Commonly Confused Words

Accept / except

Accept is a verb meaning “to receive or come to terms with”: “She accepted his story as truth.”

Except is a preposition meaning “excluding”: “I like every kind of ice cream except strawberry.”

A lot / allot

A lot is an informal way of saying “a bunch” or “several.” It is never combined as “alot” is not a word.

Allot is a verb meaning “to divide up and distribute”: “The father allotted one piece of the pie to each child.”

Effect / affect

Effect is almost always a noun meaning “a result” or “a consequence”: “The drug Lucy took had multiple side effects.”

Affect is a verb meaning “to change, alter, or have impact on”: “His harsh words really affected me.”

Exception: effect can be used as a verb meaning “to bring about”: “The president’s new policies effected a big change in the economy” (most often used in “to effect a change”).

Every day / everyday

Every day, typed as two words, means the same as each day or every single day.

Everyday is an adjective that means “common,” “typical,” or “routine”: “The doctor said I could resume my everyday activities” or “Falling asleep at her desk is an everyday occurrence for her.”
Good / well

**Good** is an adjective used to describe a noun: “a **good** dinner” or “a **good** performance,” etc.

**Well** is an adverb used to describe a verb: “she cooks **well**” or “the choir sings **well**.” **Well** can also modify an adjective: “a **well-known** cook” or “**well-informed** journalist.” (Note the hyphen usage.)

**Reminder**: Superman is doing good by saving people. You are always doing well.

It’s / its

**It’s** includes an apostrophe (‘), which means the word is a contraction of two words: *it* and *is*. If you use this word, you must be able to logically replace it with “it is.” Otherwise, it’s incorrect.

**Its** (without an apostrophe) is a possessive pronoun which shows that something belongs to “it”: “The dog found its bone” or “The corporation failed to fully report its losses.”

Loose / lose

**Loose** (with the double o) is an adjective meaning a variety of things: relaxed, not tight, or not secure: “She preferred to wear loose-fitting pants” or “The loose screw made the ladder dangerous.”

**Lose** is a verb meaning to misplace, shed, or not win. You can lose keys, lose weight, or lose a game.

Then / than

**Then** is an adverb referring to time or sequence, such as “next” or “afterward.”

**Than** is a conjunction implying a comparison: “He is a stronger swimmer than she is.”

They’re / their / there

**They’re** includes an apostrophe, indicating that the word is a contraction of *they* and *are*. You must be able to replace they’re with *they are* in your sentence. Any other use is incorrect.

**Their** is a possessive pronoun. Use this word to show that something belongs to two or more people: “Their son failed first grade” or “The women fought for their right to vote.”

**There** is an adverb denoting a place: “Put the book over there.” It can also denote an expletive, an “empty” word used to begin a sentence when the subject follows the verb: “*There* is too much poverty in our world.”
**Too / to / two**

Too is an intensifier used to show the extent or extremity of some adjective or adverb: “She’s too skinny to be healthy” or “He exercised too soon after eating dinner.”

To is a preposition for location or direction: “Go to New York” or “Give it to the teacher.”

Two is a number following one and preceding three.

**Weather / whether**

Weather refers to the climate, temperature, outdoor conditions: “The weather is so nice today!”

Whether is a conjunction referring to the choice between two or more alternatives: “I have to decide whether or not I want to attend the party.”

**Who / whom**

Who is a relative pronoun that acts as a subject, which means it usually appears just before a verb: “The prize went to the contestant who ran the fastest” or “Do you know who called this morning?” S V S V

Whom is a relative pronoun that functions as an object of a verb or preposition: “This is the woman whom he photographed” or “I don’t know whom to contact” or “To whom would you like to speak?” O S V O V P O

In each example, whom functions as an object (“receiver”) of something, not the subject (“doer”): he photographed whom, to contact whom, to speak to whom.

**You’re / your**

You’re includes an apostrophe, indicating that the word is a contraction of you and are. You must be able to replace you’re with you are in your sentence. Any other use is incorrect.

Your is a possessive pronoun showing that something belongs to a person: “You haven’t finished your dinner” or “Record your name in the space provided.”