Homonyms and Other Often Confused Words

A
accept (to receive), except (to exclude)
advice (noun), advise (verb)
affect (influence), effect (bring to pass)
aid (to help); aide (an assistant)
air; heir (one who inherits)
aisle (passageway); isle (island); I'll (contraction for I will)
all (entirely); awl (tool)
all ready (all are ready), already (previously)
all right (there is no such word as alright)
at all (contraction of all together), altogether (entirely)
alley (back street), ally (to confederate)
allusion (a reference), illusion (deceiving appearance)
all of (a whole); all (of)
alter (to change), altar (for worship)
angle; angles
arc (part of a circle); ark (Noah's boat)
ascend (act of rising); ascent (agreement)
ate, eight

B
bail; bale (large, closely pressed package)
bald (lacking hair); bawled (past tense of bawl)
bail (round toy); bow (to cry loudly)
baring (making bare), barring (obstructing), bearing (carrying)
bare (endure, empty), bear (animal)
bares, bears (animal)
baron (nobleman); barren (incapable of producing offspring; lacking vegetation)
basis (foundation); bass (deep sound or tone)
beach (shore of ocean); bee (kind of tree)
beat (to hit repeatedly); beat (a vegetable)
berry (fruit); bury (to place under earth)
bert (job or position); birth (act of being born)
billed (past tense of bill); build (to make, establish)
brung (past tense of bow); blue (color)
block (a group); block (rectangular solid; a city square; to obstruct; to shape)
boar (male pig); bore (to drill a hole)
board (piece of wood, meals provided with rent, persons managing a firm, being on ship or train); bored (uninterested)
boarder (one who rents a room); border (dividing line, an edge)
bold (more forward, more courageous); boulder (a large rock)
born (given birth), borne (carried)
ough (branch of tree); bow (to bend at waist, front part of ship)
brake (device for stopping a machine), break (shatter, fracture, rest)
break (noun), breathe (verb)
bred (past tense of breed); bread (food made from flour)
bridal (pertaining to a bride or wedding); bridal (part of a horse's harness)
by (next to); buy (to purchase); bye (leaving)

C
cannon (large weapon); canon (church law)
canvas (a cloth), canvass (to solicit)
capital (a city), capit (a building)
carrot (vegetable); caret (proofreading symbol); carat (weight of precious stones)
ceiling (top of a room); sealing (fastening or closing tightly)
cell (small, bare room); sell (to exchange for money)
cellar (underground room); seller (one who transfers property)
censer (an incense burner); censor (a person who examines material for portions deemed objectionable or harmful)
cept (penny coin); scent (an odor); sent (past tense of send)
cents (plural of cent); sense (functions of hearing, smell, taste, and touch, point or meaning, ability to think soundly)
cereal (grain used as food); serial (story published or broadcast one part at a time)
chased (past tense of chase); chaste (virtuous, modest)
cheap (not expensive); cheap (bird sound)
chose, chose
chute (an inclined passage to slide things down), shoot (to let fly, to photograph, a young outgrowth of a shrub, an exclamation)
clause (separate section of a formal document, a group of words containing a subject and verb); claws (sharp curved nails on an animal)
clothes (garments), cloths (pieces of cloth)
course (rough, crude), course (route, part of a meal, series of studies)
coin; quion
colonel (a high army officer); kernel (a grain or seed)
complement (something that completes); compliment (remark that is kind)
confident (one to whom secrets are entrusted); confident (assured, certain)
conscious (aware); conscience (an inner moral sense)
consul (country's representative); council (a group); counsel
advise (giving of advice)
cord (thick string); chord (musical note)
core (central or most important part); corps (a group of people having common activity)
correspondence (communication by letters); correspondents
(plural of correspondent, one who communicates by letter)
cot; caught
counselor (council member); counselor (gives advice)
crew (to move with a harsh, squeaky, grating noise); creek (small stream)
cue (a stick used in playing pool or billiards); queue (a waiting line)
current (berry); current (now in progress, flowing in a definite direction, electric force)
cymbals (musical instrument); symbols (graphic signs/marks)
Czech; check

dairy (place for milk cows), diary (a book)
days (plural of day); daze (to dazzle or stupefy)
dear (beloved, costly, polite form of address); deer (an animal)
declining (adjective), descent (downward slope or motion), dissent (disagreement)
dependence (the quality or state of being supported, reliance and trust); dependents (those who rely on another for support)
desert (a barren country or to leave), dessert (food)
device (noun), devise (verb)
die (to stop living) or device for stamping, singular of dice); dye (to change the color through saturation)
discreet (showing good judgment); discrete (separate and distinct)
do (to carry out, perform); due (owed as a debt, owing to)
does (past tense of do), dose (a portion of medicine)
dual (having or composed of two parts), duel (a contest between two persons)

F

fain; fane
faint (not clear, feeble, without strength, to lose consciousness temporarily); feint (a movement intended to deceive)
fair (impartial, reasonable, light, clear, beautiful, festival); fare (sum of money paid for travel, range of food, to dine, to get along)
fate (destiny); fete (a festival)
feat (an act or accomplishment showing great daring skill or ingenuity); feet (plural of foot)
find (to discover); fined (past tense of fine)
fir (type of tree); fur (skin and hair of an animal)
first born (used as noun), first-born (used as an adjective)
fisher (a fisherman); fissure (crack in a wall or rock)
flair (a natural talent); flare (to burn unsteadily, to express strongly)
flee (to run away); flea (a small parasitic insect)
flew (past tense of fly, pass through the air); flue (a pipe for conveying smoke); flu (short for influenza, a virus disease)
flower (the bloom of a plant); flour (ground grain)
for (preposition); four (the number 4); fore (the front, toward the beginning)
forbear (to hold back, refrain); forebear (ancestor)
foreword (an introduction or preface); forward (at or near the front)
formally (in a formal way), formerly (in time past)
fort (a fortified building); forte (that in which one excels)
forth (forward, onward); fourth (preceded by three others)
foul (disgusting, unfair, out of bounds in ball games); fowl (bird used for food)

G

gait (manner of walking or running), gate (a movable structure across an entrance or exit)
gamble (to bet, wager); gambol (to skip about in play)
gorilla; guerilla
great; gross

H

hay (dried grass), hey (expression of surprise)
here, hear
hoarse, horse
hole, whole
holy, wholly
hour, our
Hungary; hungry

I

instance (an example), instants (periods of time)
isle (an island); aisle (a narrow passage)
its (possessive pronoun); it's (contraction of it is)

J

Job (Bible character); job (work)

K

knew, new
know, no

L

later (more late); latter (the second of two)
lead (to go first; or a heavy metal), led (past tense of lead)

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stare, stair
stationary (in a fixed position), stationery (writing paper)
statue, stature, statute
steal (to take), steel (metal)
surplus (extra), surplice (religious garment)

T

tail; tale
than, then
there, their, they’re
therefor (to that end); therefore (for that reason)
throw (pitch, cast through the air), through (finished), thru
to, too, two
toe; tow
tract (of land), tract (a treatise on religion), track (imprint or road)

V

very; vary

W

waist, waste
wait; weight
way, weigh
weak (faint, feeble, helpless), week (seven days)
weather, whether
which, witch
whole, hole
whose, who’s
wood; would

Y

yews; ewes
yoke; yolk
you’re, your