



Common Errors in English

The English language is insanely complicated. According to Merriam Webster's online dictionary, the English language has over 1 million words! Because of this, anyone can make mistakes sometimes. Here's a short list of commonly made errors and how to avoid them.

Vocabulary Errors

To vs. Two vs. Too: These three words are often confused with one another. Here's a breakdown of their meanings.

- **To** is either used before a verb as part of the infinitive or as a preposition.
⇒ **Example:** I'm going **to** the store **to** buy a puppy.
- **Two** is the number.
⇒ **Example:** One puppy just isn't enough, so I bought **two**.
- **Too** is an adverb that means "extra".
⇒ **Example:** I decided that three was just **too** many puppies.

Their vs. They're vs. There: This is another common mistake in language usage.

- **Their** is a possessive pronoun that means something belongs to a group of people.
⇒ **Example:** Spot is **their** dog.
- **They're** is the contraction of "they" and "are." A contraction is a shortened version of two words.
⇒ **Example:** **They're** saying they are going to let me pet Spot.
- **There** is an introductory subject as well as a place-describing adjective.
⇒ **Example:** **There** is a very cute puppy over **there**.

You're vs. Your: These are very commonly mixed up when used in a sentence. Here's how to tell them apart.

- **You're** is the contraction between "you" and "are." It's a subject in a sentence.
⇒ **Example:** **You're** the best dancer!



- **Your** is a possessive pronoun. It means something that belongs to you.

⇒ **Example:** I love **your** tutu.

Cite vs. Site vs. Sight: These three words all sound the same and while two are similar, one is not.

- **Cite** is a verb. It means to call upon or quote someone, usually an authority.

⇒ **Example:** I made sure to **cite** the Declaration of Independence in my history article.

- **Site** is a noun that is the placement or location of something.

⇒ **Example:** I saw all the important historic **sites**.

- **Sight** is usually used as a noun to talk about the power of vision or a worth spectacle.

⇒ **Example:** I was never more thankful for my **sight** than when I saw the Liberty Bell!

Advise vs. Advice: these two words are different parts of speech, but have the same essential meaning.

- **Advise** is a verb that means to counsel or recommend.

⇒ **Example:** I would **advise** that you avoid the pork burrito.

- **Advice** is a noun meaning the opinion that was given.

⇒ **Example:** My **advice** is based on life experience.

Weather vs. Whether: These words are different parts of speech and have different meanings.

- **Weather** is a noun that discusses the state of the atmosphere.

⇒ **Example:** The **weather** is supposed to nice over the weekend.

- **Whether** is a conjunction that introduces an alternative or the first of one or more alternatives in a sentence.

⇒ **Example:** Now I can't tell **whether** it's raining or snowing!

Other vs. Another: these words sound similar and are the same part of speech, but they have different meanings.



- **Other** is an adjective meaning further, additional, more, or extra.
 - ⇒ **Example:** Do you have any **other** questions?
- **Another** is an adjective that refers to something else, or that means in addition to something else.
 - ⇒ **Example:** I'm going to eat **another** sandwich.
 - ⇒ **Example:** Can you meet with me on **another** day?

Specially vs. Especially: These adverbs are close in meaning and commonly confused.

- **Specially** is an adverb meaning for a special purpose.
 - ⇒ **Example:** I had these shoes **specially** made for my feet.
- **Especially** is an adverb meaning very much, a great extent; it is used to single out something.
 - ⇒ **Example:** I need you to bake a lot of cookies for the party, **especially** chocolate chip cookies.
 - ⇒ **Example:** This resource is **especially** useful for students who are learning English.

Breath vs. Breathe: These words are spelled similarly; here's the difference.

- **Breath** is a noun meaning the air that we inhale and exhale.
 - ⇒ **Example:** I was so stressed before I gave my speech, but when I took a deep **breath**, I felt better.
- **Breathe** is a verb that refers to the action of inhaling and exhaling.
 - ⇒ **Example:** When Joe burned his food, the room filled with smoke, and I couldn't **breathe**.

Who vs. Whom: These pronouns are easy to mix up.

- **Who** is a pronoun meaning what or which person or people.
 - ⇒ **Example:** **Who** is that girl?



- **Whom** is a pronoun used instead of “who” as the object of a verb or preposition.

⇒ **Example:** **Whom** did you call?

Its vs. It’s: While the meaning of these determiners is different, the structure makes using these words tricky.

- **Its** is a determiner meaning belonging to or associated with something.

⇒ **Example:** The milk is past **its** expiration date.

- **It’s** is a contraction of “It is.”

⇒ **Example:** I can’t believe **it’s** already Friday!

Seen vs. Saw : While the meaning of these determiners is the same, the context in which they occur is different.

- **Seen** is the past participle of the verb “to see.”

⇒ **Example:** I have not **seen** any of the Star Wars films. They don’t interest me.

- **Saw** is the past tense of the verb “to see.”

⇒ **Example:** I **saw** a really big dog the other day! It was beautiful.

Further Assistance: For more detailed help or if you have questions, visit the Writing Center located in the Lewis University Library or call 815-836-5427.

Sources Consulted: Purdue OWL and New Charter University