

## Commonly Confused Words: Part 2

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

**n** = noun  
**pron** = pronoun

**v** = verb  
**conj** = conjunction

**adj** = adjective  
**cont** = contraction

**adv** = adverb  
**prep** = preposition

Discreet (adj)	Discrete (adj)
Inconspicuous, cautious, or discerning → I gave a discreet nod to the bodyguard.	Separate or distinct; common in mathematical and research contexts → Discrete variables are counted using integers.
Ensure (v)	Assure (v)
To make certain something will occur → Buckle up to ensure your safety.	To convince or give confidence to → I assure you that the vault is secure.
Flaunt (v)	Flout (v)
To show off → Lottery winners flaunt their wealth.	To ignore the rules → Jaywalkers flout traffic signals.
Historic (adj)	Historical (adj)
A momentous event in history → The battlefields are a historic landmark.	Belonging to an earlier period of history → Historical records informed their family tree.
Imitate (v)	Intimate (v)
To copy or mimic → Children imitate their parents.	To insinuate or imply → He intimated that we were more than friends.
Passed (v)	Past (n, adj, prep, adv)
Past tense of <i>to pass</i> → The driver passed the scene of the accident without stopping. → The students passed their final exam.	A period of time that has elapsed (n) → Do not look back on your past with regret. Belonging to an earlier time (adj) → Past and present students are welcome. Beyond or later than something (prep) → The rent is past due. From one side of something to the other (adv) → She called his name as he jogged past.

<b>Precede (v)</b>	<b>Proceed (v)</b>
To come before → He is a controversial figure whose reputation precedes him.	To go forward → Please proceed with caution.
<b>Principal (adj, n)</b>	<b>Principle (n)</b>
Most important (adj) → Tourism is their principal source of revenue. The highest authority in a school (n) → Delinquent students are sent to the principal's office.	A fundamental truth or strong belief → I refuse to invest in fossil fuel companies on principle.
<b>Quote (v)</b>	<b>Quotation (n)</b>
To cite, to use someone's words verbatim → Be sure to quote more than one influential author in your essay.	A group of words taken from a text or speech and repeated by someone other than the original author or speaker → Each quotation should be followed by the author's last name and page number.
<b>Stationary (adj)</b>	<b>Stationery (n)</b>
Standing still → Try my new stationary exercise bike.	Office materials for writing → Wedding stationery can be rather ornate.
<b>Than (conj/prep)</b>	<b>Then (adv)</b>
Establishes a comparison → College programs are more hands-on than university degrees.	Afterward, consequently → I listened to his talk, then shook his hand. → If you procrastinate, then it might be too late.
<b>Whose (pron)</b>	<b>Who's (cont)</b>
Used to specify which person or thing you mean → The company whose CEO embezzled funds went bankrupt.	Contraction of <i>who + is</i> → Go see who's knocking on the door.

References:

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

