



LITERACY



Using homophones in context

Homophones = each of two or more words having the same pronunciation but different meanings, origins, or spelling.

Significance

It is important that you use the correct homophone for your sentence so that it is grammatically correct and makes sense to the reader (your peers, your teachers or the wider community).

This is important for written tasks across all of your subjects, but also when it comes to applying for jobs, or courses, in the future. Why? Basic literacy skills are often part of the job requirement, and this includes good grammar skills. It may also be part of your job role to produce professional texts such as; letters, emails, reports or evaluations, where excellent grammar is essential.

Resources

Below is a collection of some of the most commonly confused homophones as outlined by Scholastic in 2018.

Use this list to identify words you may wish to check are being used in the correct context throughout your piece of written work. Use the exemplar sentences for comparison.

1. affect/effect

Use *affect* to indicate influence: The medicine did not *affect* her the way the doctor had hoped.

Use *effect* as a noun: The new medicine had negative side *effects*. (Note: *effect* can sometimes be used as a verb meaning to cause/achieve or to bring about – as in "The magician *effected* his escape with a false door" – but this is mostly a technical term and not used very often.)

2. than/then

Use *than* for comparisons: John is much taller *than* his brother.

Use *then* to indicate passage of time, or when: We went to the park in the morning, and *then* we left to pick up lunch.

3. you're/ your

You're is a contraction for *you are*.

You're going to absolutely love this new recipe.

Your is a pronoun.

Please bring *your* books to class with you tomorrow.

4. it's/its

It's is the contraction for *it is*.

It's raining today, so the baseball game will be cancelled.

Its is the possessive form ("possessive" means belongs to) of *it*.

The cat is licking *its* paws



5. there/their/they're

There can act as different parts of speech, depending on how it is used in a sentence. Most commonly, it is used as a pronoun or adverb.

There will be a lot to eat at the party tonight. (pronoun)

Put the book over *there*. (adverb)

Their is a pronoun.

The students put *their* coats in the closet.

They're is the contraction for they are

They're going to have practice immediately after school today.

6. to/too/two

To can be a preposition.

We're going to the park.

To can indicate an infinitive when it precedes a verb.

We want to help in any way we can.

Too is an adverb that can mean excessively when it precedes an adjective or adverb.

I ate *too* much ice cream for dessert.

Too is a synonym for also.

I ate *too* much ice cream for dessert, *too*.

Two is a number.

Marcy ate *two* pieces of pie.

Next steps

There are some **useful websites** listed below to give you further practice.

<https://www.scholastic.com/parents/books-and-reading/raise-a-reader-blog/top-20-most-commonly-confused-homophones.print.html>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/skillswise/game/en21watc-game-paris-word>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/skillswise/topic/words-to-watch-out-for>

<https://www.bbc.com/bitesize/articles/zc84cwx>

<https://www.bbc.com/teach/class-clips-video/wonderful-words-homophones/z732t39>

<https://www.usingenglish.com/quizzes/100.html>

<http://www.homophone.com/search?type=begin&q=A>