

Appendix A: List of Homophones

Homophones are words that sound the same but have different meanings. They are usually spelt differently, so that when written they are clearly distinguishable, but in a speech-based interface they have the potential to cause ambiguity and confusion and are best avoided. It is worth consulting this list when designing spoken utterances as it is easy to become blinkered, thinking only of the particular meaning one has in mind and forgetting that a homophone might exist.

The following list is based on Alan Cooper's Homonym List (http://www.cooper.com/alan/homonym_list.html), and is used here with his permission. The original list attempts to be comprehensive, but this one is rather more selective and has been edited to include words that seem more likely to occur in speech-based devices. It has also been modified to reflect British pronunciations and spellings, and includes a number of words that are not strict homophones but are close enough in pronunciation to cause confusion.

A

acts	things done
axe	chopping tool
affect	to change
effect	result
air	<i>see: err</i>
aisle	<i>see: I'll</i>
allowed	permitted
aloud	spoken

altar	raised centre of worship
alter	to change
ant	insect
aunt	parent's sister

ascent	the climb
assent	to agree
ate	past tense of eat
eight	8
aught	anything
ought	should
aural	of hearing
oral	of the mouth

B

ball	playful orb
bawl	to cry
band	a group
banned	forbidden

bare	naked	bolder	more courageous
bear	wild ursine	boulder	large rock
baron	minor royalty	born	brought into life
barren	unable to bear children	borne	past participle of bear
berry	small fruit	bound	a small stream or boundary
bury	to take under		
base	foundation	bough	tree branch
bass	the lowest musical pitch or range	bow	front of a ship; respectful bend
bases	plural of base	buoy	navigational aid
basis	principal constituent of anything	boy	male child
basses	many four-stringed guitars	brake	stopping device
be	to exist	break	to split apart
bee	insect	breach	to break through
beat	to hit	breech	the back part
beet	edible red root	bread	a loaf
berth	anchorage	bred	past tense of breed
birth	your method of arrival	brewed	fermented
bight	middle of a rope	brood	family
bite	a mouthful	bridal	pertaining to brides
byte	eight bits	bridle	horse's headgear
billed	has a bill	broach	to raise a subject
build	to construct	brooch	an ornament fastened to clothes
blew	past tense of blow		
blue	colour of California sky	buy	to purchase
boar	wild pig	by	near
Boer	a South African of Dutch descent	bye	farewell
boor	tasteless buffoon	C	
bore	not interesting	ceiling	<i>see</i> : sealing
board	a plank	E	
bored	not interested	effect	<i>see</i> : affect
bold	brave	eight	<i>see</i> : ate
bowled	knocked over		

elicit	to draw out
illicit	unlawful
ere	eventually
err	to make a mistake
e'er	contraction of "ever"
air	gas we breathe
heir	one who will inherit
ewe	<i>see</i> : yew

F

facts	objective things
fax	image transmission technology
faint	pass out
feint	a weak, misdirected attack to confuse the enemy
fair	even-handed
fare	payment
feat	an accomplishment
feet	look down
find	to locate
fined	to have to pay a parking ticket
finish	to complete
Finnish	from Finland
fir	evergreen tree
fur	animal hair
furr	to separate with strips of wood
flea	parasitic insect
flee	to run away
flour	powdered grain
flower	a bloom

for	in place of
fore	in front
four	number after three
foreword	introduction to a book
forward	the facing direction
foul	grossly offensive to the senses
fowl	domestic hen or rooster
frees	releases
freeze	very cold
frieze	a wall decoration

G

genes	a chromosome
jeans	cotton twill trousers
gild	to coat with gold
gilled	having gills
guild	a craft society
gilt	gold-plated
guilt	culpable
gorilla	large ape
guerrilla	irregular soldier
grate	a lattice
great	extremely good
grease	lubricant
Greece	Mediterranean country
grill	to sear cook
grille	an iron gate or door
groan	reaction to hearing a pun
grown	has become larger
guessed	past tense of guess
guest	a visitor

H

hair	grows from your head
hare	large rabbit
hall	a large room
haul	to carry
hangar	garage for aeroplanes
hanger	from which things hang
hear	to listen
here	at this location
heard	listened to
herd	a group of ruminants
heir	<i>see: err</i>
heroin	narcotic
heroine	female hero
hold	to grip
holed	full of holes
hole	round opening
whole	entirety
hour	sixty minutes
our	possessed by us

I

idle	not working
idol	object of worship
illicit	<i>see: elicit</i>
I'll	contraction of "I will"
isle	island
aisle	walkway
incite	to provoke
insight	understanding
innocence	a state without guilt
innocents	more than one innocent

it's	contraction of "it is"
its	possessive pronoun

J

jeans	<i>see: genes</i>
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K

know	to possess knowledge
no	negation
knows	<i>see: noes</i>

L

lead	heavy metal
led	guided
leak	accidental escape of liquid
leek	variety of onion
lessen	to reduce
lesson	a segment of learning
loan	allow to borrow
lone	by itself
loch	a lake
lock	a security device

M

made	accomplished
maid	young woman
mail	postal delivery
male	masculine person
maize	corn
maze	puzzle
manner	method
manor	lord's house
marshal	to gather
martial	warlike

massed	grouped together
mast	sail pole
meat	animal flesh
meet	to connect
mete	a boundary
medal	an award
meddle	to interfere
mince	chop finely
mints	aromatic sweets
mind	thinking unit
mined	looked for ore
miner	one who digs
minor	small
missed	not hit
mist	fog
moan	to groan
mown	the lawn is freshly cut
mode	condition
mowed	a lawn in a well-trimmed condition
moor	swampy coastland; to anchor
more	additional
morning	AM
mourning	remembering the dead
muscle	fibrous, contracting tissue
mussel	a bivalve mollusc

N

naval	pertaining to ships and the sea
navel	pertaining to the belly button

no	<i>see: know</i>
noes	"The noes have it..."
nose	"Plain as the nose on your face..."
knows	"Only the shadow knows..."
none	not one
nun	woman of God
nose	<i>see: noes</i>

O

oar	boat propulsion system
or	alternative
ore	mineral-laden dirt
one	singularity
won	victorious
oral	<i>see: aural</i>
ordinance	a decree
ordnance	artillery
ought	<i>see: aught</i>
our	<i>see: hour</i>

P

packed	placed in a container
pact	agreement
pail	bucket
pale	light coloured
pain	it hurts
pane	a single panel of glass
pair	a set of two
pare	cutting down
pear	bottom-heavy fruit
passed	approved; moved on
past	before now

patience	being willing to wait	presence	the state of being
patients	hospital residents	present	present
pause	hesitate	presents	what Santa brings
paws	animal feet	pride	ego
peace	what hippies want	pryed	opened
piece	morsel	pries	wedging open
peak	mountain top	prize	the reward
peek	secret look	principal	head of school
perique	ruffled pride	principle	causative force
pedal	foot control	Q	
peddle	to sell	quarts	several fourths-of-gallons
peer	an equal (a captain at sea has no peer)	quartz	crystalline rock
per	wharf (a captain at sea has no pier)	R	
pi	3.1416	racket	illegal money-making scheme
pie	good eating	racquet	woven bat for tennis
place	a location	rain	precipitation
plaice	a flounder	reign	sovereign rule
plain	not fancy	rein	horse's steering wheel
plane	a surface	raise	elevate
pleas	cries for help	rays	thin beams of light
please	good manners	raze	to tear down completely
pole	big stick	rapped	knocked sharply
poll	a voting	rapt	spellbound
poor	no money	wrapped	encased in cloth
pore	careful study; microscopic hole	read	having knowledge from reading
pour	to flow freely	red	a primary colour
praise	to commend	rest	stop working
prays	worships God	wrest	take away
preys	hunts		
precedence	priority		
precedents	established course of action		
presidents	commanders-in-chief		

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retch	call Ralph on the porcelain telephone	scull	rowing motion
wretch	a ragamuffin	skull	head bone
review	a general survey or assessment	sea	ocean
revue	a series of theatrical sketches or songs	see	to look
right	correct	sealing	closing
rite	ritual	ceiling	upper surface of room
wright	a maker	seam	row of stitches
write	to inscribe	seem	appears
ring	circle around your finger	seas	oceans
wring	twisting	sees	looks
road	a broad trail	seize	to grab
rode	past tense of ride	sects	religious factions
rowed	to propel a boat by oars	sex	if you have to ask, you're too young
role	part to play	sew	needle and thread
roll	rotate	so	in the manner shown
root	subterranean part of a plant	sol	musical note
route	path of travel	sow	broadcasting seeds
rose	pretty flower	shall	is allowed
rows	linear arrangement	shell	aquatic exoskeleton
rote	by memory	shear	to cut or wrench
wrote	has written	sheer	thin; abrupt turn
S		sign	displayed board bearing information
sail	wind powered water travel	sine	reciprocal of the cosecant
sale	the act of selling	slay	kill
saver	one who saves	sleigh	snow carriage
savour	to relish a taste	sleight	cunning skill
scene	visual location	slight	not much
seen	past tense of saw	soar	fly
		sore	hurt
		soared	to have sailed through the air
		sword	long fighting blade

solace	comfort	T	
soulless	lacking a soul	tacks	small nails
sole	only	tax	governmental tithe
soul	immortal part of a person	tail	spinal appendage
		tale	story
some	a few	tare	allowance for the weight of packing materials
sum	result of addition	tear	to rip
son	male child	taught	past tense of teach
sun	star	taut	stretched tight
soot	black residue of burning	tea	herbal infusion
suit	clothes	tee	golf ball prop
stair	a step	team	a group working together
stare	look intently	teem	to swarm
stake	wooden pole	tear	eyeball lubricant
steak	slice of meat	tier	a horizontal row
stationary	not moving	teas	more than one herbal infusion
stationery	writing paper	tease	tantalize
steal	take unlawfully	tees	more than one tee
steel	iron alloy	tense	nervous
storey	the horizontal divisions of a building	tents	more than one temporary shelter
story	a narrative tale	their	belonging to them
straight	not crooked	there	a place
strait	narrow waterway	they're	contraction of "they are"
suede	split leather	threw	to propel by hand
swayed	curved; convinced	through	from end to end
suite	ensemble	throes	spasms of pain
sweet	sugary	throws	discharging through the air
summary	precis	throne	the royal seat
summery	like summer	thrown	was hurled
sundae	ice cream with syrup on it		
Sunday	first day of the week		

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tide	periodic ebb and flow of oceans	Wales	Western division of UK
tied	passed tense of tie	whales	a pod of ocean mammals
to	towards	war	large scale armed conflict
too	also	wore	past tense of wear
two	a couple	ware	merchandize
toad	frog	wear	attire
toed	having toes	where	a place
towed	pulled ahead	way	path or direction
toe	forepart of the foot	weigh	to measure weight
tow	to pull ahead	whey	watery part of milk
told	what was spoken	weak	not strong
tolled	a bell was rung	week	seven days
tracked	having tracks	weather	meteorological conditions
tract	a plot of land	wether	a castrated ram
trussed	tied up	whether	if it be the case
trust	faith	wet	watery
V		whet	prime
vain	worthless	whined	past tense of whine
vane	flat piece moving with the air	wind	what you do to a clockwork
vein	blood vessel	wined	drank well of spirits
verses	paragraphs	who's	contraction of "who is"
versus	against	whose	belonging to whom
W		whole	<i>see</i> : hole
waist	between ribs and hips	won	<i>see</i> : one
waste	make ill use of	wood	what trees are made of
wait	remain in readiness	would	will do
weight	an amount of heaviness	wrapped	<i>see</i> : rapped
waive	give up rights		
wave	undulating motion		

wrest *see: rest*

wretch *see: retch*

wright *see: right*

write *see: right*

wring *see: ring*

wrote *see: rote*

Y

yew a type of tree

you the second person

ewe female sheep

yoke oxen harness

yolk yellow egg centre

yore the past

you're contraction of
 "you are"

your belonging to you