

List of Commonly Confused Words

accept--verb, to take willingly. **Ex.**--I accept your offer.

except--preposition, to exclude. **Ex.**--I want all the food except the peas, please.

adverse, 'unfavourable, bad', with **averse**, which means 'strongly disliking or opposed to', as in *I am not averse to helping out*.

advice--noun, a suggestion or recommendation. **Ex.**--Take my advice.

advise--verb, to show the way, to give advice. **Ex.**--I will advise him of our arrival time.

affect--verb, to change in some way. **Ex.**--Did that movie affect you at all?

effect--noun, the result of something. **Ex.**--The effect of the prism is wonderful.

appraise with **apprise**: **appraise** means 'assess', while **apprise** means 'inform'.

censure with **ensor**: **censure** means 'express strong disapproval of', whereas **ensor** means 'suppress unacceptable parts of (a book, film, etc.)'.

climactic, 'forming a climax', with **climatic**, which means 'relating to climate'.

complement, 'a thing that enhances something by contributing extra features', with **compliment**, which means 'an expression of praise' or 'politely congratulate'.

continuous and **continual**: **continuous** primarily means 'without interruption', and can refer to space as well as time, as in *the cliffs form a continuous line along the coast*; **continual**, on the other hand, typically means 'happening frequently, with intervals between', as in *the bus service has been disrupted by continual breakdowns*.

council, an administrative or advisory body, with **counsel**, advice or guidance.

councillor with **counsellor**: a **councillor** is a member of a council, whereas a **counsellor** is someone who gives guidance on personal or psychological problems.

definite ('certain, sure') with **definitive**, which means 'decisive and with authority'.

exceptionable ('open to objection; causing disapproval or offence') with **exceptional** ('not typical' or 'unusually good').

flaunt with **flout**; **flaunt** means 'display ostentatiously', while **flout** means 'openly disregard (a rule)'.

flounder with **founder**: **flounder** generally means 'have trouble doing or understanding something, be confused', while **founder** means 'fail or come to nothing'.

hoard with **horde**: a **hoard** is a store of something valuable; **horde** is a disparaging term for a large group of people.

loath ('reluctant; unwilling') with **loathe**, 'dislike greatly'.

marital, 'of marriage', with **martial**, 'of war'.

officious, 'asserting authority or interfering in an annoyingly domineering way', with **official**, which means 'relating to an authority or public body' and 'having the approval or authorization of such a body'.

ordinance, 'an authoritative order', with **ordnance**, which means 'guns' or 'munitions'.

palate and **palette**: the **palate** is the roof of the mouth; a **palette**, on the other hand, is an artist's board for mixing colours.

passed--verb, went by or got over something. **Ex.**--My flu symptoms have finally passed. I passed him yesterday.

past--noun, the before, the "what was" that is now gone. **Ex.**--That was all in the past. Her past was plagued with bad decisions.

pedal and **peddle**. **Pedal** is a noun denoting a foot-operated lever; as a verb it means 'move by means of pedals'. **Peddle** is a verb meaning 'sell (goods)'. The associated noun from **pedal** is **pedaller** (US **pedaler**), and the noun from **peddle** is **pedlar** or **peddler**.

principal, 'first in order of importance; main', with **principle**, which is a noun meaning chiefly 'a basis of a system of thought or belief'.

proscribe with **prescribe**: **proscribe** is a rather formal word meaning 'condemn or forbid', whereas **prescribe** means either 'issue a medical prescription' or 'recommend with authority'.

regretful, 'feeling or showing regret', with **regrettable**, which means 'giving rise to regret; undesirable'.

stationary and **stationery**: **stationary** is an adjective with the sense 'not moving or changing', whereas **stationery** is a noun meaning 'paper and other writing materials'.

suppose--verb, means to think or guess. **Ex.**--I suppose it's O.K. if you buy a snake.

supposed--adjective, accepted as such, ought, should. **Ex.**--Are you supposed to eat that?

than--conjunction, used to show comparison. **Ex.**--My car is bigger than yours. I would rather starve to death than have to eat your cooking!

then--adverb, shows a time sequence or order. **Ex.**--If you drag that tree out of the way, then I will chop it up.

unsociable with **unsocial** and **antisocial**: **unsociable** means 'not enjoying the company of or engaging in activities with others'; **unsocial** usually means 'socially inconvenient' and typically refers to the hours of work of a job; **antisocial** means 'contrary to accepted social customs and therefore annoying'.

use--verb, to utilize. **Ex.**--I use green shampoo because it's fun.

used--verb past tense, as in I used all the shampoo. Also, "used to" means accustomed to. **Ex.**--I am used to your ways. Also, used to ____-- (any verb in the blank). **Ex.**--I used to go to the movies, but I don't go any more.