

COMMONLY MISUSED WORDS

Affect, Effect

“Affect” is a verb. It means “to change” or “to influence.” “Effect” can be a verb or a noun. As a verb, it means “to cause;” as a noun, it means “a result.”

Aggravate, Irritate

To “aggravate” is “to add to” something that is already troublesome; to “irritate” is “to annoy.”

Allude, Elude

You “allude” to “make reference to” a book; you “elude” or “run away from” someone who is chasing you.

Alot

An “alot” is a camel. One thing we do not need in the office is a lot of “alots.”

Among, Between

Use “among” when more than two are involved; use “between” when you are comparing two persons, places, or things.

And/Or

A shortcut that looks and reads bad can lead to confusion or ambiguity. Avoid using “and/or” whenever possible.

Anybody, Anyone

“Anybody” is written as one word when it refers to “any person.” “Any body” as two means “any corpse” or “any group.” The same is true for “everybody,” “nobody,” and “somebody.” “Anyone” means anybody; “any one” means “any single person” or “any single thing.”

Assure, Ensure, Insure

To “assure” is to “speak confidently” about something; “to ensure” is “to make sure” or “to make certain;” “to insure” is “to protect something against loss or damage with an insurance policy.”

Being

“Being” is not needed after “regard” in sentences such as, “he was regarded as being the best.” A better way of phrasing this thought is, “he was regarded as the best.”

COMMONLY MISUSED WORDS (Con't.)

Can, May

"Can" means "able to;" "may" means "permit."

"Can I leave work early?" means --- "Am I able to leave work early?" --- "Is all my work done?" --- "Are my legs strong enough to carry me away?"

"May I leave work early?" means "May I have permission to go home?"

Compare to, Compare with

To "compare to" is "to point out the similarities in different things." For example, "life can be compared to a rat race." To "compare with" is "to point out the differences between similar things." For example, "rat races can be compared with rush hour traffic."

Couldn't care less, Could care less

"Couldn't care less" means "you care so little about something it would be impossible for you to care less." "Could care less" is an expression that comes from people not hearing the "n't" in "couldn't care less."

Data

Like "media" and "phenomena," "data" is plural. It refers to more than one fact or piece of evidence.

Disability, Handicap

A "disability" is a physical or emotional impairment. A "handicap" occurs when a person cannot overcome his/her disability.

Farther, Further

"Farther" has to do with distance. "Further" can be used to indicate distance, and it can also mean "to promote" or "to advocate."

Fewer, Less

"Fewer" refers to numbers. "Less" refers to quantity.

Finalize

"Finalize" can mean either "to terminate" or "to put into final form." Try to avoid using "finalize" since it is overused and pretentious. Instead, use "finish" or "complete."

Gratuitous, Gratuity

Gratuitous means "undeserved" or "unearned." A "gratuity" is a "tip for services rendered."

Hopefully

"Hopefully" used to mean "with hope;" now it means "I hope," and it drives grammarians into fits of rage. They reason that if you write "hopefully, you will write your proposal on time" then you do not know whether you hope to write your proposal on time or you will write an optimistic proposal.

COMMONLY MISUSED WORDS (Con't.)

I, Me

When our parents heard us say "Bob and me played baseball," they told us to say "Bob and I." To determine which is appropriate, read the sentence without the other person's name.

Imply, Infer

"To imply" is "to suggest or indicate without expressing exactly what you want to say." For example, "he implied that we were going to get a raise." "To infer" is "to reach a conclusion from the evidence at hand." For example, "based on what he said, we can infer that a raise will be coming."

Irregardless

"Irregardless" is not a word. The correct word to use is "regardless."

Its, It's

"Its" is the possessive form of the word "it." It means something belongs to the particular place or thing "it" stands for. For example, "this car is more expensive because its upholstery is leather." "It's" is the contraction for "it is." For example, "it's a dark colored leather."

-ize

Many good verbs end in "-ize." Therefore, we should not add this suffix to other verbs.

Like, As

Except as a term of affection, "like" has to do with comparison. For example, "that was not like him." "As" can be used in comparisons. For example, "the two were equally as efficient."

Plan ahead

Would you ever "plan behind?" Just "plan" is sufficient.

Reason is because, Reason is that

"Reason is because" is redundant because "reason" and "because" both deal with the cause. "Reason is that" is correct.

Secondly, Thirdly

You would not say "firstly." Therefore, use "first," "second," and "third."

Try to, Try and

To "try to" is "to attempt." "To try and" implies that two separate actions are taking place.

Unique

Unique means "without equal." Therefore, do not use "most unique" or "very unique."