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Commonly-misused Words

a, an	Use **a** before words that begin with a consonant sound. Use **an** before words that begin with a vowel sound. a house an apple
advice, advise	**Advice** is a noun, means '*an opinion offered as guidance*." **Advise**, a verb, means '*to give advice*' or '*to counsel*.' I will *advise* you, if you are willing to *accept* my advice.
affect, effect	**Affect** is a verb that means '*to cause a change in*' or '*to influence the emotions of*." **Effect** may be a noun or a verb. As a noun, it means '*result*.' As a verb, it means '*to bring about or accomplish*.' The new work hours have *affected* the temporary workers. The new work hours had a positive *effect* on the workers performance.
among, between	In general use **among** to show a relationship in which more than two persons or things are considered as a group. Use **between** to show a relationship involving two persons or things, to compare one person or thing with an entire group, or to compare more than two items within a group. The boxes of cookies were distributed *among* the girls in the club. St. Joseph is *between* St. Augustine and San Juan. Jan could not decide *between* the box of cookies, the box of chocolate, and the box of sweets. What is the difference *between* a baking powder and baking soda?
amount, number	**Amount** and **number** both refer to quantity. Use **amount** for things that can't be counted. Use **number** for things that could be counted. There is a vast amount of diamonds Botswana. The miners extracted a large number of diamonds from the site.

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bad, badly	*Bad* is an adjective; use it before nouns and after linking verbs to modify the subject. *Badly* is an adverb; use it to modify action verbs. Dan had a *bad* football practice. Dan team performed *badly*.
beside, besides	*Beside* means '*at the side of*' or '*next to*.' *Besides* means '*in addition to*.' The dog sat *beside* his master. *Besides* ice-cream and cake, you can also order muffins and bagels.
can, may	*Can* indicates ability. *May* expresses permission or possibility. Can you *tie* your shoe lacing? *May* I be excused?
could of, might of, must of, should of, would of	After the words *could, might, must, should,* and *would*, use the helping verb *have* or its contraction, '*ve*, NOT the word *of*. I *could have* gone with her. I *might have* seen her. You *must have* seen them. I *should've* been there. I *would have* thank you.
different from, different than	In most cases, *different from* is the correct choice. Use *different than* only if than introduces a subordinate clause This dress is *different from* that dress. This dress is *different than* the dress I wore yesterday.
farther, further	Use *farther* in referring to physical distance. Use *further* in all other situations. Port of Spain is *farther* than San Juan. We have nothing *further* to discuss.

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for, four	*For* is a preposition. *Four* is a number. I have *four* pies *for* the church sharing.
good, well	*Good* is an adjective; use it before nouns and after linking verbs to modify the subject. *Well* is an adverb, use it to modify action verbs. Well may also be an adjective meaning 'in good health.' You look *good* in that costume. Joby plays the guitar *well*.
had of…	Don't use *of* between *had* and *a past participle*. I wish I *had* known about this sooner. NOT: I wish I *had of* known about this sooner.
irregardless	Use *regardless*. Both the prefix *ir-* and the suffix *–less* have negative meanings; therefore *irregardless* is a double negative, which is incorrect. *Regardless* of what you said, I like that song.
kind of, sort of	Don't use these expressions as adverbs. Use somewhat or rather instead*.* We were rather sorry to him go.
off, of	Don't use off instead of from. Don't use *of* after the preposition *off*. He fell off the bicycle. NOT: He fell off of the bicycle.
reason is because	Don't use *because* after reason is. Best to use because alone. I am ill because I didn't sleep well last week.
where… at	Don't use *at* after *where*. Where is he? NOT: Where is he at?

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who, whom	**Who** is the nominative case. Use it for subject and predicate nominatives. **Whom** is the objective case. Use it for direct objects, indirect objects, and objects of prepositions. Who is that boy? Whom did you see at the post office?
who's, whose	**Who's** is a contraction of *who is* or *who has*. **Whose** is the possessive form of who. Who is coming this evening? Who's coming this evening? Whose book is this?

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