# **Commonly Misused Words**

# **What are commonly misused words?**

Commonly misused words are easily confused because they may sound alike, have similar meanings, or are similar in spelling. Students must carefully consider which words are correct depending on the context of the sentence. The wrong word or phrase could confuse readers and distort the message.

# **Most commonly misused words:**

**Its**: possessive pronoun

**It’s**: contraction for “it is”

**To**: directional

**Too**: in addition to or an excessive amount

**Two**: the number 2

**Your**: possessive pronoun

**You’re**: contraction for “you are”

**Their**: plural possessive pronoun

**There**: directional

**They’re**: contraction for “they are”

**Accept versus Except**  
To “accept” is to receive; to “except” is to exclude.

**Advice versus Advise**  
“Advice” is a noun that is a suggestion for an appropriate course of action. To “advise” is to give advice to or offer a suggestion to another person.

**Affect versus Effect**These words are confusing because though “Affect” can be a noun, it is usually a verb and means to have an influence on, to impress or to move, or to produce a change in something or someone. Also, while “Effect” can be used as a verb, it is typically a noun and means a result of an action or cause.

**Allot versus A lot**  
“Allot” is to distribute something. “A lot” is a large extent, or to a large extent. The word “alot” does not exist.

**Aloud versus Allowed**  
“Aloud” is verbally using one’s voice. “Allowed” is to make possible through a specific action or lack of action for something to happen.

**Already versus All ready**  
“Already” is an adverb used to describe something that has happened before a certain time. To be “all ready” means to be completely prepared.

**Breath versus Breathe**“Breath” is a noun for the air that is taken in and expelled during breathing. “Breathe” is a verb for the action of taking in air and expelling it.

**Lose versus Loose**  
To “lose” means failure to do or to achieve something. “Loose” is an adjective for not tight, or free from constraint.

**Then versus Than**  
“Then” refers to express a sense of time (what comes next or what once was). “Than” is used to set up a comparison between two things.

**Whether versus Weather**  
“Whether” introduces two alternatives. “Weather” is the atmospheric conditions that comprise the state of the atmosphere, such as temperature, wind, and precipitation.

**Who versus Whom**“Who” is a subjective pronoun and is used to refer to the subject of a sentence. “Whom” is an objective pronoun and is used to refer to the object of a sentence.

# **Exercise**

Read the following paragraph and circle which word fits best for each sentence. If you get stuck, look for context clues and refer to the definitions above.

I took a deep (breathe/breath) as I checked my grade for my math exam. (Its/It’s) disappointing to see how much lower my GPA had fallen, but I knew I had to (accept/except) the grade I earned. I asked my math professor what I should do to improve my grades. She (advised/adviced) me to seek tutoring. She also told me (to/too/two) talk to Clark, (who/whom) is the in-class math tutor. During the rest of the semester, I did those things and studied (to/too/two) hours a night to try and improve my math skills. I hoped that studying would have an (affect/effect) on my grade and that my hard work would pay off. Before my next exam, I wondered (whether/weather) I had retained all the information or (lose/loose) everything I had learned the moment the professor hands me the exam. I figured everything would go better (then/than) before. In the end, I finished my exam with (a lot/allot) of time left over, and I got an A. After all my hard work, now I feel (already/all ready) for the next exam.