

Choosing the Appropriate Words

- ❶ **accept, except**--Accept is a verb meaning "to receive." Except is usually a preposition meaning "excluding." *The postal service will **accept** most packages for mailing **except** that one.*
- ❷ **advice, advise**--Advice is a noun, advise is a verb: *I agree with Jodi's **advice**. The counselor may **advise** you to take another computer class.*
- ❸ **affect, effect**--Affect is usually a verb meaning "to influence." Effect is usually a noun meaning "result." *Cats tend to **affect** her asthma. One such **effect** is an irritable throat.*
- ❹ **all ready, already**--All ready means "completely prepared." Already means "previously." *Our family had **already** packed for our trip because they were **all ready** to go.*
- ❺ **all right**--All right is written as two words. Alright is nonstandard. *Taco Bell for dinner is **all right** with me.*
- ❻ **a lot**--A lot is two words not one. *We have had to do **a lot** of writing for this class.*
- ❼ **bad, badly**--Bad is an adjective, badly an adverb. *Susan had a **bad** feeling that her dog would behave **badly** while she was gone.*
- ❽ **cannot**--This is one word--not two.
- ❾ **can, may**--Can is traditionally used to show "ability" and may for "permission." *Can you play basketball? May I show you how to dribble?*
- ❿ **could of, should of, would of**--These are all nonstandard forms. Instead use: could have, should have, would have. *The girls **should have** been home over an hour ago.*
- ⓫ **everyone, every one**--Everyone is an indefinite pronoun. Every one, the pronoun one preceded by the adjective every means "each individual or thing in a particular group." *Almost **everyone** in our English class loves to write, so **every one** of the papers received a passing grade.*
- ⓬ **hardly**--Avoid expressions such as can't hardly and not hardly which are considered double negatives. *I **can't hardly** wait for Christmas to come.*

its, it's--*Its* is a possessive pronoun; *it's* is a contraction for it is. *The dog lost its collar, and now it's going to have to get another one.*

lie, lay--*Lie* is an intransitive verb meaning "to recline or rest on a surface." Its principle parts are lie, lay, lain. *Lay* is a transitive verb meaning "to put or place." Its principle parts are lay, laid, laid. *Shirley felt nauseated, so she left to lie down. Please lay your books down right now.*

reason...is because--Use *that* instead of *because*. *The reason I'm late is that (not because) I slipped down the stairs at home.*

than, then--*Than* is a conjunction used in comparisons; *then* is an adverb denoting time. *Joseph drove us to the restaurant, and then we ordered a huge dinner. The barbecue ribs were more than I can eat.*

there, their, they're--*There* is an adverb specifying place; it is also an expletive. *There are two pieces of pie left. The paper is right there in front of your face.* *Their* is a possessive pronoun. *My parents ate at their favorite restaurant. They're* is a contraction for "they are." *They're* going out again tomorrow.

to, too, two--*To* is a preposition; *too* is an adverb; *two* is a number. *The two of them haven't been able to talk to the instructor because he is too busy.*

use to--Write *used to* instead. *Kim used to play the trumpet.*

weather, whether--The noun *weather* refers to the state of the atmosphere. *Whether* is a conjunction referring to a choice between alternatives. *Mr. Owens told us that the weather is supposed to change drastically this afternoon. I don't know whether it will, however.*

who, whom--*Who* is used for subjects and subject complements; *whom* is used for objects.

you--In formal writing, avoid *you* in an indefinite sentence meaning "anyone." *Any baseball fan (not YOU) could tell that McGwire's ball was out of the ball park.*

your, you're--*Your* is a possessive pronoun; *you're* is a contraction of "you are." *Is that your new car? You're lucky your dad bought it for you.*