Commonly Confused Words

1. Allusion vs. Illusion
   An *allusion* refers to implying or referring to something, especially in literature.
   Ex. The horse mentioned in the text is clearly an allusion to the Trojan horse.
   An *illusion* refers to a misleading image, object, or idea that does not exist as it appears.
   Ex. The magician created the illusion of a disappearing coin.

2. Among vs. Between
   *Among* is used when referring to three or more.
   Ex. Among the paintings was an original Picasso.
   *Between* is used when referring to two.
   Ex. I am stuck in traffic between Alden Rd. and Pennell Dr.

3. Effect vs. Affect
   An *effect* is a result or a consequence.
   Ex. The effect was catastrophic. OR The effects of the change in the existing system are, as yet, undetermined.
   An *affect* is to have an impression, influence, or effect on something. *(usually a verb)*
   Ex. This greatly affected his mental state that evening.

4. Fewer vs. Less
   *Fewer* is used when referring to things that can be counted.
   Ex. There were fewer customers than anticipated.
   *Less* is used when referring to uncountable and usually abstract nouns.
   Ex. I have less patience than Ted.

5. Hanged vs. Hung
   *Hanged* refers to the past tense and past participle of hang (to put to death).
   Ex. Many people were hanged during the Salem Witch Trials.
   *Hung* refers to the past tense and past participle of hang (to suspend).
   Ex. He hung the picture on the wall.

6. Imply vs. Infer
   To *imply* means to suggest something without specifically stating it.
   Ex. Are you implying that I did something wrong?
   To *infer* means to draw a conclusion about something that hasn’t been directly stated.
   Ex. From your statement, I can infer that you believe he is guilty.

7. Lie vs. Lay
   Use *lie* when the object is reclining on its own.
   Ex. I am going to lie down. OR Go lie down on the couch.
   Use *lay* when the object is being placed down.
   Ex. I will lay the book on the table. OR I need to lay the baby down; it’s nap time.
8. Many vs. Much

*Many* is used when referring to a large but definite number. *Many* refers to things that can be counted.

- Ex. I have too many shoes.

*Much* is used when referring to something great in quantity, amount, extent or degree. *Much* refers to things that cannot be counted.

- Ex. You have too much time on your hands.

9. Rise vs. Raise

Use *rise* when the object is lifting itself.

- Ex. I rise each morning at six.

Use *raise* when the object is being lifted by another force.

- Ex. She raised her hand; it did not rise on its own OR He raised the flag during the ceremony

10. Than vs. Then

*Than* is used to draw a comparison.

- Ex. I like vanilla more than chocolate.

*Then* is used to refer to time/at that time.

- Ex. I went to the store; then I went to David's graduation.

11. Their vs. They’re vs. There

*Their* is the third person plural pronoun. It indicates a possession or relationship.

- Ex. Their dog was in the backyard.

*They’re* is the contraction of “they” and “are.”

- Ex. They’re going to the amusement park on Friday.

*There* is used to refer to a specific location, position, or time. It may also be used to introduce a sentence of clause when the verb has no definite subject.

- Ex. The books are over there. OR There will be cake at the party.

12. To vs. Too vs Two

*To* is used with verbs to form the infinitive or as a preposition expressing movement towards something.

- Ex. It is important to tell the truth. OR We went to the mall.

*Too* is used to show an extensive degree or as a synonym of “also.”

- Ex. He is too young for that ride. OR I am going to the movies too.

*Two* is used when indicating a number.

- Ex. There are two dishes to bring to the party. OR Two is too many; we only need one.

13. Who vs. Whom

*Who* is used when it is the subject of a sentence or a predicate noun.

- Ex. Who wants ice cream?

*Whom* is used when it is the direct object, the indirect object, or the object of a preposition.

- Ex. Whom did you ask to the dance? OR You are giving the ring to whom?

14. Whose vs. Who’s

*Whose* is a pronoun expressing possession.

- Ex. Whose car are we taking?

*Who’s* is the contraction of who is.

- Ex. Who’s going to the concert?
Commonly Confused Words Practice Exercises

For each of the following sentences, circle the correct word choice:

1. We discussed the multiple literary (illusions/allusions) within the text.
2. (Among/Between) me and you, I think Kallie won the contest.
3. She had too (many/much) sweaters in her closet.
4. Alex was (to/too) excited to sleep.
5. (Their/They’re/There) going to the amusement park tomorrow.
6. The sugar had a negative (effect/affect) on the science experiment.
7. Nicole has (fewer/less) shoes than Sara.
8. The gas prices continue to (raise/rise).
9. Michael (hanged/hung) the picture for his mother.
11. John scored higher on the exam (then/than) I did.
12. (Who/Whom) wants to go to the mall tonight?
13. Haley did not mean to (infer/imply) that Jenny was to blame.
14. John had (less/fewer) travel time because he lives closer to the airport.
15. (Whose/Who’s) watch is this on the counter?
16. I am going to (lie/lay) down for an hour.
17. The disappearing penny was simply an optical (allusion/illusion).
18. The book is on the table over (their/there/they’re).
19. (Whose/Who’s) responsible for the advertising of the event?
20. From your words, I can (infer/imply) that you think he is guilty.
21. The weather greatly (effected/affected) the outcome of the race.
22. (Their/They’re/There) books are on the bottom shelf.
23. Earlier today we walked (to/too) the ice cream parlor.
24. The prisoner was (hung/hanged) last night.
25. There are red roses scattered (among/between) the carnations.
26. Kelly ordered her lunch, and (then/than) she went back to work.
27. Mark wanted (to raise/to rise) the flag at the assembly today.
28. (Who/Whom) did you ask to the party?
29. There was too (much/many) chlorine in the pool.
## Commonly Confused Words Practice Answers

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Allusion</td>
<td>16. Lie</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Between</td>
<td>17. Illusion</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Many</td>
<td>18. There</td>
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<tr>
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## Tips for Troublesome “T” Words

**There and Their:**
"There" and "their" are frequently confused when writing. Below is a device which might help you to remember how to use each word:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Remove the T from each</th>
<th>You are left with</th>
<th>Tip for remembering usage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T/here</td>
<td>here</td>
<td>Here denotes place - Think &quot;here and there.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T/heir</td>
<td>heir</td>
<td>An heir is one who inherits or comes into possession. Remember that &quot;their&quot; shows possession.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Then and Than:**
Try this tip to help you remember how to use each word correctly in your writing:

"Then" rhymes with "when", and "when" refers to time.

Use "then" in cases in which you want to refer to time.

Otherwise, use "than."