

## Misused/Misspelled Words

Misused and/or misspelled words are like reading a road map the wrong way. They give the reader the wrong direction (and they suggest to the reader that you're not being careful).

In the following list are misspelled words that faculty compare to hearing chalk squeak on a chalkboard. So learn these simple definitions:



<u>a lot (not alot)</u>	<u>accept/except</u>	<u>advice/advise</u>
<u>affect/effect</u>	<u>all right (not alright)</u>	<u>already/all ready</u>
<u>altogether/all together</u>	<u>alumna/alumnae alumnus/alumni</u>	<u>among/between</u>
<u>bad/badly</u>	<u>fewer/less</u>	<u>its/it's</u>
<u>lose/loose</u>	<u>principal/principle</u>	<u>their/there/they're</u>
<u>then/than</u>	<u>to/too/two</u>	<u>weather/whether</u>
<u>who/whom</u>	<u>which/who/that</u>	<u>your/you're</u>

### **a lot (*not* alot)**

it's **never** one word, but is **always** two words: a lot

Harold ate a lot of pepperoni, anchovy, broccoli, and green onion pizza; he was up all night with a lot of sickness as a result.

### **accept/except**

accept = to agree with, to receive

except = to exclude

I accept all points of the verdict except the final one that indicts me for the slaying of your affection.

### **advice/advise**

advice = the information that you give to another, but don't necessarily take yourself (a noun)

advise = the act of giving information to another (a verb)

The advice you gave me helped me advise my client in his stock choices. Are you billing me?

### **affect/effect**

affect = to influence (used as a verb)

effect = the result of an action (used as a noun) **or** the act of causing change (used as a noun)

That movie affected me strongly; I was half-awake all night thinking of bleeding limbs. I won't go to any more

hacker films if they have that effect on me.

**Tip:** Note that psychologists use "affect" as a noun meaning "feeling or emotion." Use "affect" as a noun **only** in a psychological context.

The criminal psychologist pointed out that the killer showed no affect when describing how he murdered the lawyer.

### **all right (*not* alright)**

it's **never** one word, but is **always** two words: all right?

### **already/all ready**

already = previously

all ready = completely prepared

When he arrived home, his wife was already asleep, even though she promised to be all ready to go to the movies.

### **altogether/all together**

altogether = completely, entirely

all together = grouped

She gathered the pieces of the portfolio all together, and she decided that the process of compiling her artwork was altogether satisfactory.

### **alumna/alumnae alumnus/alumni**

alumna = one female graduate

alumnae = more than one female graduate

alumnus = one male graduate

alumni = more than one male graduate, also used as a plural for males and females

Susan is an undergraduate alumna of Elmira College. Phil is an undergraduate alumnus of Goddard College. They both are graduate alumni of SUNY Empire State College.

### **among/between**

among = use with more than two

between = use with two

Grandfather divided his lottery winnings among his four children, and my father divided his share between my sister and me.

### **bad/badly**

bad = describes a person, place, thing, or state of being (feeling, looking)

badly = describes an action or another descriptive word

I feel bad; I had a bad fall, and the wound healed badly. (**Not:** I feel badly.)

### **fewer/less**

fewer = a countable number

less = an overall or general amount, non-countable

Due to parents' increasing concern with good nutrition, fewer students in my second-grade class bring cookies for snacktime. Also due to that same concern, many companies are making cookies with less sugar.

### **its/it's**

its = belonging to it

it's = it is

It's the first day after the snowfall and already the snow has lost its fresh, clean look.

### **lose/loose**

lose = to have lost something

loose = free, not fastened

She said, "I'll lose ten more pounds," even though the dress was loose on her emaciated frame.

### **principal/principle**

principal = the person in charge of a school; the main person, thing, or concept; the main amount of money

principle = a basic truth or standard

Principal Shaw is a person of principle.

### **their/there/they're**

their = belonging to them

there = a direction

they're = they are

Sam and Barbara told us that they're not recommending a visit to Gotham City to their friends. They had a lot of trouble there. When they went to make a phone call to their family at home, they were ejected from the public phone booth by someone crying, "Hey, you there, get out of Superman's way!"

### **then/than**

then = to show time

than = to show comparison

### **to/too/two**

to = a preposition (used with a noun or pronoun)

too = also, very

two = quantity

"To err is human, to forgive divine" is one of the two phrases that I remember only too well.

### **weather/whether**

weather = the stuff that it's doing outside

whether = indicates a choice; whether or not to do something

Our ski trip depends on whether the weather is appropriate.

### **who/whom**

who = the subject of a sentence

whom = the object of an action

"Who requested this book? What's that? I can't hear you. I deliver this book to whom?"

**Tip:** Try each word with "to" or "for." Whom is the word that makes sense with "to" or "for."

### **which/who/that**

which = refers to things or animals (not people)

who = refers only to people (not things or animals)

that = refers to people, things, or animals

James Stewart, who befriended Harvey, which was an invisible rabbit, often had conversations with that rabbit, to the chagrin of his family in the film.

### **your/you're**

your = belonging to you

you're = you are

"I loved your interpretation of a stalk of celery," she gushed. "You're very talented."

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