CONFUSING AND MISUSED WORD PAIRS

**accept/except**

- *accept:* (verb) to take or receive something that is offered to you
- *except:* (preposition) with the exclusion of, excluding

> Tonight, Dr. Adams will *accept* his award for outstanding medical research.

> Tony loves all Mexican food, *except* refried beans.

**advice/advise**

- *advice:* (noun) guidance
- *advise:* (verb) to give guidance, to recommend

> My grandmother gives me great *advice* when I am confused about school or boyfriends.

> My teacher *advised* me to take my essay to a tutor at the college’s writing center.

**affect/effect**

- *affect:* (verb) to produce an effect or change in, to influence
- *effect:* (noun) result or consequence

> The farmers are worried how the drought will *affect* this year’s harvest.

> One negative *effect* of smoking is an increased risk of developing lung cancer.

**aloud/allowed**

- *aloud:* (adverb) out loud in a speaking voice
- *allowed:* (verb) permitted

> Mrs. Smith read the Dr. Seuss book *aloud* to her students.

> When I turned sixteen, my father *allowed* me to stay out until midnight on weekends.
amount/number

amount: (noun) used to indicate quantity with non-count nouns, nouns that are used largely in the singular form, for example, weather, love, coffee, electricity, lumber, and hair

number: (noun) used with count nouns (nouns that have both singular and plural forms), such as, picture/pictures, cup/cups, box/boxes, column/columns, and hall/halls

The amount of fun the children had was worth the cost to enter the amusement park.

The number of children in the amusement park surprised the visitors.

*Number* may take either a singular or plural verb. Use a singular verb when the article *the* precedes the word *number*; use a plural verb when *a* precedes the word *number*.

are/our

are: (verb) present tense form of the verb *to be*

our: (pronoun & adjective) the possessive form of *we*

The crumbs *are* all that is left of the birthday cake.

*Our* birthday cake is sitting in the middle of the table.

break/brake

break: (verb) to smash or split or (noun) a rest

brake: (verb) to stop a car or other vehicle or (noun) the device for stopping a vehicle

“Don’t throw the ball in the house, or you’ll break something!” yelled the babysitter.

After final exams, a holiday break is a welcome relief.

“You will need to brake at this corner,” the driving instructor told his student.

It cost $200.00 to replace my left front brake on my car.

capital/capitol

capital: (noun) the city that is the official seat of government of a state or country or wealth and assets

Capitol: (noun) the building occupied by a state legislature or the building in Washington D.C. used by Congress (capitalized for this meaning)
Sacramento is the capital of California.

When applying for a home loan, the applicant must provide evidence of a certain amount of capital.

The eighth grade class took a field trip to the Capitol.

cite/site/sight
cite: (verb) to quote a passage, book, or author, etc. as an authority or to refer to as an example
site: (noun) position, location, or exact area at which something is located
sight: (noun) vision

Kathy’s annoying brother often cites Shakespeare when she is having romance troubles.

The secretary cited many instances of sexual harassment.

Johan’s father, who is an architect, took him to the site of the famous skyscraper.

The operation to remove a brain tumor caused the patient to lose his sight.

its/it’s
its: (possessive pronoun) belonging to it
it’s: (subject pronoun connected to verb) a contraction meaning it is or it has

The snake shed its skin.

The weatherman exclaimed, “It’s going to be a beautiful day!”

The children all agreed, “It’s been a wonderful adventure.”

lose/loose
lose: (verb) to misplace
loose: (adjective) free from restraint; baggy, not taut or (verb) to let loose or release

Because of my absent-mindedness, I lose my keys or my glasses at least once a week.

After I lost weight, my pants were loose.

The farmer loosed the geese into the barnyard.
past/passed
past: (adjective) gone by or elapsed in time
passed: (verb) to move past or go by (past tense)

In years past, my mother has celebrated the holidays by inviting the grandchildren over to bake cookies.

We were not sure where the store was located, and we passed it three times before we saw it.

principle/principal
principle: (noun) an accepted or professed rule of action or conduct
principal: (adjective) first or highest in rank or (noun) head or chief, as of a school

Atticus Finch from the novel To Kill a Mockingbird is my favorite literary character because he is a man of solid moral principles.

Mrs. Kettering is the principal of Magnolia Elementary.

then/than
then: (adverb) next in order of time or in that case
than: (conjunction) used to introduce the second member of a comparison

Alex caught the ball and then threw it to the first baseman.

If you are failing the class, then you should see a tutor.

My sister is a better dancer than I am.

there/their/they’re
there: (adverb) in or at that place
their: (possessive pronoun) belonging to them
they’re: (subject pronoun connected to verb) a contraction meaning they are.

The cake mixes are over there on that shelf next to the spices.

My brothers are very proud of their collection of antique cars.

Justine and Alexia are in calculus together, and they’re having a difficult time with the exams.

through/threw
through: (preposition) in at one end, side, or surface and out the other or done with
threw: (verb) past tense of throw (throw is to cast away, hurl, or project)
The escaped convicts drove through Arizona without stopping.
The sixth graders were through with their art project.
In anger, the heartbroken girl threw her boyfriend’s picture against the wall.

**to/too/two**
to: (preposition) in the direction of; toward
too: (adverb) also or in to an excessive extent
two: (adjective) the number after one

After class, a few of the students are going to the library.
The little boy cried, “I want to go too!”
The spicy salsa was too hot for Liza’s taste.
Professor Haskins requires two essays for his History 101 class.

**we’re/were/where**
we’re: (subject pronoun connected to verb) a contraction meaning we are
were: (verb) past tense of the verb to be.
where: (adverb) in what place

“We’re off to see the wizard, the Wonderful Wizard of OZ.”
They were invited to the Halloween party.
Where did you find my car keys?