

Best of
WORD TRIPPERS

by

Barbara McNichol

ADVICE, ADVISE –

“**Advice**” is a noun; “**advise**” is a verb. “The *advice* you receive is only as good as the people who *advise* you.” To remember the difference, think of the word “ice,” which is a thing (a noun) and not an action (a verb).

AFFECT, EFFECT –

“**Affect**” is a verb meaning to change or influence; “**effect**” is a verb meaning to bring about; “**effect**” is also a noun meaning result or outcome. “Your quick action *affects* (influences) the outcome.” “You can *effect* (bring about) a change easily.” “The story has the desired *effect*.”

ALREADY, ALL READY –

“**Already**” is an adverb meaning previously or by this time, and refers to an action. “It’s *already* too late to go.” “**All ready**” is an adjective phrase meaning completely prepared. “She’s *all ready* to go.”

AMONG, BETWEEN –

“**Among**” occurs with MORE THAN two things or people; “**between**” happens with ONLY two things or people. “*Among* the 128 members, 92 have e-mail access. *Between* AOL and MSN, AOL is the more popular choice.”

ANECDOTE, ANTIDOTE –

“**Anecdote**” is a short account of an incident, a mini-story. “**Antidote**” is a remedy to counteract the effects of a condition (e.g., poison, disease, etc.). “Telling an *anecdote* that’s funny is an *antidote* for boredom.”

ANXIOUS, EAGER –

“**Eager**” means excited or enthusiastic; “**anxious**” means full of anxiety or worry. “I’m *eager* to hear the details of your trip.” “I have been *anxious* to learn about your travels ever since I heard about the airline strike.”

AWHILE, A WHILE –

The dictionary says “**awhile**” means “**for a while**” (for a period of time). Therefore, it’s redundant to say “**for awhile**”; it’s like saying “for for a while.” “Let’s get together *awhile*. We can enjoy visiting for a *while*.”

BBETTER, BEST –

“**Better**” is used to compare TWO items while “**best**” refers to MORE THAN TWO. “It’s *better* to schedule your workshop on a Tuesday than a Wednesday, but Thursday is the *best* day in the week for most people.”

BI, SEMI –

“**Bi**” occurs every two intervals; “**semi**” occurs twice during a time period. “I publish a *bi-monthly* newsletter, sent every other month, rather than a *semi-monthly*, which goes out twice a month.”

BREATH, BREATHE –

“**Breath**” (a noun) means the air you inhale and exhale; “**breathe**” (a verb) is the action of taking breaths. “The jogger had to *breathe* hard until he could catch his *breath*.”



BROWSE, PERUSE –

“**Browse**” means to inspect something in a leisurely way while “**peruse**” calls for reading it thoroughly, examining it with care. “When we *browse* through the newspaper, we skim the display ads quickly but we carefully *peruse* the help-wanted section.”



CAPITAL, CAPITOL –

As an adjective, “**capital**” means primary or principal. “The subject is of *capital* concern.” As a noun, “**capital**” refers to wealth, a city where government is located, and an uppercase letter. “Much of my *capital* is in stocks.” “Ottawa is the *capital* of Canada.” “**Capitol**” refers to the building where people in the government meet. “You will always find the *capitol* in the *capital*.”

CHILDISH, CHILDLIKE –

When adults are “**childish**” they behave immaturely or foolishly; when they’re “**childlike**” they behave with the wonder, creativity and innocence of a child. “Their complaints about the service sounded *childish* given the overcrowded conditions at the restaurant.” “The team’s *childlike* approach to brainstorming gave us many creative ideas.”



COMPLIMENT, COMPLEMENT –

“**Compliment**” means to praise while “**complement**” means to complete or enhance something. (The words “**complete**” and “**complement**” both use the letter “e”.) “The wine steward deserves many *compliments*. The wine *complements* the food so well.”



COMPRISE, COMPOSE –

“**Comprise**” refers to the whole that has a number of parts while “**compose**” refers to the parts making up a whole. It’s correct to say, “The new book is *composed* (made up) of four short stories.” It’s incorrect to say, “The new book is *comprised* of 22 chapters.” Instead, say, “The new book *comprises* (consists of) 22 chapters.”

CONTINUAL, CONTINUOUS –

“**Continual**” means recurring frequently; “**continuous**” means without interruption. “It’s been a *continual* push to keep my business moving.” “The river flows *continuously* in the spring.”



CONVINCE, PERSUADE –

You “**convince**” someone of an idea but “**persuade**” someone to take action. It’s correct to say, “He *convinced* me it would taste good” but incorrect to say, “He *convinced* me to taste it.” Instead, say, “He *persuaded* me to taste it.”

DESERT, DESSERT –

Though the meaning of these two nouns is distinct – “cactuses grow in the **desert**”; “we eat **dessert** after the main course” – the spelling often gets mixed up. Think of it this way. Having *dessert* is an extra treat that calls for a second “s.” Also, “**desert**” as a verb (emphasis on “ert”) means to leave a person or place without intending to come back. “Don’t *desert* me before the wedding.”

DIFFUSE, DEFUSE –

“**Diffuse**” means to pour out and spread. “The spilled oil *diffused* over the kitchen counter.” “**Defuse**” means to make less tense or dangerous. “The tense emotions became *defused* once the expert *defused* the bomb.”

DISINTERESTED, UNINTERESTED –

“**Disinterested**” means to be impartial and unbiased; “**uninterested**” means not interested, bored, indifferent. “She was sufficiently *disinterested* in the outcome of the dispute to act as its mediator. Her partner, though, was completely *uninterested* in the case and walked away from it.”

E.G., I.E., –

“**i.e.**,” (in Latin *id est*) means to clarify a point. It substitutes for “that is” or “namely.” “The book tour includes two southwestern states, *i.e.*, New Mexico and Arizona.” Use “**e.g.**,” (in Latin *exempli gratia*) when you want to say “for example” or “such as.” “For the book tour, we will travel to many cities, *e.g.*, Santa Fe, Tucson, Phoenix and others.”

EMIGRATE, IMMIGRATE –

To remember the difference, think of “e” meaning “**exit**” (going out of a country) and “i” meaning “**into**” (coming into a country). This also applies to emigrants and immigrants. “She *emigrated* from Canada and *immigrated* into the United States. Therefore, she is a Canadian *emigrant* and a U.S. *immigrant*.”

EMINENT, IMMINENT –

“**Eminent**” refers to someone who is outstanding and distinguished; “**imminent**” means something is about to happen. “The arrival of the *eminent* scholar is *imminent*.”

ENSURE, ASSURE, INSURE –

“**Ensure**” – To make sure something happens. “I will research your audience thoroughly to *ensure* a customized presentation.”

“**Assure**” – To make someone feel sure about something. “I want to *assure* you I will customize the presentation so it fits your audience.”

“**Insure**” – To buy an insurance policy for financial protection in case something happens. “I *insure* my business against liability and theft.”

EVERY DAY, EVERYDAY –

In the two-word phrase, “**day**” refers to the time between sunrise and sunset; “**every**” describes the word day. “*Every day* we call our customers.” *Everyday* (without a space) is an adjective that precedes the noun that it describes. “It’s an *everyday* occurrence.”

EXCEPT, ACCEPT –

“**Except**” means leaving something or someone out while “**accept**” means agreeing to something. “*Except* for Tom, I can *accept* all the other candidates on the slate.”

FARTHER, FURTHER –

“**Farther**” refers to a geographic distance; “**further**” reflects reasoning and is used with intangibles like time, quantity, etc. “Thinking about this *further*, I know I can drive *farther* today than yesterday.”

FEWER, LESS –

“**Fewer**” is used when units or individuals can be counted; “**less**” is used with quantities of mass, bulk, or volume. “There are *fewer* letters to be written today than yesterday.” “The mail takes up *less* space than I thought it would.” Generally if the word has an “s” at the end, use “**fewer**” – *fewer* dollars but *less* money; *fewer* muffins but *less* food.

FIGURATIVE, LITERAL –

“**Figurative**” refers to the metaphoric nature of an object while its opposite “**literal**” refers to its strict definition. Use “**figurative**” as a fancy figure of speech and “**literal**” as a straight interpretation. “Be *literal* in your feedback about his use of *figurative* language.”

FLAUNT, FLOUT –

“**Flaunt**” means to show off; “**flout**” means to defy or ignore. “When he *flaunted* his fast new sports car, he *flouted* the highway speed limit.”

FORMALLY, FORMERLY –

“**Formally**” refers to something that happens with ceremony while “**formerly**” means at a previous time. “She dressed *formally* for the wedding, which had *formerly* been scheduled for June.”

FORWARD, FOREWORD –

At times, the section at the front of the book is incorrectly titled “**Forward**” (to move ahead) instead of “**Foreword**.” To remember the correct spelling, separate “**foreword**” into “**fore**” (to go before) and “**word**” (the words/ideas that follow).

GLIMPSE, GLANCE –

“**Glance**” (a verb) refers to taking a fast look at something while a “**glimpse**” (a noun) is the act of seeing something quickly. “I *glance* over my shoulder to catch a *glimpse* of the traffic behind me.”

HANGED, HUNG –

Use “**hanged**” when referring to people; use “**hung**” for everything else. “The prisoner was *hanged* for his crime.” “The wet clothes were *hung* outside to dry.”

HOPE, HOPEFULLY –

“**Hopefully**” means full of hope: “Will you help? she asked *hopefully*.” It’s incorrect to use “**hopefully**” when you want to express hope for something. Instead of saying, “*Hopefully*, he’ll help me,” say, “I *hope* he’ll help me.”

HOPE, WISH –

“**Hope**” is a feeling that what you desire is possible; “**wish**” is to want, desire, or long for. “We *hope* you have a wonderful career; we *wish* you good fortune.”

IMPLY, INFER –

The one who initiates a communication “**implies**” while the receiver of communication “**infers**.” “The reader *inferred* the politician’s actions were immoral. The editorial writer intended to *imply* that.”

INTO, IN TO –

“**Into**” refers to entering something (go *into* the legal profession); changing a form (turn lemons *into* lemonade); making contact (run *into* a door jam). “**In to**” are two prepositions that come together, as in: “Let’s go *in to* have breakfast.” Remember, if your sentence still makes sense when you drop the “in,” use two separate words. “Let’s go (in) to have breakfast.”

IRRITATE, AGGRAVATE –

“**Irritate**” means to annoy; “**aggravate**” means to make worse. “I *aggravate* the situation when I *irritate* the leaders by asking irrelevant questions.”

IT’S, ITS –

Use the apostrophe when you can logically substitute “**it’s**” for “**it is**” in the sentence. Otherwise, use the word “**its**.” “*It’s* easy to remember to put the book in *its* place.”

LAY, LIE –

The verb “**lay**” always has an object, just like the verb “**put**” always has an object. “Please *lay* (put) the plate on the table.” The verb “**lie**” doesn’t take an object. “*Lie* down if you feel tired.” Confusion happens because the past tense of “**lie**” is “**lay**.” “Today, I *lie* down; yesterday I *lay* down.” The past tense of “**lay**” (put) is “**laid**” and it still requires an object (the plate). “Yesterday, I *laid* (put) the plate beside his bed after he *lay* down.”

LEAD, LED –

The verb “**lead**” (with a long “e”) means to show the way. “The guides *lead* a hiking group every Saturday.” The past tense of this verb “**led**” (with a short “e”) is spelled with three letters, not four. “They *led* the hike yesterday.” Confusion occurs because the noun “**lead**” (a pencil lead) is pronounced the same as “**led**.”

LEND, LOAN –

Remember that “**loan**” is a noun (money or a thing that’s given out temporarily) while “**lend**” is a verb (the action of giving something temporarily). “When he receives the *loan* from the bank, he will *lend* you the funds.” It’s incorrect to say, “He will *loan* you the money.”

LESS, SMALL, FEWER –

When size is involved, use “**small**”; when importance is involved, use “**less**”; when quantity is involved, use “**few**” or “**fewer**.” Also, if you can count the number of items, use “**fewer**.” “The *small* dog picked the *less* painful of two options. He faced *fewer* obstacles by retreating than by attacking the porcupine.”

LIGHTNING, LIGHTENING –

The electrical bolts in the sky refer to “**lightning**” (without an “e”). When the dark skies are “**lightening**” after a storm, put the “e” in the word. It comes from the verb “**lighten**,” meaning to be less heavy, less dark, less burdensome, etc. “After the *lightning* storm passes, we see the sky *lightening* up.”

LOSE, LOOSE –

The verb “**lose**” is the opposite of the verb “**win**.” “Do you win or *lose* when you gamble?” The adjective “**loose**” means not fastened tightly while the verb “**loose**” means to free something. “This *loose* blouse looks comfortable.” “*Loose* (or *loosen*) your tie and relax!”

MORAL, MORALE –

“**Moral**” means a lesson while “**morale**” refers to an emotional state. “The *moral* of the story encourages team members to keep their *morale* high.”

PASSED, PAST –

“**Passed**” is a form of the verb “**pass**” meaning to go by. “I *pass* the mailbox on my way to work every day. Yesterday, I *passed* it more times than usual.” “**Past**” is an adjective, noun, preposition, or adverb that shows something has gone by. Adj.: “We celebrate *past* glories.” Noun: “We enjoy thinking about the *past*.” Preposition: “It’s the house just *past* the corner.” Adverb: “The troops marched *past*.”

PEDAL, PEDDLE –

The verb “**pedal**” refers to riding a bicycle while “**peddle**” means selling wares. “The salesman *peddles* new products every week as he *pedals* his bike through the neighborhood.”

PITCHER, PICTURE –

A “**pitcher**” throws the ball during a baseball game; a “**pitcher**” is a container holding liquid; a “**picture**” is a visual image. “The team’s ace *pitcher* is the *picture* of good sportsmanship. Let’s celebrate with a *pitcher* of lemonade.”

PRECEDE, PROCEED –

To “**precede**” is to go before; to “**proceed**” is to go forward. “When good planning *precedes* any trip, you can *proceed* to have a wonderful time.”

PRESUME, ASSUME –

Both imply taking something for granted but “**assume**” means supposing something is true while “**presume**” shows a stronger belief, close to expressing a dare. “I *assume* he’ll arrive when he says he will.” “Well, don’t *presume* you’re always right.”

PRINCIPAL, PRINCIPLE –

“**Principal**” as a noun means head of a school, a main participant, a sum of money; “**principle**” is a fundamental law or basic truth. “Even the school *principal* lives by her values and *principles*.” Use the “al” spelling when principal describes a noun. “The *principal* issue is calculating the *principal* plus interest correctly.”

QUALIFY, QUANTIFY –

To “**qualify**” means to show some ability to perform in a particular capacity while to “**quantify**” refers to an amount. “I will *qualify* the applicant after I *quantify* the sales he has made.”

REGIME, REGIMEN –

“**Regime**” refers to a period of rule and/or a governing body while “**regimen**” means a system of behavior or treatment. “Following a strict dietary *regimen* can feel like you’re living in a military *regime*.”

RETICENT, RELUCTANT –

“**Reticent**” means disposed to be silent or reserved while “**reluctant**” means hesitation or slowness because of unwillingness. “She felt *reticent* (quiet) about sharing her opinions in front of others, while he felt *reluctant* (unwilling) to speak up because his ideas were unclear.”

SEMI, BI –

“**Bi**” occurs every two intervals; “**semi**” occurs twice during a time period. “I publish a *bi-monthly* newsletter, sent every other month, rather than a *semi-monthly*, which goes out twice a month.”

SETUP, SET UP –

The noun “**setup**” deals with a plan or arrangement. “The *setup* for the party includes entertainment and gourmet food.” The two-word verb phrase “**set up**” means arranging something. “We *set up* the entertainment for the party.”

STATIONARY, STATIONERY –

“**Stationery**” is material for writing letters; “**stationary**” is a fixed position. “I left my *stationery* (letter) in a car that didn’t remain *stationary*.” To help remember, the words “**letter**” and “**stationery**” both have “e”s; the words “**stay**” and “**stationary**” both have “a”s.

TAKE, BRING –

Is the item you’re talking about coming or going? If it is coming to a place, then someone “**brings**” it; if it’s going somewhere, then someone “**takes**” it. “Will you *bring* me a glass of water, please?” “Yes I will, after I *take* the dirty glasses away.”

THAT, WHICH –

Use “**that**” when it is essential to the meaning of the sentence. “We provide guides *that* serve as an alternative to our programs.” Use “**which**” when the phrase gives additional information but isn’t critical to understanding the sentence. “The guides, *which* complement the services we offer, serve as an alternative to our programs.” The sentence still makes sense when you omit the phrase and say, “The guides serve as an alternative to our programs.”

THAT, WHO –

“**That**” relates to things, while “**who**” relates to people. “I have a friend *who* did me a favor, one *that* I greatly appreciated.”

THEN, THAN –

“**Then**” means soon after or at that time, while “**than**” sets up a comparison. “Let’s eat, *then* go shopping.” “He’s shorter *than* his brother.”

THEIR, THERE, THEY'RE –

“**Their**” (adjective) shows someone possessing something.
“It is *their* wish.”

“**There**” (adverb) means a location or place. “*There* is a place for us.”

“**They’re**” (contraction) means “**they are**” – the apostrophe takes the place of the missing letter. “*They’re* coming over for a drink.”

TRANSPARENT, TRANSLUCENT –

When an object is “**transparent**,” it is completely see-through. With a “**translucent**” object, light goes through it but you can’t see to the other side. “We can see the view clearly through the *transparent* window in the kitchen but not through the *translucent* glass in the bathroom.”

WHERE, WHEN, IN WHICH –

Think carefully about the meaning of your sentence when selecting the right bridge words. Use “**where**” for place; “**when**” for time; “**in which**” for things. “The contract specifies a number of years *when* (not *where*) you live at home.” “I examined a case *in which* (not *where*) mistakes were plentiful.”

WHO, WHOM –

Use “**who**” as the subject of a sentence or clause; use “**whom**” as an object. Think of “**who**” as an equivalent for the personal pronouns he, she, or they, while “**whom**” is similar to him, her, or them. “*Whom* did you select for the presentation?” (You selected him/her/them.) “*Who* will be selected?” (He/she/they will be selected.)

WHO’S, WHOSE –

“**Who’s**” means who is or who has; “**whose**” shows ownership. “*Who’s* responsible for correcting this error? *Whose* mistake is it anyway?”

YOUR, YOU’RE –

“**Your**” shows possession; “**you’re**” is a contraction that means “you are.” “When *your* ship comes in, *you’re* a wealthy person.”

CREATOR OF WORD TRIPPERS—BARBARA MCNICHOL

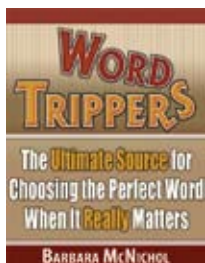


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“As a professional writer, I enjoy the twists of the English language, such as when to use peek or peak, and course or coarse. Like big rocks on a path, I trip over how to use ‘lay vs. lie’ and ‘compose vs. comprise.’ That’s when I peek at Barbara’s Word Trippers ebook and get back on course.” — Patrice Rhoades-Baum, copywriter, marketer, www.WebsitesDeliver.com

PRAISE FOR WORD TRIPPER OF THE WEEK EZINE

“I find your grammer, grimmer, grammar updates helpful. (And you know I need the help.)”

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“Great ezine! Thanks.” – Dan Poynter, author, publisher, speaker

“You’ve defined my pet peeve with eager and anxious!” – Michelle Cubas, speaker, author

“I always find your word trippers educational and helpful. Peace and Harmony.”

– Agnes Paulsen, choir director

“I love your trippers.” – LeAnn Thieman, CPAE, speaker, author

“This time you really hit home. I thought my grammar was good, but I frequently misuse ‘hopefully’ and maybe even the other three. I was shocked!” – Lynn Murphy, speaker

“Your Word Trippers have been invaluable. I have a 13 year-old granddaughter I’ll share them with..” – Ben Leichling, speaker

“Your notes give me hope that lots of other people love to see that, too.” – Chas Ridley, writer

“Really enjoy your mailings and appreciate your succinct descriptions of the language distinctions.” – Jan Carothers, CPC

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