to describe someone who is annoying. *Pain* may be used as a noun or a verb, related words are *pains, pained, paining, painful, painfully*. The word *pain* is derived from the Latin word *poena* which means penalty or pain.

A **pane** is a sheet of glass in a window or in a door. Pane may also refer to panel in a window or door. Lastly, pane may be used as a philatelic term that describes a sheet of stamps. The word pane is derived from the Old French word pan which means a section or piece.

# Pair vs. pare vs. pear

A **pair** is a set of two. The word also works as a verb meaning to provide a partner or to make a set of two.

To **pare** (often with the preposition down) is to trim off the outer parts (of something). The word is often used figuratively. For example, when a household budget is tight, you might pare your grocery expenses.

A **pear** is a fruit with a spherical base and a tapered top, as well as the tree that bears this fruit.

**Pause vs paws**

**Pause** and **paws** are two words that are pronounced in the same way but are spelled differently and have different meanings. They are homophones. We will examine the difference between the definitions of *pause* and *paws,* where these words came from and some examples of their use in sentences.

***Pause*** means to temporarily stop during a process or while speaking, and then resume the process or speaking. *Pause* may also be used as a noun to mean the temporary stop or break taken during a process or while speaking. Related words are *pauses, paused, pausing.* The word *pause* is derived from the Greek word *pausis,* which means to stop.

**Paws** is the plural form of paw, which means the foot of an animal. Informally, paw may also mean a human hand. Paws is also the second person present tense of the verb paw, meaning to strike at the ground with a foot or hoof. Related words are pawed and pawing. The word paws is derived from the Old French word powe, which means fist.

# Piece vs peace

**Piece** and**peace** are two words that are pronounced in the same way but have different definitions and different spellings. We will look at the meanings of piece and peace, where these words came from and some examples of their use in sentences.

The word piece means a portion of something, an individual portion or section of a larger item or set of things. Piece may mean a financial portion, a game marker in a board game or in North America, a firearm. Piece may also refer to an artistic composition. Used as a transitive verb, which is a verb that takes an object, piece means to assemble something by putting its parts together, to patch something. The word piece is derived from the Old French word *piece* which means a portion, a small part of something or a coin.

Peace means tranquility, freedom from war or other disturbance, a state of calm. The word peace is derived from the Latin word pacem which means a peace treaty, an agreement, tranquility.

# Peal vs. peel

A **peal**(1) a ringing of a set of bells, (2) a loud burst of noise. A **peel**is the skin or rind of a fruit or vegetable. So bananas and oranges have peels, and laughter and thunder come in peals.

# Peer vs pier

**Peer** means 1.) to look searchingly or with difficulty, to attempt to obtain a clearer view of something 2.) a person or thing  that is equal with another specified person or thing in status, ability, rank or age. 3.) a member of British or Irish nobility, including the ranks of duke or duchess, marqus or marchioness, earl or countess, viscount or viscountess and baron or baroness. This system is referred to as peerage. The word peer comes the Anglo-French peir, meaning an equal in rank or status. Related terms are peer review, a scientific or academic evaluation by others in the same field, and peer pressure, the influence from one’s sociological group.

A **pier** is a structure built on pillars that begins on land and extends into the ocean. A pier may be used as a fishing area, a landing for boats or an entertainment area. A supporting pillar in a bridge or an arch is also called a pier. Pier comes from the Old French word, pire, which means a breakwater.

# Place vs Plaice

**place** :: *noun*

An area with definite or indefinite boundaries; a portion of space.

Room or space, especially adequate space: There is place for everyone at the back of the room.

The particular portion of space occupied by or allocated to a person or thing.

A building or an area set aside for a specified purpose: a place of worship.

**plaice**

A large edible marine flatfish (Pleuronectes platessa) of western European waters.

Any of various flatfishes, such as Hippoglossoides platessoides of North American Atlantic waters, related to the plaice.

# Plain vs. plane

**Plain**and **plane**are distinct in most of their definitions, but they almost converge where plain refers to a flat, treeless area of land and plane refers to a flat, level surface. But even here, the distinction is simple: A plain is a land formation, while plane is abstract, mainly appearing in mathematics and other specialized fields.

Outside those definitions, plain and plane are not as easily confused. Plane most often appears as an abbreviation of airplane. Its other definitions relate to levels of achievement (e.g., a higher plane), skimming over water (short for hydroplane), and flat tools used to smooth surfaces. Plain has a range of adjectival meanings, including free from adornment, free from obstructions, and evident to the mind.

# Plum vs. plumb

**Plum**is an [adjective](http://grammarist.com/grammar/adjectives/) meaning desirable, and it also denotes the sweet, purplish fruit. The adjectival meaning originated as a figurative extension of the fruit.

**Plumb**is a verb meaning (1) to determine the depth of, to probe, or (2) to work as a plumber; an adjective/[adverb](http://grammarist.com/grammar/adverbs/) meaning (3) exactly vertical, (4) utterly, or (5) squarely; and a noun referring to (6) a weight on the end of a line, used to determine water depth.

# Pore over vs. pour over

The [phrase](http://grammarist.com/grammar/phrases/) meaning to study carefully is ***pore over***. It comes from a little-used sense of the [verb](http://grammarist.com/grammar/verbs/) pore—namely, to meditate deeply. In modern writing, this sense of pore rarely appears outside this phrase.

**Pour over**is of course a meaningful phrase in its own right, but it has nothing to do with studying. It’s what you do, for example, with milk to a bowl of cereal.

**Pore** : Definition: any tiny hole admitting passage of a liquid (fluid or gas)

#### Examples: Air enters the plant through pores on the leaves.

**Pour** : Definition: cause to run

Examples: pour water over the floor

# Practice vs. practise

In the main varieties of English from outside North America, **practice**is the [noun](http://grammarist.com/grammar/nouns/), and **practise**is the [verb](http://grammarist.com/grammar/verbs/). For instance, we would say that a doctor with a private practice practises privately. There is no such distinction in American English, where practice is both a noun and a verb, and practise is not used at all. Canadian English also favors practise as the verb, but practice appears with relative frequency as a verb (about a third as often as practise).

The verb practise is inflected practised, practising, and practises. Even outside the U.S., the s becomes a c in the derivative adjective practicable, where practicable means capable of being put into practice. C is likewise used in the much rarer adjective practiceable (ignore spell check on this one), which means capable of being practiced (i.e., such as a piano song or a football maneuver). Practisable used to appear for this latter sense, but we find almost no examples of its use from after the early 20th century.

This [ngram](http://books.google.com/ngrams/graph?content=practiced%2Cpractised&year_start=1800&year_end=2000&corpus=5&smoothing=3) graphs the use of practiced and practised in American books published between 1800 and 2000. It suggests that the verb practise has been in decline since the 19th century and is only rarely used now.

# Praise, Prase, Prays, Preys

**Praise**:: *verb-transitive*

To extol or exalt; worship.

Expression of approval, commendation, or admiration.

The extolling or exaltation of a deity, ruler, or hero.

Archaic A reason for praise; merit.

**prase**:: *noun*

A light green or light grayish-green variety of translucent chalcedony

**prays**:: *verb*

Third-person singular simple present indicative form of pray.

**preys**:: *verb*

Third-person singular simple present indicative form of prey.

# Principal vs. principle

As a noun, **principal**refers to (1)one who holds a presiding position or rank, and (2) capital or property before interest, and it’s also an adjective meaning (3) first or most important in rank. The head of a primary or secondary school is a principal.

**Principle**is only a [noun](http://grammarist.com/grammar/nouns/). In its primary sense, it refers to a basic truth, law, assumption, or rule.

Though the words sound alike and share a distant origin in the Latin princeps (meaning first or original), they come from separate French sources and have always been different words in English.[1](http://grammarist.com/spelling/principle-principal/#fn1)

# Profit vs prophet

**Profit** and **prophet** are two words that are pronounced in the same manner but are spelled differently and have different meanings. They are homophones. We will examine the difference between the definitions of profit and prophet, where these two words came from and some examples of their use in sentences.

**Profit** means the amount of money one has gained, they difference between the cost of manufacturing something or producing a service and the amount one is paid for that item or service. Profit may also mean any advantage or any benefit. The word profit may be used as a noun or an intransitive verb, which is a verb that does not take an object. Related words are profits, profited, profiting, profitable. The word profit is derived from the Latin word profectus, which means advance, success or increase.

A **prophet** is a person who others believe has been chosen by God in order to impart knowledge. Prophet may also someone who can foretell the future. The word prophet is also used figuratively to mean a visionary, someone who invents new ways of doing things. A female prophet is a prophetess. The word prophet is derived from the Greek word prophetes, which means an interpreter or a spokesman for the gods.

# Reign vs Rein and Rain

Do you want to hold the reins, reign over the land, or see a little rain fall?

## Rein In

Reins are the straps you use to control a horse, and the word *rein* comes to English from a Latin word that means "to hold back." Remember that *rein in* is the correct spelling by thinking of the troublesome person you need to rein in as a troublesome horse that you need to get under control.

## Free Rein

*Rein* is also the spelling you want in the phrase *free rein*. When you have a horse you trust, you give it free rein—the freedom to make its own way. Think of your friends and coworkers as horses again when you're trying to remember the spelling. When you trust them enough to do things on their own, you're giving them free rein.

In contrast, when you watch or control people carefully, you keep them under a tight rein—again, just like a horse.

## Reign

Reigning is something a king or queen does. The period of time during which a monarch rules a country is also referred to as his or her reign.

## Reign of Terror

The phrase*reign of terror* was first used to refer to the particularly violent time at the beginning of the French Revolution.

*Reign of Terror* is capitalized when referring to these events for the same reason we capitalize Boston Tea Party and Industrial Revolution: It's the name of a major historical event. (1) Keep it lowercase when it refers to a generic event:*Our HOA president's reign of terror continues*.

## Rain

## *Rain* was first used to describe the wet stuff that falls from the sky, and later people added figurative meanings such as describing things that appear in abundance: *It's raining men! Hallelujah!*

# Raise vs raze

**Raise**, when used as a verb, means 1.) to lift to a higher point 2.) to set in a vertical position 3.) to build a structure 4.) to increase 5.) to promote 6.)to bring to the surface 7.) to provoke, to suggest for consideration 8.) to rear children or grow crops or animals 9.) to make bread dough lighter with the addition of yeast 10.) in poker, to increase the amount bet 11.) in curling, to push a stone to the tee by way of another stone. Related verbs are raises, raised and raising. Used as a noun, a raise refers to an increased amount of a poker bet, or in the United States, increased pay at a job. The related adjective is raisable, the related noun is raiser.

**Raze** is a verb which means to level a building or complex of buildings, to erase. Related forms are razes, razed and razing. Rase is a secondary, accepted spelling but rarely used. Related forms are rases, rased and rasing.

# Raise, rase, rays, raze, res

**Raise** :: *idiom*

raise the stakes To increase one's commitment or involvement.

raise eyebrows To cause surprise or mild disapproval.

Cain To reprimand someone angrily.

Cain To behave in a rowdy or disruptive fashion.

**Rase** :: *verb -* Variant of raze.

:: *verb-transitive -* To erase.

**Rays** :: *noun*

Any of various marine fishes of the order Rajiformes or Batoidei, having cartilaginous skeletons, horizontally flattened bodies, and narrow tails.

:: *verb-transitive*

To cast rays on; irradiate.

To supply with rays or radiating lines.

To send out as rays; emit.

**Raze** :: *verb-transitive*

Archaic To erase.

To scrape or shave off.

To level to the ground; demolish. See Synonyms at ruin.

**Res** :: *noun*

A thing; the particular thing; a matter; a point.

# Reed vs read

**Reed** and **read** are two words that may be pronounced in the same fashion but are spelled differently and have different meanings. They are homophones. We will look at the definitions of reed and read, where these words come from and some examples of their use in sentences.

A reed is a type of tall grass that grows in wetlands such as bogs, swamps and the shallows of rivers or creeks. Reeds have jointed, hollow stalks. In Britain, reed also describes the straw used in thatching. Reed instruments are orchestral instruments that use a small piece of cane or metal that when blown into, vibrate in a specific way to make music. The word reed is derived from the Old English word hreod which means a rush or a reed.

Read means to look at printed symbols and interpret their meaning or to discern the gist of a situation. Read may be used as a noun or a transitive verb, which is a verb that takes an object. Related words are reads, read, reading, reader. The word read is derived from the Old English word rǣdan, which means to advise, to guide, to explain.

# Real, Reel

Real: actual, authentic.

Reel: a spool (noun); to stumble; falter (verbs).

# Right, Rite, Wright, Write

**Right** :: *adjective -*

Conforming with or conformable to justice, law, or morality: do the right thing and confess.

In accordance with fact, reason, or truth; correct: the right answer.

Fitting, proper, or appropriate: It is not right to leave the party without saying goodbye.

:: adverb - According to law, morality, or justice.

**Rite** :: noun

The prescribed or customary form for conducting a religious or other solemn ceremony: the rite of baptism.

A ceremonial act or series of acts: fertility rites.

The liturgy or practice of a branch of the Christian church.

**Wright**:: noun

One that constructs or repairs something. Often used in combination: a playwright; a shipwright.

**Write** :: verb-transitive

To form (letters, words, or symbols) on a surface such as paper with an instrument such as a pen.

To spell: How do you write your name?

To form (letters or words) in cursive style.

To compose and set down, especially in literary or musical form: write a poem; write a prelude.

# Ring vs. wring

To **wring** is to twist, squeeze, or clasp firmly, especially to extract liquid. It is the appropriate word in wring [one’s] neck, meaning to choke. **Ring**would almost make sense there, as wringing a neck involves holding one’s fingers in a ringlike position. Nonetheless, wring is the conventional spelling in the phrase.

# Road vs rode

A **road** is a wide street or lane, usually with an asphalt or concrete surface. A *road* provides a clear pathway of travel from place to place. A *road* may also be a figurative path of travel on a life journey, a series of events leading to a particular ending or goal. In mining, a *road* is an underground passageway into a mine. *Road* comes from the Old English *rad*, meaning riding expedition, journey, hostile incursion. *Road* as meaning an open way for traveling between two places is first seen in the 1590s.

**Rode** is the past tense of *ride*. Related words are *rides*, *riding* and *ridden*. A *rode* is also an North American term for a nautical rope attached to a small boat’s anchor. *Ride* as a verb comes from the Old English *ridan*, meaning sit or be carried on, move forward, rock, float, sail.

# Root vs. route vs. rout

The most common definition of **root**is the underground portion of a plant (though this sense is usually used metaphorically). It has many other meanings, however, including (1) to dig with the snout or nose, (2) to rummage, and (3) to give audible encouragement for a contestant or team.

The meaning of **route**is narrower. Route refers to (1) a road, course, or way from one place to another, (2) a customary line of travel, (3) a means of reaching a goal, (4) a fixed course for a salesperson or delivery person, or (5) to send on a route. The word is also used in the French loan phrase [*en route*](http://grammarist.com/usage/en-route/) (sometimes spelled enroute), meaning on or along the way.

Depending on the speaker’s background and the sense being used, route is variously pronounced root and route. In the former pronunciation, it is homophonous with root. In the latter, it is homophonous with a third word, ***rout***, which also has several definitions, including (1) a disorderly retreat, (2) an overwhelming defeat, and (3) to defeat overwhelmingly. Also, somewhat confusingly, it shares with root the senses to dig with the snout and to rummage.

# Roes, rose, rows

**Roes** :: *noun*

Plural form of roe.

**Rose** :: noun

A member of the rose family.

Any of numerous shrubs or vines of the genus Rosa, having prickly stems, pinnately compound leaves, and variously colored, often fragrant flowers.

The flower of any of these plants.

Any of various similar or related plants.

**Rows** :: *noun*

Plural form of row.

:: verb

Third-person singular simple present indicative form of row.

# Rye vs wry

**Rye** is a cereal plant and the grains that come from this cereal plant. Rye is used as fodder, in whiskey-making and bread-making. Rye may be used as a noun or an adjective, in North America ryebread may be shortened to simply rye. Rye comes from the Old English word, *ryge*, and from the Germanic word, *ruig.*

**Wry** refers to a dry humor or a twisted facial expression. Wry is an adjective, related words are wryer and wryest. The only correct adverb form is wryly, the only correct noun form is wryness. Interestingly, one may apply the “when following a consonant change the y to an i” rule when spelling wrier and wriest, but not wryly or wryness. To avoid confusion, it may be better to stick with the y spelling in all derivations. Wry appears in the 1520s to mean distorted, twisted to the side, from the Old English word wrigian, which means to turn, bend, move.

# Sail vs sale

A **sail** is a large piece of fabric, canvas or nylon, hoisted from a mast on a ship to catch the wind and thereby move the ship across the water. A sail is also the voyage on that ship. A sail may refer to something sail-shaped meant to catch wind, such as a part of a windmill. When used as a verb, sail may mean to travel in or navigate a sailing ship, to pass through a process easily, to move smoothly and rapidly, to succeed. Related words are sails, sailed, sailing. Sail comes from the Old English word segl, meaning sail, veil, curtain.

A **sale** is the exchange of a product for money, it may also refer to the item that is sold. Sale may also mean a period of time during which goods will be offered to the public at reduced cost. The word sale comes from Old English sala, meaning a sale, the act of selling. Sale is first used as a way of describing a period of time during which goods will be offered to the public at reduced cost in 1866.