

Commonly Confused Words: Part I

These words may look similar, but clear communication depends on knowing the difference!

n = noun **v** = verb **adj** = adjective **adv** = adverb **prep** = preposition

Affect (n, v)	Effect (n, v)
<p>Mood (n) → Psychopaths show no affect.</p> <p>To influence (v) → Stress affects longevity.</p>	<p>Result (n) → Research has shown harmful effects of alcohol on the brain.</p> <p>To accomplish (v) → Activists try to effect change.</p>
Allusion (n)	Illusion (n)
<p>An indirect reference → His texts contain allusions to the Bible.</p>	<p>A false perception of reality → Hollywood's "perfection" is just an illusion.</p>
Breath (n)	Breathe (v)
<p>Inhaled or exhaled air → You could see her breath in the cold air.</p>	<p>To inhale or exhale → Asthma makes it difficult to breathe.</p>
Compliment (n, v)	Complement (n, v)
<p>Praise (n), to give praise (v) → He received many compliments on his new suit. → I complimented her on her presentation.</p>	<p>Something that completes (n), to complete or enhance (v) → A nice dry white wine is the perfect complement to a seafood entrée. → That sweater complements your eye colour.</p>
Conscience (n)	Conscious (adj)
<p>A sense of right and wrong → My conscience tells me to be honest.</p>	<p>Awake, aware → Are you conscious of your mistakes?</p>
Council (n)	Counsel (n, v)
<p>A group that consults or advises → School council voted against uniforms.</p>	<p>Advice (n), to give advice (v) → You should seek legal counsel. → My job is to counsel youth.</p>

Elicit (v)	Illicit (adj)
To draw or bring out → The film elicited many strong emotions.	Illegal → That plaza is often the site of illicit activity.
Eminent (adj)	Imminent (adj)
Famous, respected → The eminent psychologist is also a prolific writer.	About to happen → His imminent departure is making waves among colleagues.
Its (adj)	It's
Of or belonging to it → The bear cub is crying for its mother.	Contraction of <i>it is</i> → I don't know if it's true.
Lead (n)	Led
A type of metal → Our city needs to replace its lead pipes.	Past tense of the verb <i>to lead</i> → The General led his army to victory.
Altogether (adv)	All together (adv)
Entirely → The business downsized before closing altogether.	Gathered in one place → The conference brought international researchers all together.
Cite (v)	Site (n)
To attribute an idea to a source → I prefer to cite in APA style.	The position or place → Beware of hazards on construction sites.
Lie (v)	Lay (v)
To lie down (no direct object) → Cats lie in the sun. (present) → The cat lay in the sun all day. (past)	To lay an object down (direct object) / past tense of <i>to lie</i> → Lay down your weapons! (present) → The guards laid down their weapons. (past)
Lose (v)	Loose (adj)
To misplace or to suffer defeat → I have nothing left to lose.	Untethered → The loose gate allowed the dog to escape.

Material adapted from:

<http://writing2.richmond.edu/writing/wweb/confordprint.html>

