

loose, lose, loss *Loose* (loos) means “free, untied, unrestricted”; *lose* (loo^z) means “to misplace or fail to find or control”; *loss* (los) means “something that is misplaced and cannot be found.”

miner, minor A *miner* digs in the ground for ore. A *minor* is a person who is not legally an adult. A *minor* problem is one of no great importance.

The use of minors as miners is no minor problem.

oral, verbal *Oral* means “uttered with the mouth”; *verbal* means “relating to or consisting of words and the comprehension of words.”

The actor’s oral abilities were outstanding, her pronunciation and intonation impeccable, but I doubted the playwright’s verbal skills after trying to decipher the play’s meaning.

past, passed *Passed* is a verb. *Past* can be used as a noun, as an adjective, or as a preposition.

That Escort **passed** my ‘Vette. (verb)

Many senior citizens hold dearly **to the past**. (noun)

I’m sorry, but my **past life is not your business**. (adjective)

Old Rosebud walked **past us** and never smelled the apples. (preposition)

peace, piece *Peace* means “tranquility or freedom from war.” *Piece* is a part or fragment.

Someone once observed that peace is not a condition, but a process—a process of building goodwill one piece, or one step, at a time.

people, person Use *people* to refer to human populations, races, or groups; use *person* to refer to an individual or the physical body.

What the American people **need** is a good insect repellent. The forest ranger recommends that we check our persons for wood ticks when we leave the woods.

percent, percentage A *percent* is only one part in a hundred; a *percentage* is a portion of the whole, that portion being expressed as an amount of something or as a certain number of percents (25 percent, 50 percent, etc.).

Each person’s **percentage** of the reward amounted to \$125—25 percent of the \$500 offered by Crimestoppers.

NOTE: In everyday usage, you will often see the word “percent” being used in place of the word “percentage.”

What percent (instead of percentage) of your paycheck do you save?

personal, personnel *Personal* means “private.” *Personnel* are people working at a particular job.

Although choosing a major is a personal decision, it can be helpful to consult with guidance personnel.

pore, pour, poor A *pore* is an opening in the skin. *Pour* means “a constant flow or stream.” *Poor* means “needy or pitiable.”

Tough exams on late spring days make my poor pores pour.

precede, proceed To *precede* means “to go or come before,” while *proceed* means “to move on or go ahead.”

Our zany biology instructor often preceded his lecture with these words: “All alert sponges, proceed to soak up more fascinating facts!”

principal, principle As an adjective, *principal* means “primary.” As a noun, it can mean “a school administrator” or “a sum of money.” A *principle* is an idea or a doctrine.

His principal gripe is lack of freedom. (adjective)

The principal expressed his concern about open campus. (noun)

After 20 years, the amount of interest was higher than the principal. (noun)

The principle of caveat emptor is “Let the buyer beware.”

quiet, quit, quite *Quiet* is the opposite of noisy. *Quit* means “to stop.” *Quite* means “completely or to a considerable extent.”

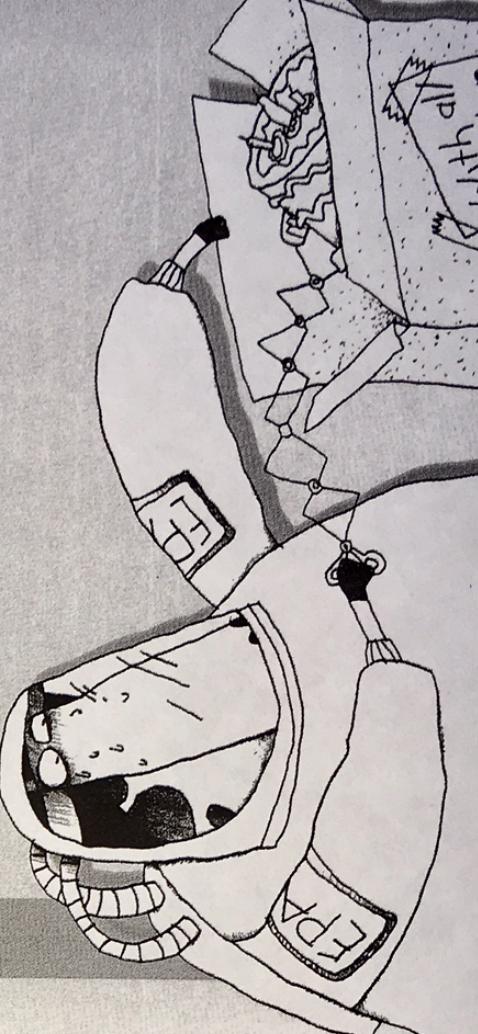
The library remained quite quiet until the librarian quit watching us.

quote, quotation *Quote* is a verb; *quotation* is a noun.

The quotation I used was from Woody Allen. You may quote me on that.

real, very, really Do not use *real* in place of the adverbs *very* or *really*.

My mother’s cake is usually very (not real) fresh. But this cake is really stale—I mean, it’s just about fossilized.



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