**KAMPALA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY**

**COLLEGE OF HIGHER DEGREES AND RESEARCH**

**MASTER OF ARTS IN ENGLISH**

**COURSE TITLE: USAGE AND ABUSAGE**

**COURSE CODE: ENL 7301**

**HOURS TAUGHT: Three hours per week**

**PREREQUISITES: None**

**PURPOSE OF THE COURSE:**

In the course of their practical and theoretical studies of the English language, students have, from time to time, been occasioned to attend to aspects of usage. Subsumed under usage are the ways users of a language deploy it in conformity with its grammatical rules or even in direct contravention of the very rules (a case dubbed “justified by usage”). The purpose of this course is to systematically sensitize students to English usage.

**EXPECTED LEARNING OUTCOMES**

By the end of the course, students should be able to:

* Establish types of usage
* Analyze usage in written , and spoken English
* Advise learners and users of English on issues of usage.

**COURSE CONTENT**

* Usage and Types of English
  1. English as Native Language (ENL)
  2. English as a Second Language (ESL)
  3. English as a Foreign Language (EFL)
* Modular Typology of Usage
  1. lexical
  2. morphological
  3. syntactic
  4. semantic
  5. pragmatic
  6. textological
  7. phonological
  8. graphological
* Error Treatment
  1. diagnosis
  2. analysis
  3. explanation
  4. prevention
* Usage and Levels of Linguistic Analysis
  1. Textual level
     1. Discourse markers
     2. Text structure
  2. Sentential level
     1. punctuation marks ( period, question mark, exclamation mark, colon, semicolon, comma, dash, quotation mark, apostrophe, hyphen, brackets, slash, omission points, italics, underlining)
     2. sentence structure
     3. sentence construction line
     4. subject-predicator concord
     5. pro-forms
     6. pronoun reference
     7. sentence fragment
     8. run-on sentence
* Clausal Level
  1. **that** –clause
  2. **to**-infinitive clause
  3. bare infinitive clause
  4. **wh**-clause
  5. **–ing** -clause
  6. **–ed**-clause
  7. nonfinite clause
  8. verbless clause
* Phrasal Level
  1. government
  2. noun phrase
  3. verb phrase
  4. adjective phrase
  5. prepositional phrase
* Word Level
  1. spelling
  2. capitalization
  3. pronunciation
  4. word class
     1. determiner
     2. adverb
     3. adjective
     4. noun
     5. verb
     6. preposition
     7. conjunction
     8. interjection
  5. inflectional category
     1. gender ( masculine, neuter, feminine)
     2. case (subjective, objective, possessive)
     3. degree (positive, comparative, superlative)
     4. number (singular, plural)
     5. person (first, second, third)
     6. tense (present, past)
     7. mood (indicative, imperative, subjunctive)
     8. aspect (progressive, perfective)
     9. voice (active, passive)
  6. confusables
  7. contraction
  8. word structure
     1. word
     2. stem
     3. root
     4. affix
* Usage Labels
  1. origin
  2. time
  3. space
  4. variety
  5. attitude
  6. group
  7. field
  8. proprietary
  9. utterance
  10. medium
* Overall Awareness of Usage
  1. Criticized (disputed)usage
  2. Divided usage
  3. Variation in usage

**MODE OF DELIVERY**

* Lectures
* Demonstrations
* Tutorials
* Written and oral exercises

**INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS AND /OR EQUIPMENT**

* Whiteboard and Markers
* Flip Charts
* LCD Projectors
* CDs, DVDs and Tapes

**READING LIST**

Alexander, L.G (2004) *Longman English Grammar*, London: Longman

Burchfield, R.W (2004) *Fowler’s Modern English Usage Rev*. 3rd edn 1998, Reissued with title change 2004, London: Oxford University Press

Davidson, George and George Stern (2007) *A Student’s Comparison Vocabulary and Grammar*, Singapore: Learners Publishing

Huddleston, R.D., G.K Pullum et al (2002), *Cambridge Grammar of the English Language*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Leech, Geoffrey and Jan Svartvik (1975) *A Communicative Grammar of English*, London: Longman

Quirk, Randolph, Sidney Greenbaum, Geoffrey Leech, and Jan Svartvik (1985) *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language*, London: Longman

Swan, Michael (2005) *Practical English Usage*, 3rd edn, London: Oxford University Press

**USAGE**

**Usage** is the manner in which written and spoken [language](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Language) is used, the "points of [grammar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grammar), [syntax](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Syntax), [style](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Style_guide), and the choice of words".[[1]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Usage#cite_note-1) and "the way in which a word or phrase is normally and correctly used". Usage can mean the way people actually use language or [prescriptively](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Linguistic_prescription) the way one group feels that people ought to use it.[[2]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Usage#cite_note-2)

The *Chicago Manual of Style* says "the great mass of linguistic issues that writers and editors wrestle with don't really concern grammar at all—they concern usage: the collective habits of a language's native speakers",[[3]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Usage#cite_note-3) and "the standards of good usage change, however slowly."[[4]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Usage#cite_note-4)

Dictionaries are not always accurate guides to "good usage." "Despite occasional usage notes, lexicographers generally disclaim any intent to guide writers and editors on the thorny points of English usage."[[5]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Usage#cite_note-5)

**History**

According to [Jeremy Butterfield](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jeremy_Butterfield), "The first person we know of who made *usage* refer to language was [Daniel Defoe](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Daniel_Defoe), at the end of the seventeenth century". Defoe proposed the creation of a [language society](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Linguistic_prescription) of 36 individuals who would set prescriptive language rules for the approximately six million English speakers

# ABUSAGE IN ENGLISH

### Etymology

**Abusage** first appeared in the 16th century as a general synonym of [abuse](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/abuse), but it fell into disuse after just a couple of centuries. The word reemerged in the language with a new grammar-specific sense after Eric Partridge published a book on grammar titled *Usage and Abusage* in 1942.

**abusage** ‎(*plural* [**abusages**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/abusages#English))

1. ([obsolete](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Appendix:Glossary#obsolete))[Abuse](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/abuse). [Attested from the mid 16th century until the mid 17th century.][[1]](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/abusage#cite_note-SOED-1)
2. Improper or incorrect use of language. [First attested in the mid 20th century.][[1]](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/abusage#cite_note-SOED-1)

### References

1.  Lesley Brown (editor), *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, 5th edition (Oxford University Press, 2003 [1933], [ISBN 978-0-19-860575-7](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Special:BookSources/9780198605757)), page 10

### DEFINITIONS OF ABUSE

verb (əˈbjuːz) (transitive)

1. to use incorrectly or improperly; [misuse](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/misuse)

2. to [maltreat](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/maltreat), esp physically or sexually

3. to speak [insultingly](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/insultingly) or cruelly to; [revile](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/revile)

4. (reflexive) to [masturbate](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/masturbate)

noun (əˈbjuːs)

5. [improper](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/improper), [incorrect](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/incorrect), or excessive use; misuse

6. maltreatment of a person; [injury](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/injury)

7. [insulting](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/insult), [contemptuous](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/contemptuous), or [coarse](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/coarse) speech

8. an [evil](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/evil), [unjust](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/unjust), or [corrupt](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/corrupt) practice

9. See [child abuse](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/child-abuse)

10. archaic a [deception](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/deception)

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### Derived forms

abuser (aˈbuser) noun

### Word origin of 'abuse'

c14 (vb): via Old French from Latin abūsus, past participle of abūtī to misuse, from ab-1 + ūtī to use

## abuse for learners of English

### Definitions

Pronunciation note:   The noun is pronounced (əbjuːs). The verb is pronounced (əbjuːz).1. uncountable noun

Abuse of someone is [cruel](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/cruel) and [violent](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/violent) treatment of them. ⇒ ...investigation of alleged child abuse. ⇒ ...victims of sexual and physical abuse. ⇒ ...controversy over human rights abuses.

2. uncountable noun

Abuse is extremely [rude](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/rude) and insulting things that people [say](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/say) when they are [angry](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/angry). insults ⇒ I was left shouting abuse as the car sped off. ⇒ Raft repeatedly hurled verbal abuse at his co-star.

3. variable noun

Abuse of something is the use of it in a [wrong](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/wrong) way or for a [bad](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/bad) purpose. [+ of] ⇒ What went on here was an abuse of power. ⇒ ...drug and alcohol abuse.

4. verb

If someone is abused, they are treated cruelly and violently. [be V-ed] ⇒ Janet had been abused by her father since she was eleven. [V n] ⇒ ...parents who feel they cannot cope or might abuse their children. [V-ed] ⇒ ...those who work with abused children.

abuserWord forms: abuserscountable noun⇒ ...a convicted child abuser.5. verb

You can say that someone is abused if extremely rude and insulting things are [said](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/said) to them.

[be V-ed] ⇒ He alleged that he was verbally abused by other soldiers. [Also V n]

6. verb

If you abuse something, you use it in a wrong way or for a bad purpose. [V n] ⇒ He showed how the rich and powerful can abuse their position.

abusercountable noun⇒ ...the treatment of alcohol and drug abusers.

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### Example sentences containing 'abuse'

She [let](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/let_1) out a [howl](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/howl) of pain and, [screaming](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/scream) abuse at him, [began](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/begin)[backing](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/backing) out of the room. Stewart, Michael COMPULSION. There was no [telling](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/tell) what abuse they would have [hurled](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/hurl) at each other. St. James, Ian FINAL RESORTYoung [ladies](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/lady) often abuse a [gentleman](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/gentleman) in whom they have an [intense](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/intense)[personal](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/personal) interest. Elizabeth Peters LION IN THE VALLEY

## SYNONYMS OF 'ABUSE'

[More synonyms](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english-thesaurus/abuse)

[maltreatment](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/maltreatment), [wrong](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/wrong), [damage](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/damage), [injury](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/injury), [hurt](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/hurt), [harm](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/harm), spoiling, bullying, [oppression](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/oppression), [imposition](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/imposition), [mistreatment](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/mistreatment), manhandling, [ill-treatment](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/ill-treatment), rough handling, insults, [blame](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/blame), slights, curses, cursing, put-downs, [libel](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/libel), [censure](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/censure), [reproach](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/reproach), [scolding](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/scolding), [defamation](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/defamation), indignities, [offence](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/offence), [tirade](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/tirade), [derision](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/derision), [slander](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/slander), [rudeness](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/rudeness), [vilification](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/vilification), [invective](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/invective), swear words, [opprobrium](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/opprobrium), [insolence](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/insolence), upbraiding, aspersions, character assassination, [disparagement](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/disparagement), [vituperation](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/vituperation), [castigation](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/castigation), [contumely](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/contumely), revilement, traducement, calumniation, [misuse](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/misuse), [corruption](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/corruption), [perversion](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/perversion), misapplication, [exploitation](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/exploitation), misemployment, misusage, [ill-treat](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/ill-treat), [wrong](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/wrong), [damage](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/damage), [hurt](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/hurt), [injure](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/injure), [harm](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/harm), [mar](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/mar), [spoil](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/spoil), [oppress](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/oppress), [maul](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/maul), [molest](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/molest), dump on, impose upon, [manhandle](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/manhandle), rough up, [brutalize](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/brutalize), shit on, [maltreat](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/maltreat), [misapply](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/misapply), handle roughly, knock about or around, [insult](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/insult), [injure](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/injure), [offend](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/offend), [curse](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/curse), put down, [smear](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/smear), [libel](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/libel), [slate](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/slate), slag (off), [malign](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/malign), [scold](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/scold), swear at, [disparage](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/disparage), [castigate](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/castigate), [revile](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/revile), [vilify](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/vilify), [slander](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/slander), diss, [defame](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/defame), [upbraid](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/upbraid), [slight](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/slight), [flame](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/flame), [inveigh against](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/inveigh-against), call names, [traduce](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/traduce), [calumniate](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/calumniate), [vituperate](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/vituperate)

[exploit](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/exploit), take advantage of, [manipulate](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/manipulate), [misuse](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/misuse)

## Trends of 'abuse'

## Related Terms of 'abuse'

* [sex abuse](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/sex-abuse)
* [child abuse](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/child-abuse)
* [self-abuse](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/self-abuse)
* [alcohol abuse](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/alcohol-abuse)
* [market abuse](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/market-abuse)

## Nearby words of 'abuse'

* [aburst](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/aburst)
* [abusable](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/abusable)
* [abusage](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/abusage)
* abuse
* [abusion](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/abusion)
* [abusive](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/abusive)
* [abut](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/abut)

1 abuse /əˈbjuːz/verb

abuses;abused;abusing

**1**:to treat (a person or animal) in a harsh or harmful way

* He abused [=mistreated] his wife both mentally and physically.
* abuse a dog
* He was accused of sexually/physically/psychologically abusing a child.

**2**:to use or treat (something) in a way that causes damage

* He abused his body with years of heavy drinking.
* He had abused his first car by not taking care of it.

**3**:to use (something) wrongly

* abuse [=misuse] a privilege
* She abused her friend's trust.
* a senator who abuses his power
* He abused my confidence by letting this secret be known.

**4**:to use too much of (a drug, alcohol, etc.)

* a drug that is abused by many people
* He was known to abuse alcohol.

**5**:to attack (someone) in words

* The fans were verbally abusing the referee.

## — abused

adjective

* providing help for abused children/women

## — abuser

noun,pluralabusers[count]

* a child abuser
* officeholders who are abusers of privilege
* alcohol/cocaine/drug/substance abusers

**1**;the act or practice of abusing someone or something: such as

**a**:harmful treatment of a person or animal

[noncount]

* He subjected his wife to physical and emotional abuse.
* child abuse
* sexual abuse

[plural]

* The government has been accused of human rights abuses. [=of violating the basic rights of people by treating them wrongly]

**b**[noncount]:the use or treatment of something in a way that causes damage

* his abuse [=mistreatment] of his body through poor eating habits
* These toys can stand up to a lot of abuse. [=can be handled roughly without being damaged]

**c**:the act or practice of using something wrongly

[noncount]

* the governor's abuse [=misuse] of his power/privileges

[count]

* the buying of votes and other election abuses

**d**[noncount]:the act or practice of using too much of a drug, alcohol, etc.

* abuse of alcohol
* drug/substance abuse

**2**[noncount]:harsh and insulting language

* She was subjected to every term of abuse her boss could think of.
* a torrent/stream of verbal abuse

The prisoner hurled/shouted/screamed abuse at the judge.

**LIST OF COMMONLY MISUSED ENGLISH WORDS**

This is a list of English words that are commonly misused. It is meant to include only words whose *misuse* is deprecated by most usage writers, editors, and other professional linguists of Standard English. It is possible that some of the meanings marked *non-standard* may pass into *Standard* English in the future, but at this time all of the following *non-standard* phrases are likely to be marked as *incorrect* by English teachers or changed by editors if used in a work submitted for publication. Some of the examples are [homonyms](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Homonym) or pairs of similarly spelled words that are often confused.

The words listed below are frequently used in ways that major English dictionaries do not condone in any definition. See [list of English words with disputed usage](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_English_words_with_disputed_usage) for words that are used in ways that are [deprecated](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/deprecate) by some usage writers but are condoned by some dictionaries. There may be regional variations in grammar, spelling, and word-use, especially between different English-speaking countries. Such differences are not seen as incorrect once they have gained widespread acceptance in a particular country.

**A**

* [**a lot**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/a_lot) and [**allot**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/allot). *A lot* means many; *allot* means to distribute something.
* [**a priori**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/A_priori_and_a_posteriori) and **prior** *A priori* means "based on hypothesis or theory rather than experiment". It does not mean "in advance".
  + *Standard*: *x + 2* is known *a priori* to be greater than *x*.
  + *Non-standard*: The magician pretended to guess which card was chosen, but he actually knew it *a priori*, because he had secretly watched in a mirror.
  + *Prior* means beforehand, in advance.
* [**abdicate**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/abdicate), [**abrogate**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/abrogate), and [**arrogate**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/arrogate). To *abdicate* is to resign from the throne, or more loosely to cast off a responsibility. To *abrogate* is to repeal (do away with) a law or abolish (put an end to) an arrangement. To *arrogate* is to attempt to take on a right or responsibility to which one is not entitled.
  + *Standard*: Edward VIII abdicated the throne of the United Kingdom.
  + *Standard*: Henry VIII abrogated Welsh customary law.
  + *Non-standard*: John abrogated all responsibility for the catering arrangements (should be "abdicated").
  + *Non-standard*: You should not abrogate to yourself the whole honour of the President's visit (should be "arrogate").
* [**accept**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/accept) and [**except**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/except). While they sound similar (or even identical), *except* is a [preposition](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Preposition) that means "apart from", while *accept* is a [verb](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Verb) that means "agree with", "take in", or "receive". *Except* is also occasionally used as a verb, meaning to take out or to leave out.[[1]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-1)
  + *Standard*: We accept all major credit cards, except Diners Club.
  + *Standard*: Men are fools... present company excepted! (Which means, "present company excluded")
  + *Non-standard*: I had trouble making friends with them; I never felt excepted.
  + *Non-standard*: We all went swimming, accept for Jack.
* [**acute**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/acute) and [**chronic**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/chronic). *Acute* means "sharp", as an acute illness is one that rapidly worsens and reaches a crisis. A *chronic* illness may also be a severe one, but it is long-lasting, lingering, or having a long history.
  + *Standard*: She was treated with epinephrine during an acute asthma attack.
  + *Standard*: It is not a terminal illness, but it does cause chronic pain.
  + *Non-standard*: I have suffered from acute asthma for twenty years.
  + *Non-standard*: I just started feeling this chronic pain in my back.
* [**adverse**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/adverse) and [**averse**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/averse). *Adverse* means unfavorable, contrary or hostile. *Averse* means having a strong feeling of opposition, antipathy, or repugnance. Merriam-Webster notes that *adverse* is commonly used as an attributive adjective (before the noun), while "averse" is rarely used in this situation.[[2]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-2)
  + *Standard*: They sailed despite adverse weather conditions.
  + *Standard*: He was averse to taking his medicine.
  + *Non-standard*: He is not adverse to having a drink now and then.
* [**aesthetic**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/aesthetic) and [**ascetic**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/ascetic). *Aesthetic* relates to an appealing or unappealing visual look or atmosphere. *Ascetic* is used to express the avoidance of pleasure due to self-discipline.[[3]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-3)
  + *Standard*: The aesthetics of the building were beautiful.
  + *Standard*: Some religions support ascetic practices.
* [**affect**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/affect) and [**effect**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/effect). The verb ‘*affect’* means "to influence something", and the noun *effect* means "the result of". *Effect* can also be a verb that means "to cause [something] to be", while *affect* as a noun has technical meanings in [psychology](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Psychology), [music](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Music), and [aesthetic theory](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aesthetics): an [emotion](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emotion) or [subjectively](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Subjectivity) experienced feeling.[[4]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-4) A device to remember when trying to decide which is the right choice: If something affects you it usually has an effect on you.
  + *Standard*: This poem affected me so much that I cried.
  + *Standard*: Temperature has an effect on reaction spontaneity.
  + *Standard*: The dynamite effected the wall's collapse.
  + *Standard*: He seemed completely devoid of affect.
  + *Non-standard*: The rain effected our plans for the day.
  + *Non-standard*: We tried appeasing the rain gods, but to no affect.
  + *Non-standard*: An IOC spokesman told Press Association Sport: "We were aware that FIFA might consider changing the dates for the 2022 World Cup. We are confident that FIFA will discuss the dates with us so as to co-ordinate them and avoid any affect on the Winter Games."[[5]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-5)
  + *Non-standard*: Some neighbors complain about Romney's new presidential entourage—including dozens of Secret Service agents who now guard the candidate 24 hours a day—and its affect on their quiet street.[[6]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-6)
  + *Non-standard*: His teammate Steve Nash can see how the time off had an affect on Gasol.[[7]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-7)
  + *Non-standard*: Seneca Jones Timber Co. executives say the pipe will effect 2,000 acres of their timberland, another 1,000 acres of property for roads, as well as public lands where Seneca harvests and transports logs.[[8]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-8)
* [**aggravate**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/aggravate) and [**mitigate**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/mitigate). *Aggravate* means "to make worse". *Mitigate* means "to make less bad" (see also *mitigate* versus *militate*, below). "[Mitigating factor](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mitigating_factor)" refers to something that affects someone's case by lessening the degree of blame, not anything that has any effect at all.
* [**algorithm**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/algorithm) and [**logarithm**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/logarithm). An *algorithm* is a step-by-step procedure, usually for calculation, the processing of data, or choosing among alternatives. The *logarithm* of a number is the power (i.e., exponent) to which a specified base must be raised to produce that number.
  + *Standard*: The board of directors developed an algorithm for choosing the company's new president from among the remaining candidates.
  + *Standard*: Using a base of 2, the logarithm of 32 is 5, because 25 equals 32.
* [**allusion**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/allusion), [**hallucination**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/hallucination), and [**illusion**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/illusion). An *allusion* is an indirect or metaphorical reference to something; an *illusion* is a false picture of something that is there; a *hallucination* is the seeing of something that is not there.
* [**alternately**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/alternately) and [**alternatively**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/alternatively). *Alternately* is an adverb that means in turn; one after the other. *Alternatively* is an adverb that means on the other hand; one or the other.
  + *Standard*: We alternately spun the wheel in the game.
  + *Standard*: You can choose a large bookcase or, alternatively, you can buy two small ones.
* [**appraise**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/appraise) and [**apprise**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/apprise). To *appraise* is to assess or value something; to *apprise* is to teach or inform.
  + *Standard*: His performance was appraised very positively.
  + *Standard*: I lost no time in apprising her of the situation.
  + *Non-standard*: Has he been appraised of the fact?
* [**are**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/are) and [**our**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/our). *Are* is the second-person singular present and the first, second, and third-person plural present of the verb *be*. *Our* means "belonging to us".
  + *Standard*: Are you coming to our house after the show?
  + *Standard*: Our family has been trying to save money because of the country's current economic situation.
* [**around**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/around) and [**about**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/about), [**on**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/on) (most commonly), as well as other adverbs and prepositions. "Around" means encircling, in the vicinity of, or near. Alternatively it can designate a general, unspecified end or direction, as in "walking around".
  + *Standard*: *The Hunt for Red October* is based on the book of the same title.
  + *Non-standard*: *The Hunt for Red October* is based around the book of the same title.
  + *Standard*: The committee called for papers about climate change.
  + *Non-standard*: The committed called for papers around climate change.
  + *Standard*: The new style drew largely from the New Orleans jazz scene.
  + *Non-standard*: The new style was based around New Orleans jazz bands.
* [**ascent**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/ascent) and [**assent**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/assent). To *assent* is to agree. To *ascend* means to go up or advance from an original position.[[9]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-9)
  + *Standard*: We need to reach assent on how to do this project.
  + *Standard*: I watched the balloon’s ascent into the sky.
* [**assure**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/assure), [**ensure**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/ensure), and [**insure**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/insure). In American English, to *assure* is purely to intend to give the listener confidence, to *ensure* is to make certain of, and to *insure* is to purchase insurance. The only difference with British English is that "assure" can be used instead of "insure", particularly in the context of life insurance/assurance.
  + *Standard*: I assure you that I will have your car washed by the time you return.
  + *Standard*: When you mow the lawn, ensure there are no foreign objects in the grass.
  + *Standard*: I plan to purchase the collision policy when I insure my car.
  + *Standard*: I already have more than enough life assurance.
  + *Non-standard*: His actions insured that the attacking army would fail.
* [**awaken**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/awaken) and [**awoken**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/awoken): *Awaken* is typically used to express waking in the present tense. *Awoken* is typically used to express waking in the past tense.[[10]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-10) Awoken is the original "hard verb" inflection of "to wake", but through morphologically leveling the soft form "awakened" has become more common.
  + *Standard*: We must awaken the dragon.
  + *Standard*: The dragon has awoken.

**B**

* [**bacteria**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/bacterium), [**criteria**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/criterion), [**media**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/medium) and [**phenomena**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/phenomenon) are all plurals and should be used as such, regardless of their widespread misuse.
  + *Non-standard*: He showed a labelled drawing of an *E. coli* bacteria. Use 'bacterium'.
  + *Non-standard*: What is the review criteria for the learning program? Use 'What is the review criterion?' or 'What are the review criteria?'.
  + *Non-standard*: The media is responsible for the unrest. Use 'the media are'.
  + *Non-standard*: It's the most amazing phenomena I've witnessed. Use 'phenomenon'.
* [**barter**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/barter), [**haggle**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/haggle) and [**banter**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/banter). To barter means to exchange goods rather than carrying out commercial transactions using money. To haggle is to negotiate a price. Banter is a noun meaning a friendly or good-natured exchange of remarks.
* [**belie**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/belie). This word in one sense means "to misrepresent", but it is sometimes used to mean the opposite, i.e., "to give evidence of"; [Follett's Modern American Usage](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Follett%27s_Modern_American_Usage) objected to this.[[11]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-11)
* [**bemused**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/bemused). To be bemused is to be perplexed or bewildered; however, it is commonly used incorrectly in place of [**amused**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/amused).
* [**bifurcate**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/bifurcate). Bifurcate means to segregate or divide into two parts. It is not a stand-in for 'more than one.'
* [**bisect**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/bisect) and [**dissect**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/dissect). *Bisect* means "to cut into two"; *dissect* means "to cut apart", both literally and figuratively. *Disect* is an archaic word meaning "to separate by cutting", but has not been in common use since the 17th century.
  + *Standard*: The Americas are bisected by the Panama canal.
  + *Standard*: She dissected Smith's dissertation, pointing out scores of errors.
  + *Standard*: We dissected the eye of a bull in biology class today.
  + *Non-standard*: We bisected the eye of a bull in biology class today.
* [**born**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/born) and [**borne**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/borne). *Born* is when a living creature enters the world through the birthing process. *Borne* means to carry, realize, or bear something.[[12]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-12)
  + *Standard*: I was born on March 6, 1982.
  + *Standard*: I contracted mosquito-borne malaria while in Africa.
* [**breath**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/breath) and [**breathe**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/breathe). A *breath* (noun) is the air that is inhaled or exhaled from the lungs. To *breathe* (verb) is the act of inhaling or exhaling.
* [**buy**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/buy) and [**by**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/by). *Buy* means to purchase or spend money on something. *By* is a proposition meaning close to or indicating who did something.[[13]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-13)
  + *Standard*: I want to buy a TV.
  + *Standard*: We are by the station now.
  + *Standard*: My favorite novel is by Ursula Le Guin.

**C**

* [**cache**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/cache), [**cachet**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/cachet) and [**cash**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/cash). A *cache* (IPA: /kæʃ/) is a storage place from which items may be quickly retrieved. A *cachet* (IPA: /kæˈʃeɪ/) is a seal or mark, such as a wax seal on an envelope or a mark of authenticity on a product (usually used figuratively to mean "marked by excellence, distinction or superiority").[[14]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-14)
  + *Standard*: The pirates buried a cache of jewels near the coast.
  + *Standard*: Living in New York City definitely has a certain cachet.
  + *Standard*: But if a recommendation out of the Board of Governors meeting Tuesday in Las Vegas gets enacted as soon as this autumn, division titles would lose more than cachet.[[15]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-15)
  + *Standard*: The Wiz would be safer following the path San Antonio took with Leonard, only they haven’t built up the cachet that allowed the Spurs to say, essentially, “Trust us. Hold tight as a cheap cap hold, and we’ll make it worth your while.”[[16]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-16)
  + *Standard*: This of course would be the second time Prokhorov was able to take advantage of a situation where his huge cache of cash helped him with the Nets.[[17]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-17)
  + *Non-standard*: It was easy: For one, he was an athlete who had made it, which provided the ultimate caché among parents who wanted their kids to go as far in sports as their talent could take them.[[18]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-18)
  + *Non-standard*: The greatest cache this team has is that one of the players has an umlaut in his name.[[19]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-19)
  + *Non-standard*: You need a couple of money guys (serious big money), then it doesn’t hurt if you have a minority owner or two with some cache in said city to help win over the local fans.[[20]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-20)
  + *Non-standard*: Despite the celebrity status, big-name athletes seem to have more cache with average Americans than their cohorts from Hollywood or the Executive Suite.[[21]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-21)
* [**can't**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/can%27t) and [**cant**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/cant). *Can't* is a contraction of *cannot*. *Cant* has a number of different meanings, including a slope or slant, or a kind of slang or jargon spoken by a particular group of people. "Canting arms" is a coat-of-arms that represents meaning of the bearer's surname.
  + *Standard*: I can't understand the dialogue in this book because it is written in cant.
  + *Standard*: [Heralds](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heralds) do not pun; they cant.[[22]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-22)
  + *Non-standard*: I cant swim; I have never taken lessons.
* [**canvas**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/canvas) and [**canvass**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/canvass). *Canvas* is a type of fabric known for being tough and strong. *Canvass* is a way to try to get people’s support or find out where their support lies.[[23]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-23)
  + *Standard*: I use a canvas cover to protect the barbecue.
  + *Standard*: Canvass the block for information on their votes.
  + *Non-standard*: My political party needs to canvas the local neighborhoods.
* [**complementary**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/complementary) and [**complimentary**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/complimentary). Things or people that go together well are *complementary* (i.e., they ***comple****te* each other); *complimentary* describes an item given without charge (considered a 'gift'), usually in addition to a product or service that may have been purchased. It also describes praise given to someone or something.
  + *Standard*: Exercise, nutrition, and medical care are complementary factors in good health.
  + *Standard*: The motel provides a complimentary breakfast to overnight guests.
  + *Standard*: Jane was complimentary about the new couch, which she said complements the drapes and carpet.

Similarly, a *complement* is an accessory, while a *compliment* is a statement of admiration.

* [**complacency**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/complacency) and [**complaisance**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/complaisance). *Complacency* means self-satisfaction especially when accompanied by unawareness of actual dangers or deficiencies. *Complaisance* means the willingness to comply with the wishes of others.[[24]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-24)
* [**contiguous**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/contiguous), [**continual**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/continual), and [**continuous**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/continuous). *Contiguous* means "touching" or "adjoining in space"; *continual* means "repeated in rapid succession"; *continuous* means "uninterrupted" (in time or space).
  + *Standard*: Alaska is not one of the forty-eight contiguous states.
  + *Standard*: The field was surrounded by a continuous fence.
  + *Standard*: The continuous murmur of the stream.
  + *Standard*: His continual interruptions are very irritating.
* [**contingent**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/contingent) and [**contingency**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/contingency). As a noun, a *contingent* is a representative group; a *contingency* is a possible event.
  + *Standard*: The explorers were prepared for every contingency.
  + *Standard*: He was a member of the California contingent at the convention.
  + *Non-standard*: He was greeted by a contingency from the school board.
* [**copy write**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/copy_write) and [**copyright**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/copyright): *Copy write* means to make written copies for manuals, press releases, or advertisements. A *copyright* consists of select privileges that legally protect a work and prohibit its duplication without a reference.[[25]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-25)
  + *Standard*: Contact a copy writer if you need more advertisements to be written for the event.
  + *Standard*: This book has another five years of protection under its copyright.
* [**crotch**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/crotch) and [**crutch**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/crutch). A *crotch* is an area where something branches or forks off in two directions, or the area on a person's body where the legs fork from the trunk (commonly interchanged with 'groin'). A *crutch* is a device that assists motion, especially one that sits under the armpit. It is also used metaphorically for something that supports, often negatively to imply a dependency on something that would not be needed by a healthy person.

**D**

* [**decimate**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/decimate) and [**devastate**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/devastate). To *decimate* is to damage or remove a large portion of something, often one-tenth (Latin decem=tenth); to *devastate* is to destroy or ruin most of something.
* [**defuse**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/defuse) and [**diffuse**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/diffuse#Etymology_1). To *defuse* is to remove the fuse from a bomb, or in general to render a situation less dangerous, whereas to *diffuse* is to disperse randomly. [*Diffuse*](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/diffuse#Etymology_2) can also be used as an adjective, meaning "not concentrated".[[26]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-26)
  + *Standard*: Bill's face turned red at Joe's tactless remark to the Kennel Club meeting, but Clarice defused the situation by turning it into a joke. "Not that even a [Dachshund](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dachshund) would stoop so low, of course!" she quipped.
  + *Standard*: The speaker droned on, his words like a powerful sleeping gas slowly diffusing through the stuffy air of the auditorium.
  + *Standard*: The spotlights went dark, leaving the scene lit only by the diffuse glow of the lanterns.
  + *Non-standard*: Houston was aware it was happening and worked to diffuse the campaign late in the process.[[27]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-27)
  + *Non-standard*: A government agency long associated with efforts to mediate and diffuse tense situations in communities helped organize rallies over the killing of Florida teen Trayvon Martin last year, a conservative leaning legal advocacy group claims.[[28]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-28)
  + *Non-standard*: Cavaliers small forward Luol Deng tried to diffuse all the questions about how emotional it will be facing his former team -- the Chicago Bulls -- Wednesday night at The Q.[[29]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-29)
  + *Non-standard*: After finding the suspected bomb, Pennsylvania state police were called in to diffuse it.[[30]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-30)
* [**desert**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/desert) and [**dessert**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/dessert). A *desert* is a barren or uninhabited place; an older meaning of the word is "what one deserves", as in the idiom [just deserts](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/just_deserts). A *dessert* is the last course of a meal.
* [**disassemble**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/disassemble) and [**dissemble**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/dissemble). To *disassemble* means "to dismantle" (e.g., to take a [machine code](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machine_code)[program](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Computer_program) apart to see how it works); to *dissemble* means "to tell lies".
* [**disburse**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/disburse) and [**disperse**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/disperse). *Disburse* means "to give out", especially money. *Disperse* means "to scatter".
* [**discreet**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/discreet) and [**discrete**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/discrete). *Discreet* means "circumspect". *Discrete* means "having separate parts", as opposed to contiguous.
* [**disingenuous**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/disingenuous) and [**disingenious**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/disingenious). *Disingenuous* means naive or pretending to be naive. *Disingenious* is a likely mis-hearing of disingenuous and means naive or sarcastically not a genius.
* [**disinterested**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/disinterested) and [**uninterested**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/uninterested). To be *disinterested* in something means to not be biased about something (i.e., to have no personal stake in a particular side of an issue). To be *uninterested* means to not be interested in or intrigued by something.
  + *Standard*: As their good friend, I tried to mediate their argument in a disinterested manner so as not to anger either.
  + *Standard*: Though his initial reaction suggested otherwise, he maintains that he remains uninterested in the business proposition.
  + *Non-standard*: The key to attracting a member of the opposite sex is to balance between giving attention to him or her and appearing disinterested.

**E**

* [**e.g.**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/e.g.) and [**i.e.**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/i.e.) The abbreviation *e.g.* stands for the Latin *exempli gratiā* "for example", and should be used when the example(s) given are just one or a few of many. The abbreviation *i.e.* stands for the Latin *id est* "that is", and is used to give the only example(s) or to otherwise qualify the statement just made.
  + *Standard*: A Briton is a British citizen, e.g., John Lennon.
  + *Standard*: Tolkien's *The Hobbit* is named after its protagonist, i.e., Bilbo Baggins.
  + *Non-standard*: A Briton is a British citizen, i.e., Paul McCartney *(at the last count, there were about 60 million Britons—Sir Paul is far from being the only one)*
* [**economic**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/economic) and [**economical**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/economical). *Economic* means "having to do with the economy". *Economical* means "financially prudent, frugal" and also figuratively in the sense "sparing use" (of time, language, etc.)[[31]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-Fowler-31)
  + *Standard*: Buying in bulk can often be the most economical choice.
  + *Standard*: The actor should be economical in his use of movement.
  + *Standard*: He attended the School of Economic and Business Sciences.
  + *Non-standard*: Leading economical indicators suggest that a recession may be on the horizon.
  + *Non-standard*: The actor should be economic in his use of movement.
* [**either**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/either) and [**neither**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/neither). [*Neither*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neither) is used to agree with a negative statement. [*Either*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Either) indicates a similarity between two things, such that they are effectively the same.
  + Standard usage: 'I do not like fish.' 'Neither do I.'
  + Standard usage: 'Do you want your martini shaken or stired?' 'Either will do.'
  + Non-standard: 'I do not like fish.' 'Me either.'
* [**emigration**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/emigrate) and [**immigration**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/immigrate). *Emigration* is the process of leaving a country; *immigration* is the process of arriving in a country—in both cases, indefinitely.
  + *Standard*: Ethnic communities, such as Little Italy, were created by people emigrating from their home countries.
* [**eminent**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/eminent), [**immanent**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/immanent), [**imminent**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/imminent), and [**preeminent**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/preeminent). *Eminent*, originally meaning "emerging", means "illustrious or highly-regarded". *Preeminent* means "most highly-regarded". *Imminent* means "about to occur". *Immanent* (less common than the other two, and often theological) means "indwelling, pervading".
  + *Standard*: The eminent doctor Jones testified on behalf of the defence.
  + *Standard*: Rumours that war was imminent soon spread through the population.
  + *Standard*: God's grace is immanent throughout the entire creation.
* [**emoji**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/emoji) and [**emoticon**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/emoticon). *Emojis* are actual pictures, whereas *emoticons* are typographic displays of a facial representation, e.g. :-).
* [**epitome**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/epitome) is used to mean a typical or ideal example of something. [**epidemy**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/epidemy) is an epidemic disease.
* [**eponymous**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/eponymous) is used to describe something which gives its name to something else, not something which receives the name of something else.
  + *Standard*: Frank, the eponymous owner of *Frank's Bistro*, prepares all meals in a spotless kitchen.
  + *Non-standard*: Frank maintains an eponymous restaurant, *Frank's Bistro.*
* [**exacerbate**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/exacerbate) and [**exasperate**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/exasperate). *Exacerbate* means "to make worse". *Exasperate* means "to exhaust", usually someone's patience.
  + *Standard*: Treatment by untrained personnel can exacerbate injuries.
  + *Standard*: Do not let Jack talk to the state trooper; he is tactless and will just exasperate her.
* [**expedient**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/expedient) and [**expeditious**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/expeditious). *Expedient* means "done conveniently or quickly, but possibly improperly". *Expeditious* means "done efficiently", and does not carry any negative connotation.
  + *Standard*: The chef's expedient solution was to microwave the undercooked hamburger.
  + *Standard*: The chef's expeditious solution was to cook a new hamburger.

**F**

* [**flack**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/flack) and [**flak**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/flak). **Flak** is adverse criticism. A **flack** is a publicity agent or press relations person.[[32]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-32)
  + *Standard*: He took a lot of flak for his unpopular position.
  + *Non-standard*: But he took no flack from her people.
* [**flesh**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/flesh) and [**flush**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/flush). To *flesh out* is to add flesh to a skeleton, or metaphorically to add substance to an incomplete rendering. To *flush out* is to cause game fowl to take to flight, or to frighten any quarry from a place of concealment.
  + *Standard*: The forensic pathologist will flesh out the skull with clay.
  + *Standard*: The beaters flushed out the game with drums and torches.
  + *Non-standard*: This outline is incomplete and must be flushed out.
* [**flounder**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/flounder) and [**founder**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/founder). To *flounder* is to be clumsy, confused, indecisive, as if flopping about like a fish out of water (a [*flounder*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flounder) being a kind of fish). To *founder* is to fill with water and sink (or, figuratively, to fail).
  + *Standard*: The ship is damaged and may founder.
  + *Standard*: She was floundering on the [balance beam](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Balance_beam).
  + *Non-standard*: The ship is damaged and may flounder.
* [**flout**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/flout) and [**flaunt**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/flaunt). One *flouts* a rule or law by flagrantly ignoring it. One *flaunts* something by showing it off.
  + *Standard*: If you have it, flaunt it.
  + *Standard*: He continually flouted the speed limit.
  + *Standard*: The diplomat's son flaunted his ability to flout the speed limit.
  + *Non-standard*: If you have it, flout it.
  + *Non-standard*: He continually flaunted the speed limit.
* [**forego**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/forego) and [**forgo**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/forgo): *Forego* means to go before. *Forgo* means to give up or do without.[[33]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-33)
  + *Standard*: After reading the foregoing paragraph, she decided to forgo the rest of the book.
* [**functionality**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/functionality) means quality of degree of being functional: either a range of functions or the quality of being suited to a function. It is commonly and incorrectly used as a pretentious synonym for [**function**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/function).
  + *Standard*: I'm glad I bought this rotary tool. It has amazing functionality.
  + *Non-standard*: This switch changes it to each of three different functionalities.

**G**

* [**gone**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/gone) and [**went**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/went). *Gone* is the [past participle](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Past_participle) of *go*. *Went* is the simple past tense of *go*.[[34]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-34)[[35]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-35)
  + *Non-standard*: Looking back on it, they should have **went** No. 1 in their respective drafts.[[36]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-36)
  + *Non-standard*: She had previously **underwent** a surgical procedure to remove an abscess discovered during a recent ultrasound.[[37]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-37)
  + *Non-standard*: Phoenix has **went** 5-15 over the last 20 games and now that Bledsoe is out with another knee injury, the Suns could potentially see their losing streak extend to seven as they face the elite Cleveland Cavaliers, San Antonio Spurs and Oklahoma City Thunder in their next three games.[[38]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-38)
* [**guarantee**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/guarantee) and [**guaranty**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/guaranty). In legal terms, a *guaranty* is a binding assurance of the performance of a product or service, commonly a security for the fulfillment of an obligation (often on another's behalf), while a *guarantee* is a person who benefits from a guaranty (provided by a *guarantor*). However, it has become common for the word *guarantee* to refer to any assurance itself (often verbal, rather than a written [warranty](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/warranty)) of a certain outcome, including figuratively. The verb form has also become *guarantee*. (See also **warrantee** and **warranty**, below.)
  + *Standard*: I guarantee that you will make a return on your investment.
  + *Standard*: The radio advertisement promised a three-month, money-back satisfaction guarantee.
  + *Standard*: The collision statistics to date seem to virtually guarantee several such accidents per month until this intersection is redesigned.
  + *Standard*: The completion bond firm lost its $50 million guaranty when the film production collapsed after the death of the director.
  + *Uncommon except in law*: This phone comes with a written one-year guaranty against defects. (Use *warranty* in most contexts, which is more precise and more common.)
  + *Uncommon except in law*: The guarantee studio received a $50 million payout from the completion bond firm. (Rephrase, e.g.: The studio received a $50 million guaranty payout from the completion bond firm.)
* [**guide lines**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/guide) and [**guy ropes**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/guy). *Guide lines* are faint grid lines used in drawing and layout to help guide an artist or designer, or, in a figurative and more common sense (often spelled *guidelines*), they are loose rules to help guide conduct. *Guy ropes* are lines used to tension structures, particularly tents, and do not "guide" anything.

**H**

* [**hang**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/hang). To *hang* something or someone in the present tense, one uses the same form. In the past, however, pictures are *hung*, but criminals are *hanged*.
* [**hangar**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/hangar) and [**hanger**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/hanger).
  + *Standard*: The aeroplane is in the hangar; the coat is on the hanger.
* [**hay**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/hay) and [**straw**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/straw). *Hay* is animal fodder made by cutting and drying a grassy plant. *Straw* is the dry stalk of a cereal plant (e.g., barley, oats, rice, or rye), after the grain or seed has been removed; it is used to line an animal's stall or for insulation.
* [**hear**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/hear) and [**here**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/here). To *hear* is to detect a sound with one's ears. *Here* refers to one's immediate location.
* [**hoard**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/hoard) and [**horde**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/horde). A *hoard* is a store or accumulation of things. A *horde* is a large group of people.
  + *Standard*: A horde of shoppers lined up to be the first to buy the new gizmo.
  + *Standard*: He has a hoard of discontinued rare cards.
  + *Non-standard*: Do not horde the candy, share it.
  + *Non-standard*: The hoard charged when the horns sounded.
  + *Non-standard*: It probably shouldn't come as a surprise; an angry **hoard** is calling for his head to be mounted on a wall.[[39]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-39)
  + *Non-standard*: Despite good progress on the team's bid for a new arena, the Bucks aren't getting LeBron James or Durant next summer, so why **horde** cap space to chase ghosts?[[40]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-40)
* [**home**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/home) and [**hone**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/hone)[[41]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-41)
  + *Standard*: In the weeks that New Horizons was **homing** in on Pluto, NASA and its partner, the Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory, published a barrage of images.[[42]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-42)
  + *Standard*: He **homed** in on Mission Bay, then about 303 decrepit acres designated for redevelopment.[[43]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-43)
  + *Standard*: "When suspicion and hostility is allowed to fester it can erupt into unrest," she said, adding that the investigation will not **home** in on individuals but will aim to "improve systems."[[44]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-44)
  + *Non-standard*: The [homing pigeon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Homing_pigeon) **honed** in on the target.
  + *Non-standard*: **Honing** in on the roster's second point guard might be the most difficult decision in this process.[[45]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-45)
  + *Non-standard*: But in exploring what could have been done differently, the new report **honed** in on his mother, Nancy Lanza, who backed her son's resistance to medication and from the 10th grade on kept him at home, where he was surrounded by an arsenal of firearms and spent long hours playing violent video games.[[46]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-46)
  + *Non-standard*: They collected Cano's DNA from a water bottle and discarded gum, and **honed** in on Gordon as a second suspect after a search of Cano's cellphone records showed he texted with Gordon constantly.[[47]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-47)
  + *Non-standard*: While Indonesia's navy said divers had not yet found the black boxes from the AirAsia plane that crashed into the Java Sea two weeks ago, searchers on Sunday **honed** in on intense pings detected amid a growing belief that the devices will soon be recovered.[[48]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-48)
  + *Non-standard*: But authorities are **honing** in on a rural "hot spot" in southwestern New York.[[49]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-49)
  + *Non-standard*: Arnovitz **honed** in on a particular play late in the Thunder's game against the Los Angeles Clippers on Monday, where Durant isolated against Luc Richard Mbah a Moute and found Russell Westbrook open for a 3-pointer.[[50]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-50)

**I**

* [**If**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/if) and [**whether**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/whether). "If" expresses conditionality. "Whether" refers to alternatives (although an alternative might only be implicit).
  + *Standard*: We can paint the fence this Saturday if it doesn't rain.
  + *Standard*: I don't know whether to choose the green shirt or the blue one.
  + *Standard*: I'm considering whether I should take a vacation. (Implied: "Or keep working")
  + *Non-standard*: I don't know if it was Angela or Marie who put the notice up in the tea room.
* [**imply**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/imply) and [**infer**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/infer). Something is *implied* if it is a suggestion intended by the person speaking, whereas a conclusion is *inferred* if it is reached by the person listening.
  + *Standard*: When Tony told me he had no money, he was implying that I should give him some.
  + *Standard*: When Tony told me he had no money, I inferred that I should give him some.
  + *Non-standard*: When Tony told me he had no money, he was inferring that I should give him some.
* [**inherent**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/inherent) and [**inherit**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/inherit). A part *inherent in* X is logically inseparable from X. *To inherit* is a verb, meaning "pass down a generation".
  + *Standard*: Risk is inherent in the stock market.
  + *Standard*: The next president inherits a legacy of mistrust and fear.
  + *Non-standard*: There is violence inherit in the system.
* [**it's**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/it%27s) and [**its**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/its). *It's* is a contraction that replaces *it is* or *it has* (see [apostrophe](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apostrophe_%28punctuation%29)). *Its* is the [possessive determiner](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Possessive_determiner) corresponding to *it*, meaning "belonging to it".
  + *Standard*: It's time to eat! (it is time)
  + *Standard*: It's been nice getting to meet you. (it has been)
  + *Standard*: My cell phone has poor reception because its antenna is broken.
  + *Non-standard*: Its good to be the king.
  + *Non-standard*: The bicycle tire had lost all of it's pressure.
* [**irony**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/irony). Something is *ironic* if it is the opposite of what is appropriate, expected, or fitting.
  + *Standard*: It is ironic that the center for the handicapped has no wheelchair ramp.
  + *Standard*: It is ironic that [Alanis Morissette](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alanis_Morissette) wrote a song called "[Ironic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ironic_%28song%29)" with many examples, not one of which is actually ironic.
  + *Non-standard*: It is ironic that George W Bush is right-handed and Republican while Bill Clinton is left-handed and Democratic.
  + *Non-standard*: It is raining on our wedding day! Is it not ironic?
* [**isle**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/isle) and [**aisle**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/aisle). An isle is an island. An aisle is a corridor through which one may pass from one place to another.
  + *Standard*: He came from a small isle in the Caribbean.
  + *Standard*: The coffee is down the third aisle on the left.
* [**invariably**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/invariably). *Invariably* means *always*, *unchanging*, *constant*.
  + *Standard*: The Sun invariably rises every morning.
  + *Non-Standard*: The word decimated is invariably misused by journalists.

**J**

* [**jive**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/jive) and [**jibe**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/jibe). Jive is hepcat patois or deception. Jibe is to be in accord with.
  + *Standard*: Don't give me that same old jive.
  + *Standard*: Your report doesn't jibe with the facts.
  + *Non-standard*: Your report doesn't jive with the facts.

**L**

* [**lay**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/lay) (*lay*, *laid*, *laid*, *laying*, *lays*) and [**lie**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/lie) (*lie*, *lay*, *lain*, *lying*, *lies*) are often used synonymously. *Lay* is a [transitive verb](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transitive_verb), meaning that it takes an object. "To lay something" means to place something. *Lie*, on the other hand, is [intransitive](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Intransitive) and means to recline. The distinction between these related verbs is further blurred by the fact that the past tense of *lie* is *lay*. An easy rule of thumb is to replace the words with *sit* and *set*. If *sit* makes sense (e.g., sit down) then *lie* should be used (lie down). If the sentence works with *set* (e.g., set the book on the table) then *lay* should be used (lay the book on the table). A **layoff** is never a *lieoff* or *lyoff*. (*To lie* can also mean "to not tell the truth" – but in that case, the past tense is *lied*.)
  + *Standard*: I lay my husband's work clothes out for him every morning. Yesterday, I decided to see if he paid attention to what I was doing, so I laid out one white sock and one black. He did not notice!
  + *Standard*: You should not lie down right after eating a large meal. Yesterday, I lay on my bed for half an hour after dinner, and suffered indigestion as a result. My wife saw me lying there and made me get up; she told me that if I had waited for a couple of hours I could have lain down in perfect comfort.
  + *Standard*: You lied to me; there is no hidden chamber!
  + *Non-standard*: Since the gunmen remained at large for more than four months after the shooting, Nellum often **laid** in bed wondering who his assailants were and whether they might come after him again.[[51]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-51)
  + *Non-standard*: "It could be easy for those guys to **lay** down. After I left, they could have just **laid** down."[[52]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-52)
  + *Non-standard*: Yueyue **laid** motionless in the street for 10 minutes until Chen Xianmei, a 58-year-old woman who collects trash for a living, passed by.[[53]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-53)
  + *Non-standard*: Schaub **laid** on the ground for a while before being taken off the field.[[54]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-54)
  + *Non-standard*: Jurors squirmed Monday as a Massachusetts pathologist detailed the wounds inflicted on the 19 bodies prosecutors have lain at the feet of reputed Boston mob boss James "Whitey" Bulger.[[55]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-55)
  + *Non-standard*: For two days he laid in bed, locked in a daze.[[56]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-56)
  + *Non-standard*: Is this bed comfortable when you lay on it? (Should be *lie*)
  + *Non-standard*: Yesterday I lied down in my office during the lunch hour. (Should be *lay*)
  + *Non-standard*: There was no reason for him to have laid down in the middle of the path, it unnerved me to see him laying there saying nothing. (Should be "have lain down" and "him lying there")
  + *Non-standard*: Lie the baby down, and change his diaper (Should be *lay*, as *lie* is intransitive)
  + *Non-standard*: I am going to lay out in the sun and work on my tan. (Should be *lie*. In general, the term *lay out* when referring to sunbathing is always non-standard usage.)
  + *Non-standard*: Sorry, I lay about our appointment yesterday. (Should be *lied*)
  + *Non-standard*: You should not **lay** down right after eating a large meal. Yesterday, I **lied** on my bed for half an hour after dinner, and suffered indigestion as a result. My wife saw me **laying** there and made me get up; she told me that if I had waited for a couple of hours I could have **lied** down in perfect comfort. (Should be *lie*, *lay*, *lying* and *lain*)
* [**levee**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/levee) and [**levy**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/levy). A *levee* is a structure built along a river to raise the height of its banks, thereby preventing nearby land from flooding (see: [dike](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/dike)). *To levy* is to impose (1) a tax, fine or other assessment, or (2) a military draft; as a noun, a *levy* is an assessment or army thus gathered. The two words share a common root, but they are not considered interchangeable in Standard English. Because they are [homophones](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Homophones), misuse is usually only apparent when observed in writing.
  + *Standard*: The Netherlands is well known for its elaborate system of levees.
  + *Standard*: This statute allows the state to levy a 3% tax.
  + *Non-standard*: Recent storms have weakened the levy.
* [**loathe**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/loathe) and [**loath**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/loath) or [**loth**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/loth): *Loathe* is a verb meaning "to strongly dislike", and *loath* (or *loth*) is an adjective meaning "unwilling" or "reluctant".
  + *Standard*: I loathe arrogant people.
  + *Standard*: I was loath to concede defeat.
  + *Standard*: I was loth to submit to a body-cavity search until I saw who would be administering it.
  + *Non-standard*: Colangelo and Krzyzewski are loathe to break the players up into categories, but essentially, that's what is in place.[[57]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-57)
  + *Non-standard*: Which is why the Panthers were loathe to give him a guaranteed contract.[[58]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-58)
* [**lose**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/lose) and [**loose**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/loose). *Lose* can mean "fail to win", "misplace", or "cease to be in possession". *Loose* can mean the opposite of tight, or the opposite of tighten. *Lose* is often misspelled *loose*, likely because *lose* has an irregular rhyme for the way it is spelled: it is more common for words ending *-ose* to rhyme [-əʊz](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Rhymes:English:-%C9%99%CA%8Az), like *nose*, or *rose*, but *lose* rhymes [-uːz](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Rhymes:English:-u%CB%90z), like *news* or *confuse*. This may cause poor spellers to guess the correct spelling should match another -uːz rhyming word like *choose*, although *choose* is itself also an exception to the regular rhyme for words ending *-oose* (typically such words, including *loose*, rhyme [-uːs](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Rhymes:English:-u%CB%90s), like *goose* or *caboose*).
  + *Standard*: We cannot afford to lose customers to our competitors.
  + *Standard*: A screw is loose and I need a screwdriver to tighten it.
  + *Non-standard*: If the team cannot score any points, they will loose the game.

**M**

* [**macerate**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/macerate), [**marinate**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/marinate), and [**marinade**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/marinade). (From post-classical Latin *marina* brine, short for classical Latin *aqua marina* sea water.)[[59]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-OED-59) In Standard English, *marinade* is a noun and not a verb; marinate is the verb. *Macerate* means "to soften by steeping in a liquid" and in culinary terminology is used for non-protein items, specifically *fruit*.[[59]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-OED-59) The word *macerate* is also used in science "to soften bone, rock etc. in a liquid".[[59]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-OED-59)
  + *Standard*: The meat will taste better if you marinate it in olive oil before cooking.
  + *Standard*: Prepare the marinade by mixing vinegar and soy sauce.
  + *Non-standard*: Marinade the meat in wine for half an hour.
  + *Standard*: Macerate the fruit in wine for half an hour.
  + *Non-standard*: Marinate the fruit in wine for half an hour.
* [**me**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/me), [**myself**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/myself), and [**I**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/I). In a traditional prescriptive grammar, *I* is used only as a subject, *me* is used only as an object, and *myself* is used only as a reflexive object, that is to say when the subject is "*I*" and the object would otherwise be "*me*". *Myself* is often used incorrectly, often in a form of [hypercorrection](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hypercorrection). Like the other [reflexive pronouns](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reflexive_pronoun), *myself* should be used only when both the subject and object of the verb are the speaker, or as an emphatic pronoun ([intensifier](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Intensifier)).
  + *Standard*: Jim and I took the train.
  + *Standard*: He lent the books to Jim and me.
  + *Standard*: That is I in the picture. (This is very formal, and seldom found in speech.)
  + *Acceptable*: That is me in the picture. (This is typical in informal English.)
  + *Standard* ([intensifying](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Intensifier)): I myself have seen instances of that type.
  + *Standard* (reflexive): I hurt myself. I did it to myself. I played by myself. I want to enjoy myself.
  + *Non-standard*: Jim and me went into town.
  + *Non-standard*: Me and Jim went into town.
  + *Non-standard*: As for myself, I prefer the red.
  + *Non-standard*: He is an American like myself.
  + *Non-standard*: He gave the paper to Jim and myself.
  + *Non-standard*: My wife and myself do not like the development.
  + *Non-standard*: 'I wake up/With my eyes shut tight/Hoping tomorrow will never come/For you and I.' (Should be *For you and me*) (From "You And I, Part II" by [Fleetwood Mac](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fleetwood_Mac))
  + *Non-standard*: "Allow myself to introduce myself." (An example of intentional misuse for humorous effect, from [*Austin Powers: International Man of Mystery*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Austin_Powers:_International_Man_of_Mystery).)
* [**methodology**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/methodology) is the study or discussion of method. It is commonly and incorrectly used as a pretentious synonym for [**method**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/method).
  + *Standard*: Examine your methodology with the assistance of your supervisor prior to the study.
  + *Non-standard*: We used the methodology of incubating the plates for 24 hours at 37 degrees.
* [**mitigate**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/mitigate) and [**militate**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/militate). To *mitigate* is to make something milder, typically something undesirable, and takes no preposition. To *militate* is to fight or exert pressure for something to happen or not to happen; it is typically followed by a preposition.
  + *Standard*: The seriousness of your crime was mitigated by the provocation you were under.
  + *Standard*: Over-protective practices in this factory militate against increased efficiency.
  + *Non-standard*: Over-protective practices in this factory mitigate against increased efficiency.
* [**momentary**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/momentary) and [**momentarily**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/momentarily). *Momentary* is an adjective meaning "for a moment". *Momentarily* is an adverb with similar meaning. (However, note that US usage increasingly allows for *momentarily* to mean not "for a moment, but "in a moment". See also [List\_of\_English\_words\_with\_disputed\_usage#M](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_English_words_with_disputed_usage#M))
  + *Standard*: The meerkat will emerge momentarily rom its burrow to view its surroundings, but then will quickly go underground again.
  + *Standard*: He had only a momentary lapse of concentration, but it was enough to make him drive into the ditch.
  + *Non-standard (US)*: The tired passengers were glad to hear that the airplane would be landing momentarily, knowing that touching down on the runway would then allow them to go home.
  + *Non-standard (non-US)*: The tired passengers were terrified to hear that the airplane would be landing momentarily, knowing that such bouncing off the runway would probably kill them.

**N**

* [**novice**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/novice) and [**novitiate**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/novitiate). A [*novice*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Novice) is a prospective or trainee member, as of a religious order. The [*novitiate*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catholic_novitiate) is the state of being a novice, or the time for which one is a novice. However, a novice monk or nun is often incorrectly described as "a novitiate" (perhaps confused with "initiate").

**O**

* [**of**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/of) and [**have**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/have). In some dialects of spoken English, *of* and the contracted form of *have*, *'ve*, sound alike. However, in standard written English, they are not interchangeable.
  + *Standard*: Susan would have stopped to eat, but she was running late.
  + *Standard*: You could have warned me!
  + *Non-standard*: I should of known that the store would be closed. (Should be "I should've known")
* [**overestimate**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/overestimate) and [**underestimate**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/underestimate). There is frequent confusion between things that *cannot* and *should not* be over/underestimated, though the meanings are opposite.
  + *Standard*: The damage caused by pollution cannot be overestimated (i.e., it is so enormous that no estimate, however high, is excessive)
  + *Standard*: The damage caused by pollution should not be overestimated (i.e., while significant, it would be wrong to exaggerate it)
  + *Standard*: The damage caused by pollution should not be underestimated (i.e., it is wrong to regard it as minor)
  + *Non-standard*: The damage caused by pollution cannot be underestimated (literal meaning: it is so minimal that no estimate is too small. Intended meaning: as in the first or third example)

**P**

* [**pallet**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/pallet), [**palate**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/palate) and [**palette**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/palette). A *pallet* is a wooden platform or a thin sleeping mattress placed on the floor. The *palate* is the roof of the mouth, used to refer to one's tastes in food. An artist paints using a *palette*.
  + *Standard*: After unloading the boxes from the pallets, I slept on a pallet on the floor.
  + *Standard*: My palate is not very refined.
  + *Standard*: The artist placed globs of varying paint colors on his palette before beginning to paint.
  + *Non-standard*: This food always pleases my pallet.
  + *Non-standard*: When it comes to spiciness level, everyone's palette is different.
* [**parcel**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/parcel) and [**partial**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/partial). A *parcel* is an item wrapped for shipment, or a division of land, while *partial* is a part or a portion of something. The expression *part and parcel* is an old legal term, now a saying in general use, meaning an essential part or component. The mis-hearing of the homophones *parcel* and *partial*, and some overlap in their meaning, may account for the misuse.
  + *Standard*: Regular maintenance is part and parcel of owning a car.
  + *Non-standard*: Regular maintenance is part and partial of owning a car.
* [**past**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/past) and [**passed**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/passed). *Past* refers to events that have previously occurred, while *passed* is the past tense of "to pass", whether in a congressional action or a physical occurrence.
  + *Standard*: Congress passed the bill limiting the powers of the President.
  + *Standard*: History is mainly concerned with the events of the past.
  + *Standard*: He went past my house on his way to the store.
  + *Standard*: He passed my house on his way to the store.
  + *Non-standard*: He past my house on his way to the store.
* [**peremptory**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/peremptory) and [**preemptive**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/preemptive). A *peremptory* act or statement is absolute; it cannot be denied. A *preemptive* action is one taken before an adversary can act.
  + *Standard*: He issued a peremptory order.
  + *Standard*: Preemptive air strikes stopped the enemy from launching the new warship.
* [**perpetrate**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/perpetrate) and [**perpetuate**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/perpetuate). To *perpetrate* something is to commit it, while to *perpetuate* something is to cause it to continue or to keep happening.
  + *Standard*: The gang perpetrated outrages against several citizens.
  + *Standard*: The stories only serve to perpetuate the legend that the house is haunted.
* [**perquisite**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/perquisite) and [**prerequisite**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/prerequisite). *Perquisite* usually means 'an extra allowance or privilege'. *Prerequisite* means 'something required as a condition'.
  + *Standard*: He had all the perquisites of a movie star, including a stand-in.
  + *Standard*: Passing the examination was one of the prerequisites for a teaching position.
* [**period**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/period) implies a length of time. The expression 'period of time' therefore contains a redundancy, implying 'length of time of time'.
  + *Non-standard*: It can be left in place for any period of time you consider necessary.
  + *Standard*: It can be left in place for any period you consider necessary./It can be left in place for any length of time you consider necessary.
* [**perspective**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/perspective) and [**prospective**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/prospective). *Perspective* is a view with correct visual angles, example: parallel railway tracks converging in the distance. "Prospective" is a future possibility or expectation.
* [**perspicuity**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/perspicuity) and [**perspicacity**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Perspicacity). If something is perspicuous, it is easily understood; its meaning is obvious. If one is perspicacious, then one is quick to understand or has good insight.
  + *Standard*: I admired her perspicacity; she just seemed to get it so much better than I.
  + *Standard*: He expressed the idea so perspicuously that anyone could understand.
  + *Non-standard*: She spoke in a perspicacious way.
* [**photogenic**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/photogenic) and [**photographic**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/photographic). The former is to be used to mean someone's likeness is particularly amenable to being well photographed. The latter is anything pertaining to photography whether it is technical, e.g., photographic chemicals or equipment, or generic, e.g., photographic journals.
* [**pored**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/pored) and [**poured**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/poured). The phrase 'pored over' means to study an item intently, however sometimes seen incorrectly in its place is 'poured over' which would correctly describe the act of tipping a substance onto something.
* [**practice**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/practice) and [**practise**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/practise). In most English dialects, *practice* is the noun and *practise* is the verb, although this distinction is not maintained in American English, which uses *practice* for both.
* [**prescribe**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/prescribe) and [**proscribe**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/proscribe). To *prescribe* something is to command or recommend it. To *proscribe* somebody or something is to outlaw him, her or it.
  + *Standard*: The doctor prescribed some medicine to clear up the infection.[[60]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-60)
  + *Standard*: The new law was going to proscribe public gatherings.
* [**prevaricate**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/prevaricate) and [**procrastinate**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/procrastinate). To *prevaricate* is to avoid telling the truth. To *procrastinate* is put off doing something that needs to be done. [[61]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-61)
* [**progeny**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/progeny) and [**prodigy**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/prodigy). *Progeny* are [offspring](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Offspring) or things that follow something else. A *prodigy* is a [genius](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Genius) or a marvelous example of something.

**R**

* [**rain**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/rain), [**reign**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/reign) and [**rein**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/rein#English). A [*reign*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reign) refers to the rule of a monarch.[[62]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-62)[*Reins*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rein) are the straps used to control the movements of an animal (typically a horse).[[63]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-63) Thus, to "take the reins" means to assume control, and to have "free rein" means to be free of constraints.[[64]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-64)
  + *Standard*: From dozens of ideas floated to **rein** in skyrocketing costs of Oregon's public pension system, Gov. John Kitzhaber and lawmakers two years ago pinned their hopes on one, risky option.[[65]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-65)
  + *Standard*: Harrison would thrive in bench units with less attentive defenders and presumably a less capable lead guard who can let him take the **reins** from time to time.[[66]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-66)
  + *Standard*: And there are signs that ESPN's spending may need to be **reined** in.[[67]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-67)
  + *Standard*: Thursday's central bank comments came after analysts said allowing market forces free **rein** could drive the yuan sharply lower.[[68]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-68)
  + *Standard*: It is but one example of Israel's failure to **rein** in youths suspected of carrying out ultranationalist attacks.[[69]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-69)
  + *Standard*: Nationally, gambling has been slow to recover since the Great Recession as people continue to **rein** in leisure spending.[[70]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-70)
  + *Standard*: Button’s representatives said in a statement Friday that police have told them such thefts have become a growing problem, with thieves pumping in the gas to give them free **rein** in the properties.[[71]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-71)
  + *Standard*: It's rare to bring homicide charges against a physician, but the case came amid a prescription drug abuse epidemic that has led lawmakers to try to **rein** in so-called pill mills that dole out medications with little scrutiny.[[72]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-72)
  + *Standard*: But **reining** in Maduro, who became president after Chavez died in 2013, will be tough.[[73]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-73)
  + *Standard*: A few months later, the ailing president, Boris Yeltsin, stepped aside and Vladimir Putin took the **reins** as Russian president.[[74]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-74)
  + *Non-standard*: ...the Suns gave Sports Illustrated's Jack McCallum free **reign** of practices...[[75]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-75)
  + *Non-standard*: Bobby Jindal, a whiz kid takes the reigns of Louisiana's Department of Health and Hospital[[76]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-76)
  + *Non-standard*: Taylor will be passing on the **reigns** of the neighborhood school to Assistant Principal Amy Kleiner.[[77]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-77)
  + *Non-standard*: ...his rein of terror in 1969 is fascinating part of the history of 20th century crime...[[78]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-78)
  + *Non-standard*: He spent the last four seasons trying to patch together lineups in Houston, where injuries **reined** supreme, and he had a great deal of success under the circumstances.[[79]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-79)
  + *Non-standard*: Wesley Johnson: It's more that Johnson was proven a long-limbed bust before Lindsey Hunter and a tanking Phoenix team gave him free **reign** to jack triples and perhaps clarify his NBA destiny. Johnson still shot just 32 percent from deep amid all that freedom; his chances of membership here look slim.[[80]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-80)
  + *Non-standard*: Over 13 games, he averaged 15.5 points and 9.9 assists while shooting 44.8 percent from 3-point range (while **reigning** in his attempts a bit).[[81]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-81)
  + *Non-standard*: The transition from the previous luxury tax system, which penalized teams one dollar for every dollar they went over the tax threshold, to the new one that includes an escalating pay scale for every $5 million teams go over the threshold, was supposed to **reign** in spending and help level the playing field.[[82]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-82)
  + *Non-standard*: If you’re Mike Lupica you have the biggest column in one of America’s largest circulation newspapers, you host a prestige show on ESPN each week and you have, presumably, free **reign** to talk about whatever you want to talk about in sports.[[83]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-83)
  + *Non-standard*: In fact, many moms say there's no way they would let their children do what their own parents gave them free **reign** to do as kids.[[84]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-84)
  + *Non-standard*: Brooks allowed Durant and Westbrook free **reign** as players and kept an open-door policy in terms of suggestions, not that he had much choice.[[85]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-85)
  + *Non-standard*: It’ll be up to Doc Rivers and Chris Paul to **reign** Stephenson in early on.[[86]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-86)
  + *Non-standard*: Mexican fans **reigned** down debris on Panama players, and the match was held up for 11 minutes before Guardado stepped up to nail his first penalty kick and send the match to extra time.[[87]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-87)
  + *Non-standard*: Bryant has been given free **reign** for close to a decade.[[88]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-88)
* [**redundant**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/redundant) does not mean "useless" or "unable to perform its function". It means that there is an excess of something, that something is "surplus to requirements" and no longer needed. It can also refer to a duplicate of something retained as a backup, failsafe, or reinforcement.
  + *Standard*: The week before Christmas, the company made seventy-five workers redundant.
  + *Standard*: A new pill that will instantly cure any illness has made antibiotics redundant. (Antibiotics could still be used to cure illnesses, but they are no longer needed because a better pill has been invented.)
  + *Standard*: The security system has two levels of redundancy.
  + *Non-standard*: Over-use of antibiotics risks making them redundant. (This should read: over-use of antibiotics risks making them ineffective)
* [**regime**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/regime#English), [**regimen**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/regimen) and [**regiment**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/regiment).[[89]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-89) A *regimen* is a system of order, and may often refer to the systematic dosing of medication. A *regiment* is a military unit.
  + *Standard*: The sick soldier was removed from his **regiment**.
  + *Standard*: The sick soldier was ordered to complete a **regimen** of [amoxicillin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amoxicillin).
  + *Standard*: But there were issues regarding his training **regimen** and conditioning, and he was demoted by the Kings last season to their American Hockey League affiliate in Manchester.[[90]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-90)
  + *Standard*: The story states that TB12 markets Guerrero's training **regimen** as "a proven approach to help people reach and maintain their peak levels of performance. Developed by Brady and his body coach, Alex Guerrero, their revolutionary approaches to wellness in the areas of nutrition and supplementation, as well as physical and mental fitness training, have helped athletes maximize their potential and maintain peak performance levels for more than a decade.”[[91]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-report-tom-bradys-trainer-91)
  + *Non-standard*: But wow, without the daily **regiment** of basketball, imagine what will happen to him?[[92]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-92)
  + *Non-standard*: Sports, science and technology are converging at an all-time pace and eight NBA teams are experimenting with a new device designed to optimize and personalize training **regiments**, thus the ability to maximize performance and reduce injury.[[93]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-93)
  + *Non-standard*: A treatment **regiment**, sometimes constant, was not enough.[[94]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-94)
  + *Non-standard*: It's going to require a lot of additional work but she already runs a lot as part of her training **regiment** for tennis.[[95]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-95)
  + *Non-standard*: It would appear that Guerrero's training, eating, and supplemental **regiment** works, at least for Brady, to whom Guerrero devotes near-constant attention by mapping out his training and nutrition years into the future.[[91]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-report-tom-bradys-trainer-91)
* [**regretful**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/regretful) and [**regrettable**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/regrettable). *Regretful* is an adjective meaning to be full of regret. *Regrettable* is an adjective meaning deplorable or unfortunate.[[96]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-96)
  + *Standard*: She felt very regretful about her regrettable actions.
* [**reluctant**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/reluctant) and [**reticent**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/reticent).[[97]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-97)*Reticent* means quiet and unwilling to speak; *reluctant* means unwilling to do something.
  + *Standard*: He was reluctant to come to the party.
  + *Standard*: He is reticent in expressing his feelings.
  + *Non-standard*: He is reticent to press charges.
  + *Non-standard*: The Warriors and New York Knicks have been two of the most persistent suitors for Lowry, but Toronto's recent run of success has made the front office more reticent to unload Lowry, league sources said.[[98]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-98)
  + *Non-standard*: Detroit's reluctance to pursue Green is understandable, but it's unclear if this **reticence** to tie up money for 72 hours extends to every restricted free agency on the market.[[99]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-99)
  + *Non-standard*: Under the current rules, an attractive candidate who does not feel sufficiently well connected to financial resources, is too busy with his current job, thinks he is not "ripe" for a presidential contest, or is, for whatever reason, **reticent** to run is not likely to enter the fray.[[100]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-100)
* [**revert**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/revert). To revert is to return to a former state, not to reply or respond to someone.
  + *Standard*: The Hulk reverted to Bruce Banner after he had a nice cup of tea and calmed down a bit.
  + *Non-standard*: Thanks for your email, I will look into this and revert to you.[[101]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-101)

**S**

* [**sensual**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/sensual) and [**sensuous**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/sensuous). Both words mean "to do with the senses". *Sensual* is more often applied to a pleasure or experience or to a person's character; *sensuous* to someone or something of enticing appearance.
  + *Standard*: Don Juan is the most sensual character in fiction.
  + *Standard*: Ascetics believe in avoiding all sensual pleasures.
  + *Standard*: Marilyn Monroe looks extremely sensuous in this film clip.
* [**set**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/set) and [**sit**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/sit). When used as a transitive verb, to *set* means "to place" or "to adjust to a value", whereas to *sit* means "to be seated".
  + *Standard*: Set the pot upon the stove.
  + *Standard*: Set the temperature-control to 100 °C.
  + *Non-standard*: Set down over there.
  + *Standard*: Sit on the chair.
* [**shirk**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/shirk) and [**shrink**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/shrink). To *shirk* means "to consistently avoid", "to neglect", "to be too afraid to engage". To *shrink* means "to contract", "to become physically smaller in size"; also, to *shrink away* means, "to suddenly jerk away from something in horror". However, to *shrink from* may also mean, "to hesitate or show reluctance toward".
  + *Standard*: I will not shirk discussion.
  + *Standard*: I will not shrink from discussion.
  + *Standard*: She shrank away from me.
  + *Non-standard*: I will not shrink discussion.
  + *Non-standard*: I will not shirk from discussion.
* [**shall**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/shall), [**will**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/will), [**should**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/should) and [**would**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/would). See [Shall and will](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shall_and_will)
* [**since**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/since) and [**sense**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/sense). *Since* is used as an adverb or a preposition to imply the same meaning as "after then" or "from" in a sentence. *Sense* is a noun meaning any method to gather data about an environment.
  + *Standard*: I have known her since last year.
  + *Standard*: My sense of smell is weak.
  + *Non-standard*: I won't go sense I have no fuel.
  + *Non-standard*: I can since your aura.
* [**cite**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/cite), [**sight**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/sight) and [**site**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/site). A *sight* is something seen; a *site* is a place. To *cite* is to quote or list as a source.
  + *Standard*: You are a sight for sore eyes.
  + *Standard*: I found a list of the sights of Rome on a tourist site.
  + *Standard*: Please cite the sources you used in your essay.
  + *Standard*: You must travel to the site of the dig to see the dinosaur bones.
  + *Standard*: It is necessary to have line-of-sight if you want to use semaphore.
  + *Non-standard*: One must be careful on a construction sight.
  + *Non-standard*: I will site the book in which I saw the statistics.
  + *Non-standard*: I could not fire because I did not have line-of-site to the target.
* [**suit**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/suit) and [**suite**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/suite). *Suit* is a noun meaning an article of clothing; it is also a verb meaning to make/be appropriate. *Suite* is a noun meaning a set of things forming a series or set. [[102]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-102)
  + *Standard*: He got dressed in his new suit.
  + *Standard*: Before leaving the hotel suite, she checked her lipstick in the mirror.
  + *Non-standard*: That wall color will suite our apartment nicely.

**T**

* [**taut**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/taut) and [**tout**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/tout): *Taut* is when something is tight or stretched. *Tout* means to hype up, advertise, or promote.[[103]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-103)
  + *Standard*: You need to hold it taut to stretch it properly.
  + *Standard*: This concert needs a lot of tout to be successful.
* [**temblor**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/temblor) and [**trembler**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/trembler). A *temblor* is an earthquake. A *trembler* is something that trembles (also, a fine-tuned motion detector).
* [**than**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/than) and [**then**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/then). *Than* is a [grammatical particle](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grammatical_particle) and [preposition](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Preposition) associated with comparatives, whereas *then* is an [adverb](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adverb) and a [noun](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Noun). In certain dialects, the two words are usually [homophones](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Homophone) because they are [function words](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Function_word) with [reduced vowels](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Schwa), and this may cause speakers to confuse them.
  + *Standard*: I like pizza more than lasagna.
  + *Standard*: We ate dinner, then went to the movies.
  + *Non-standard*: You are a better person then I am.
* [**their**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/their), [**there**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/there), [**they're**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/they%27re), and [**there're**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/there%27re). *There* refers to the location of something. *Their* means "belonging to them". *They're* is a contraction of "they are". *There're* is a contraction of "there are".
  + *Standard*: There're five of them, and they're all coming to the restaurant for their dinner; we will meet them there.
  + *Non-standard*: I don't like peanuts because of there texture when being chewed.
  + *Non-standard*: Bobby and Sally are coming over later and there bringing some friends with them.
  + *Non-standard*: The dogs are lying over their in the shade.
* [**there's**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/there%27s), [**where's**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/where%27s), etc. A common spoken mistake is using a singular contraction when it should be plural in words like *there's* and *where's*. This stems from the fact that *there're* and *where're* are more difficult to enunciate and are often avoided for that reason in colloquial speech.
  + *Non-standard*: Where's the cars? (Should be *Where're* or *where are*)
  + *Non-standard*: There's many types of car. (Should be *There are*)
* [**throe**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/throe) and [**throw**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/throw). *Throe* is a spasm. *Throw* means to pass an object through the air.
* [**to**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/to) and [**too**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/too). *Too* means "in excess" or "also". *To* is a preposition or is a part of a verb in the infinitive. At the end of a sentence *to* may also refer to a dropped verb in the infinitive.
  + *Standard*: I have too much time on my hands.
  + *Standard*: Kick it to me.
* [**trimester**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/trimester). A *trimester* is a period of three [months](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Month).[[104]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-104)[[105]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-105) Because it is most commonly used in conjunction with a nine-month *academic year*[[106]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-106) or a nine-month term of human [pregnancy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pregnancy),[[107]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-107) it is sometimes wrongly assumed that *trimester* is simply a synonym for one third.[[108]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-108)[[109]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-109)
  + *Standard*: One [calendar year](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Calendar_year) contains four trimesters.
  + *Non-standard*: Without further delay, then, comes ESPN.com's annual (and overdue) First Trimester Report, ushering folks back to the office by taking stock of the season's opening third:[[110]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-110)

**U**

* [**use**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/use) and [**used**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/used). *Used* is the past participle of *use*. Among its meanings is "accustomed". The expression *used to* is in some spoken accents similar sounding to *use to*, leading to confusion.
  + *Standard*: I always carry an umbrella because I am used to the weather being unpredictable in Melbourne.
  + *Standard*: An umbrella is what I use to avoid getting wet.
  + *Non-standard*: You should be use to it by now.

**V**

* [**venal**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/venal) and [**venial**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/venial). These words are sometimes confused; *venal* means "corrupt", "able to be bribed", or "for sale"; *venial* means "pardonable, not serious".[[31]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-Fowler-31)[[111]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-111)
  + *Standard*: According to Catholic doctrine, eating meat on a Friday during Lent is a venial sin, but murder is a mortal sin.
  + *Standard*: All ages have examples of venal politicians.

**W**

* [**want**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/want), [**won't**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/won%27t) and [**wont**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/wont). *Want* means the act of desiring or wishing for something. *Won't* is a contraction for "will not", while *wont* is a word meaning "accustomed" or "inclined to" (as an adjective) or "habit or custom" (as a noun).
  + *Standard*: He won't let me drive his car.
  + *Standard*: He spent the morning reading, as he was wont to do.
  + *Standard*: He took a walk in the evening, as was his wont.
  + *Standard*: His only want was to see his son again.
  + *Non-standard*: I wont need to go to the supermarket after all.
  + *Non-standard*: He took a walk in the evening, as was his want.
* [**warrantee**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/warrantee) and [**warranty**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/warranty). A *warranty* is a legal assurance that some object can perform some specified task or meets certain quality standards. A *warrantee* is a person who benefits from a warranty, provided by a *warrantor*. The verb form is [*warrant*](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/warrant). (See also **guarantee** and **guaranty**, above.)
  + *Standard*: Most new cars come with at least a three-year warranty.
  + *Standard*: This contract warrants that you will make a certain minimum return on your investment.
  + *Non-standard*: Your mobile phone has stopped working? Maybe you need to file a claim under the warrantee.
* [**who's**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/who%27s) and [**whose**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/whose). *Whose* is an [interrogative word](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Interrogative_word) (Whose is this?) or a relative pronoun (The people whose house you admired); *who's* is a contraction for "who is" or "who has".[[112]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-112)[[113]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-113)
  + *Non-standard*: Which brings us right back to Del Negro, **whose** navigated this mercurial stretch seamlessly.[[114]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-114)
  + *Non-standard*: But there remains a group of teams, of which the Brooklyn Nets are a member, **who's** fate remains in the balance.[[115]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-115)
  + *Non-standard*: Mr. Cent, **who’s** real name is Curtis Jackson, was worth as much as $150 million earlier this year.[[116]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-116)
  + *Non-standard*: Well, more like 19 months older, but **whose** counting?[[117]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-117)
  + *Non-standard*: At 7’2 300, Haas is one of the only players in the country **whose** actually bigger than Hammons.[[118]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-118)
  + *Non-standard*: Embattled, hard-line, milquetoast coach **who's** job is on the line so he cuts it loose and starts winning???[[119]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-119)
  + *Non-standard*: Amy Carey, a VIPP volunteer **whose** the first to respond to a lost dog call, made it her mission to find the canines.[[120]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-120)
  + *Non-standard*: They have run the numbers and they know that enough guys slip through the cracks the first time they come through the league that it’s worth giving unproven guys a shot as opposed to a veteran on the downside of his career **whose** already shown what he will be.[[121]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-121)
  + *Non-standard*: Duncan is getting older but he’s still a 7’0 with one of the most refined post games in NBA history **whose** capable of stepping out and playing at the high post.[[122]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-122)
* [**woman**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/woman) and [**women**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/women). *Woman* is the singular form of the word for an adult human female. *Women* is the plural form.
  + *Non-standard*: USADA is the national anti-doping partner of the Olympics, and Rousey spent much of her childhood training to compete in the Games, eventually becoming the first American **women** to medal in judo with her 2008 bronze medal campaign in Beijing.[[123]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-123)

**Y**

* [**you're**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/you%27re) and [**your**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/your). While they sound the same in many dialects, in standard written English they have separate meanings. *You're* is a contraction of "you are", and *your* is a possessive pronoun meaning "belonging to you". When in doubt, check whether the word in question can logically be expanded to "you are".
  + *Standard*: When driving, always wear your seatbelt.
  + *Standard*: If you're going out, please be home by ten o'clock.
  + *Non-standard*: You also can't use 4G or LTE if you're Android phone doesn't support Bluetooth tethering.[[124]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_commonly_misused_English_words#cite_note-124)
  + *Non-standard*: You're mother called this morning.
  + *Non-standard*: Your the first person to notice my new haircut today!

**Notes**

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