Frequently confused words

Here’s a quick-reference list of pairs of words that regularly cause people problems. The words follow the accepted British English spelling. Some of them do have alternative American spellings and you will find these at the main dictionary entry on this website.

To – he went to the doctor

Two – 2

Too – also

There – location, she is over there

They’re – contraction, they are

Their – possession, it is their dog

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| ***Confusables*** | ***Meanings*** |
| [accept](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/accept) [except](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/except) | to agree to receive or do not including |
| [adverse](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/adverse) [averse](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/averse) | unfavourable, harmful strongly disliking; opposed |
| [advice](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/advice) [advise](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/advise) | recommendations about what to do to recommend something |
| [affect](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/affect) [effect](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/effect) | to change or make a difference to a result; to bring about a result |
| [aisle](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/aisle) [isle](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/isle) | a passage between rows of seats an island |
| [all together](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/all#all__76) [altogether](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/altogether) | all in one place, all at once completely; on the whole |
| [along](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/along) [a long](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/long) | moving or extending horizontally on referring to something of great length |
| [aloud](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/aloud) [allowed](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/allow) | out loud permitted |
| [altar](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/altar) [alter](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/alter) | a sacred table in a church to change |
| [amoral](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/amoral) [immoral](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/immoral) | not concerned with right or wrong not following accepted moral standards |
| [appraise](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/appraise) [apprise](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/apprise) | to assess to inform someone |
| [assent](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/assent) [ascent](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/ascent) | agreement, approval the action of rising or climbing up |
| [aural](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/aural) [oral](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/oral) | relating to the ears or hearing relating to the mouth; spoken |
| [balmy](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/balmy) [barmy](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/barmy) | pleasantly warm foolish, crazy |
| [bare](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/bare) [bear](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/bear) | naked; to uncover to carry; to put up with |
| [bated](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/bated) [baited](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/bait) | in phrase 'with **bated** breath', i.e. in great suspense with bait attached or inserted |
| [bazaar](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/bazaar) [bizarre](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/bizarre) | a Middle Eastern market strange |
| [berth](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/berth) [birth](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/birth) | a bunk in a ship, train, etc. the emergence of a baby from the womb |
| [born](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/born) [borne](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/borne) | having started life carried |
| [bough](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/bough) [bow](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/bow) | a branch of a tree to bend the head; the front of a ship |
| [brake](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/brake) [break](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/break) | a device for stopping a vehicle; to stop a vehicle to separate into pieces; a pause |
| [breach](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/breach) [breech](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/breech) | to break through, or break a rule; a gap the back part of a gun barrel |
| [broach](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/broach) [brooch](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/brooch) | to raise a subject for discussion a piece of jewellery |
| [canvas](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/canvas) [canvass](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/canvass) | a type of strong cloth to seek people’s votes |
| [censure](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/censure) [censor](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/censor) | to criticize strongly to ban parts of a book or film; a person who does this |
| [cereal](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/cereal) [serial](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/serial) | a grass producing an edible grain; a breakfast food made from grains happening in a series |
| [chord](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/chord) [cord](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/cord) | a group of musical notes a length of string; a cord-like body part |
| [climactic](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/climactic) [climatic](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/climatic) | forming a climax relating to climate |
| [coarse](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/coarse) [course](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/course) | rough a direction; a school subject; part of a meal |
| [complacent](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/complacent) [complaisant](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/complaisant) | smug and self-satisfied willing to please |
| [complement](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/complement) [compliment](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/compliment) | to add to so as to improve; an addition that improves something to praise or express approval; an admiring remark |
| [council](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/council) [counsel](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/counsel) | a group of people who manage or advise advice; to advise |
| [cue](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/cue) [queue](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/queue) | a signal for action; a wooden rod a line of people or vehicles |
| [curb](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/curb) [kerb](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/kerb) | to keep something in check; a control or limit (in British English) the stone edge of a pavement |
| [currant](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/currant) [current](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/current) | a dried grape happening now; a flow of water, air, or electricity |
| [defuse](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/defuse) [diffuse](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/diffuse) | to make a situation less tense to spread over a wide area |
| [desert](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/desert) [dessert](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/dessert) | a waterless, empty area; to abandon someone the sweet course of a meal |
| [discreet](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/discreet) [discrete](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/discrete) | careful not to attract attention separate and distinct |
| [disinterested](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/disinterested) [uninterested](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/uninterested) | impartial not interested |
| [draught](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/draught) [draft](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/draft) | a current of air a first version of a piece of writing |
| [draw](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/draw) [drawer](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/drawer) | an even score at the end of a game a sliding storage compartment |
| [dual](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/dual) [duel](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/duel) | having two parts a fight or contest between two people |
| [elicit](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/elicit) [illicit](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/illicit) | to draw out a reply or reaction not allowed by law or rules |
| [ensure](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/ensure) [insure](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/insure) | to make certain that something will happen to provide compensation if a person dies or property is damaged |
| [envelop](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/envelop) [envelope](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/envelope) | to cover or surround a paper container for a letter |
| [exercise](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/exercise) [exorcise](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/exorcise) | physical activity; to do physical activity to drive out an evil spirit |
| [fawn](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/fawn) [faun](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/faun) | a young deer; light brown a mythical being, part man, part goat |
| [flaunt](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/flaunt) [flout](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/flout) | to display ostentatiously to disregard a rule |
| [flounder](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/flounder) [founder](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/founder#founder-3) | to move clumsily; to have difficulty doing something to fail |
| [forbear](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/forbear) [forebear](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/forebear) | to refrain an ancestor |
| [foreword](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/foreword) [forward](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/forward) | an introduction to a book onwards, ahead |
| [freeze](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/freeze) [frieze](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/frieze) | to turn to ice a decoration along a wall |
| [grisly](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/grisly) [grizzly](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/grizzly) | gruesome, revolting a type of bear |
| [hoard](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/hoard) [horde](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/horde) | a store a large crowd of people |
| [imply](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/imply) [infer](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/infer) | to suggest indirectly to draw a conclusion |
| [loath](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/loath) [loathe](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/loathe) | reluctant, unwilling to hate |
| [loose](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/loose) [lose](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/lose) | to unfasten; to set free to be deprived of; to be unable to find |
| [meter](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/meter#meter-3) [metre](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/metre) | a measuring device a metric unit; rhythm in verse |
| [militate](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/militate) [mitigate](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/mitigate) | to be a powerful factor against to make less severe |
| [palate](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/palate) [palette](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/palette) | the roof of the mouth a board for mixing colours |
| [pedal](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/pedal) [peddle](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/peddle) | a foot-operated lever to sell goods |
| [pole](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/pole) [poll](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/poll) | a long, slender piece of wood voting in an election |
| [pour](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/pour) [pore](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/pore) | to flow or cause to flow a tiny opening; to study something closely |
| [practice](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/practice) [practise](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/practise) | the use of an idea or method; the work or business of a doctor, dentist, etc. to do something repeatedly to gain skill; to do something regularly |
| [prescribe](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/prescribe) [proscribe](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/proscribe) | to authorize use of medicine; to order authoritatively to officially forbid something |
| [principal](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/principal) [principle](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/principle) | most important; the head of a school a fundamental rule or belief |
| [sceptic](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/sceptic) [septic](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/septic) | a person inclined to doubt infected with bacteria |
| [sight](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/sight) [site](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/sight) | the ability to see a location |
| [stationary](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/stationary) [stationery](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/stationery) | not moving writing materials |
| [storey](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/storey) [story](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/story) | a level of a building a tale or account |
| [titillate](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/titillate) [titivate](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/titivate) | to arouse interest to make more attractive |
| [tortuous](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/tortuous) [torturous](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/torturous) | full of twists; complex full of pain or suffering |
| [wreath](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/wreath) [wreathe](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/wreathe) | a ring-shaped arrangement of flowers etc. to surround or encircle |
| [yoke](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/yoke) [yolk](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/yolk) | a wooden crosspiece for harnessing a pair of oxen the yellow center of an egg |