

Homophones: Words That Sound the Same but Don't Mean the Same

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There are homonyms that no matter how many times I look them up, practice them, try to memorize them, or even attempt to come up with some witty connection to them, I constantly get them confused. Here are a few that confuse me (and probably you too) and their definition.

Advice vs. Advise

Advice: (noun) an opinion or suggestions on what to do or how to proceed

- My doctor's **advice** was to ice the sore ankle.

Advise: (verb) To recommend how to proceed with a particular situation or suggest the best way in which to deal with a situation.

- The teacher **advised** the students to finish reading the text all the way to the end before answering the questions.

Affect vs Effect

Affect: (verb) 1) To cause an effect or a change upon something or someone. 2) To effect or move someone on an emotional level

- 1) The extreme drop in temperature **affected** the garden in such a way that many of the flowers did not survive.
- 2) Her saddened expression was an obvious sign of how deeply **affected** Janice was by Ron's harsh words.

Effect: 1) (noun) The result of a change, the consequence of an action, or the outcome of a situation.

- 2) (verb) to bring about or cause something to happen
- 1) Flooding and destruction were the **effects** of Hurricane Ian.
- 2) The new CEO will mostly likely **effect** great changes in the company.

Complacent vs Complaisant

Complacent: (adjective) Smug or self-satisfied in such a way that you do not try any harder

- Sales are become stagnant because the salesclerk has become **complacent**.

Complaisant: (adjective) To be agreeable or willing to please others

- The new office assistant was very **complaisant** and always ready to attend to everyone's needs.

Compliment vs Complement

Compliment: 1) (noun) A remark or an expression of praise, admiration, or approval.

- 2) (verb) to express praise or congratulate
- 1) John gave Sue a huge **compliment** on her sculpture, calling it a marvelous piece of art.
- 2) Lucy's date **complimented** her on how beautiful she looked in her dress.

Complement: 1) (noun) Something that goes well with or enhances something else.

- 2) (verb) To match, go well with, or enhance something.

- 1) The grey-blue marbled area rug was a perfect **complement** to the living room suite.
- 2) The dusty blue decorative pillow **complimented** the pale grey sofa perfectly.

Defuse vs. Diffuse

Defuse: (verb) 1) To remove the fuse from an explosive device. 2) To reduce the tension or the frustration in a particular situation.

- 1) The members of the bomb squad are trained to **defuse** different types of explosives.
- 2) Alex used mild humor to **defuse** the tension between the two opponents.

Diffuse: 1) (verb) To lessen by spreading out or dispersing.

2) (adjective) Spread out so that it is not so concentrated.

- 1) Chris **diffused** the smoke in the room by turning on the fan and opening the window.
- 2) The solution was **diffused** by the quantity of water that was added to it.

Elicit vs Illicit

Elicit: (verb) To draw out or evoke information, an action, or an answer.

- The leader of the pep rally **elicited** a roar of cheer from the crowd.

Illicit: (adjective) Not approved, either by society or by government; illegal

- The corrupted businessman was on trial for his **illicit** activities.

Loose vs Lose

Loose: (adjective) Not firmly secured. Not fitting tightly.

- The workers left several **loose** screws that needed tightening.

Lose: (verb) To no longer have possession of, ability to do, or desire for

- If you do not practice a foreign language, you will most likely **lose** the ability to speak it.
- Put the keys in your purse before you **lose** them in the store.

Overdue vs Overdo

Overdue: (adjective) Not done when it should have been done and still needs to be done.

- Gloria needs to return her **overdue** library books.

Overdo: (verb) To do something in excess or exaggerate something.

- Don't **overdo** your explanation or the message will become diluted.

Patience vs Patients

Patience: (noun) The ability to wait, tolerate delay, or continue on with something unpleasant without getting angry, annoyed, or upset.

- Teachers must possess a great deal of **patience** when dealing with very young students.

Patient (plural: **patients**): (noun) A person who is receiving medical treatment

- Dr. Johnson sees many **patients** during the week.

Principle vs Principal

Principle: (noun) A fundamental law of conduct. An ethical truth. A basic moral quality that motivates behaviors.

- Her decisions on the voting polls were based on her **principles**.

Principal: (noun) 1) The person in charge of a group or organization, such as the principal of a school. 2) The original sum of money being lent or borrowed. (adjective) 3) The main reason of something.

- 1) One of the **principals** of the international conglomerate held an office in Switzerland.
- 2) We needed to pay off the **principal** of our existing loan in order to refinance.
- 3) Judging the bake-off is the **principal** reason I attended the festival.

Stationary vs Stationery

Stationary: (adjective) something that in place and doesn't move or is not meant to be moved

- Sally prefers her vintage **stationary** desk in the corner of her home office to the modern portable desk her daughter keeps rolling around throughout the house.

Stationery: (noun) Paper typically used for writing letters, personal or business. Usually comes with matching envelopes.

- Susan wrote John a letter on her favorite floral **stationery** and sealed the matching envelope with a heart sticker.