

Commonly Confused Words: Part I

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

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

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



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