

## Frequently Confused/Misspelled Words

**its / it's:** **its** is a possessive pronoun like his, hers; it does not need an apostrophe.

**it's** is a contraction for it is.

**infer/imply:** Think of **imply** as an outgoing message: The girl's remarks **implied** ("suggested") that her family is rich. Think of **infer** as an incoming message: We **inferred** ("concluded") from the girl's remarks that her family is rich.

**allusion/illusion:** An **allusion** is an indirect reference to someone or something: My sister makes frequent **allusions** ("references") to Shakespeare. An **illusion** is a false picture or idea: She is under the **illusion** ("false idea") that she is a Shakespeare scholar.

**accept / except:** The verb **accept** means "to receive": I **accept** the award. The preposition **except** means "other than": All of the winners **except** Betty received an award.

**number / amount:** The word **number** is used for anything countable; **amount** is for collective or bulk measurement. I bought a **number** of chocolate bars. Each contained an **amount** of caffeine.

**passed / past:** The **past** is a noun: In the **past**, I used a fork to eat pizza; **passed** is a verb: I **passed** the pizza to her.

**who's / whose:** Always read a contraction as two words to hear it aloud: **Who's** ("who is") going to the dance?; **whose** is a possessive pronoun: **Whose** book is this?

**affect:** A verb meaning "to influence," as in: The new schedule will **affect** us all.

**effect:** As a verb, effect means "to bring about or to produce a result," as in: The new schedule will **effect** many changes. As a noun, effect means "the result," as in: The **effect** of the new schedule was a negative feeling on campus.

**fewer:** Used to describe things that can be counted, as in: Shirley has **fewer** clients this year.

**less:** Used to describe quantity (or uncountable things) or degree, as in: There has been **less** rain this year, or: The new neighbors will give you **less** trouble than the previous neighbors.

**then:** A word associated with time, as in: After the bell rang, we **then** headed to McDonald's.

**than:** A word used to compare, as in: His car is newer **than** mine.

**lead:** Besides being a noun, as in the lead in a pencil, lead is a present tense verb, as in: Ralph was chosen to **lead** the orchestra.

**led:** This is the past tense of the verb "to lead," as in: Ralph has **led** the orchestra many times in the past. The dog **led** me to his master.

**lay:** The verb *lay* means "to put or place *something*" (it needs an object), as in: Where did you **lay** the book?

I will **lay** the book down. (future tense) I **lay** the book down. (present tense) I **laid** the book down. (past tense) I **have laid** the book down. (past participle) I **am laying** the book down. (present progressive)

**lie:** The verb *lie* means "being in a horizontal position or to remain or to be situated" as in resting or reclining. (It does *not* take an object.) Used as in: I will **lie** down and take a nap. I **am lying** down to take a nap. (present progressive)

I will lie down and nap. (future tense) I **lie** down and nap after school. (present tense) I **lay** down and napped yesterday. (past tense) I **have lain** down and napped every day this week. (past participle)

**lie:** A homonym meaning "to tell an untruth," as in: She will **lie** whenever she is in trouble. She **lied** to me yesterday. (past tense) She **has lied** to me many times. (past participle) She **is lying** to me now. (present progressive)