

right, write, wright, rite *Right* means “correct or proper”; it also refers to that which a person has a legal claim to, as in *copyright*. *Write* means “to inscribe or record.” A *wright* is a person who makes or builds something. *Rite* is a ritual or ceremonial act.

Did you write that it is the right of the shipwright to perform the rite of christening—breaking a bottle of champagne on the stern of the ship?

scene, seen *Scene* refers to the location where something happens; it also may mean “sight or spectacle.” *Seen* is the past participle of the verb “see.”

An exhibitionist likes to be seen making a scene.

set, sit *Set* means “to place.” *Sit* means “to put the body in a seated position.” *Set* is a transitive verb; *sit* is an intransitive verb.

How can you just sit there and watch as I set all these chairs in place?

sight, cite, site *Sight* means “the act of seeing” or “something that is seen.” *Cite* means “to quote” or “to summon to court.” *Site* means “location or position.”

After sighting the faulty wiring and the overloaded I-beam, the inspector cited the building contractor for breaking two city codes at a downtown work site.

some, sum *Some* refers to an unknown thing, a number, or a part. *Sum* is a certain amount of money, or the result of adding numbers together.

Some of the students answered too quickly, without thinking, and came up with the wrong sum.

stationary, stationery *Stationary* means “not movable”; *stationery* refers to the paper and envelopes used to write letters.

than, then *Than* is used in a comparison; *then* tells when.

Just remember to study more than you party. Then you will probably be satisfied with your grades.

their, there, they're *Their* is the possessive personal pronoun. *There* is an adverb used to point out location. *They're* is the contraction for “they are.”

If there is a comfortable place for students to study for their exams, they're more likely to do a good job.

threw, through *Threw* is the past tense of “throw.” *Through* means “passing from one side of something to the other.”

to, too, two *To* is a preposition that can mean “in the direction of.” *To* is also used to form an infinitive. *Too* means “also” or “very.” *Two* is the number 2.

Two causes of visual problems among students are lights that fail to illuminate properly and computer screens with too much glare.

vain, vane, vein *Vain* means “valueless or fruitless”; it may also mean “holding a high regard for one's self.” *Vane* is a flat piece of material set up to show which way the wind blows. *Vein* refers to a blood vessel or a mineral deposit.

The weather vane indicates the direction of the wind; the blood vein determines the direction of flowing blood; the vain mind moves in no particular direction and is content to think only about itself.

vary, very *Vary* means “to change”; *very* means “to a high degree.”

To ensure the very best employee relations, the workloads should not vary greatly from worker to worker.

waist, waste *Waist* is the part of the body just above the hips. The verb *waste* means “to lose through inaction” or “to wear away, decay”; the noun *waste* refers to material that is unused or useless.

Her waist is small because she wastes no opportunity to exercise.

wait, weight *Wait* means “to stay somewhere expecting something.” *Weight* refers to a degree or unit of heaviness.

ware, wear, where *Ware* refers to a product that is sold; *wear* means “to have on or to carry on one's body”; *where* asks the question “In what place?” or “In what situation?”

The designer boasted, “Where can one wear my ware? Anywhere.”

weather, whether *Weather* refers to the condition of the atmosphere. *Whether* refers to a possibility.

Weather conditions affect nearly all of us, whether we are farmers, pilots, or plumbers.

who, which, that *Who* refers to people. *Which* refers to nonliving objects or to animals. (*Which* should never refer to people.) *That* may refer to animals, people, or nonliving objects.

who, whom *Who* is used as the subject of a verb; *whom* is used as the object of a preposition or as a direct object. (*Who* is used in place of *whom* for most everyday communication.)

who's, whose *Who's* is the contraction for “who is.” *Whose* is the possessive pronoun.

Whose car are we using, and who's going to pay for the gas?

your, you're *Your* is a possessive pronoun. *You're* is the contraction for “you are.”

If you're like most Americans, you will have held hold eight jobs by your 40th birthday.