

HOMONYMS

PS-5

Of the words most often misspelled, the majority are homonyms. **Homonyms are words that sound alike, but have different spellings and meanings. Use caution in choosing the spelling that is appropriate to the context.** Review the following list and refer to it whenever you are in doubt.

Group 1:

aid	verb, “to help”
aide	noun, “helper, assistant”
aisle	noun, “a space between rows”
isle	noun, “island”
already	adverb, “previously”
all ready	pronoun/adverb, “everyone (or everything) prepared”
altar	noun, “sacred platform or place”
alter	verb, “to change”
altogether	adverb, “completely”
all together	pronoun/adverb, “everyone (or everything) all in one place”
ascent	noun, “rising”
assent	noun, “agreement” verb, “to agree”
assistance	noun, “help”
assistants	noun, “helpers”, plural of “assistant”
bazaar	noun, “a fair” or “open-air booths”
bizarre	adjective, “strange”

* Pronunciation where needed is in brackets with the accented syllable in capital letters.

Exercise 1: Choose the spelling that is appropriate to the context.

1. Katie thought that Michael was (altogether/all together) boring.
2. He could not get to the back of the bus because the (isle/aisle) was filled with people.
3. She asked the tailor to (alter/altar) the dress.

HOMONYMS

PS-5

4. I have (already/all ready) called my mother.
5. Bill hired a new office (aid/aide).
6. She visited a tropical (isle/aisle).
7. Myra had a (bazaar/bizarre) painting in her living room of a dog riding a horse.
8. I was happy to see the family (altogether/all together) again.
9. Josh asked Beverly to (aid/aide) him with his statistics.
10. The minister conducted the ceremony from the (alter/altar)
11. The man refused to sell the car without his wife's (ascent/assent).
12. Despite the executive's many (assistance/assistants), he was still unable to complete the report on time.
13. The children were (already/all ready) to go to school.
14. The street-side (bazaar/bizarre) featured several paintings by local artists.
15. The passengers were startled when the plane made a quick (ascent/assent).
16. The frustrated woman waited at the customer service desk for an hour before she received any (assistance/assistants).

Group 2:

bare	adjective, "naked"
bear	noun, "animal"
	verb, "to carry"
capital	adjective, "upper case" or "major"
	noun, "top of an architectural column"
	noun, "wealth, net worth"
	noun, "major city" or "seat of government"

HOMONYMS

PS-5

capitol	noun, “building which houses state or national government”
cite	verb, “to acknowledge or point out”
site	noun, “a place”
sight	verb, “to locate” noun, “ability to see”
coarse	adjective, “rough”
course	noun, “path” or “unit of study”
complement	noun, “completer” verb, “to provide balance”
compliment	noun, “flattery” verb, “to flatter”
council	noun, “legislative body”
counsel	noun, “advice”
descent	noun, “the way downward”
dissent	noun, “disagreement”
elicit	verb, “to withdraw”
illicit	adjective, “illegal”

Exercise 2: Choose the spelling that is appropriate to the context.

1. The (council/counsel) members debated heatedly over the new proposal.
2. Construction workers must always wear hard hats when on the job (cite/site/sight).
3. A (compliment/complement) must be sincere or else it is worthless.
4. The hardware store was out of (course/coarse) sandpaper.
5. Sometimes, a friend who is your exact opposite can be the perfect (compliment/complement).
6. I would like to visit Tallahassee, the state (Capital/Capitol), during my summer vacation.
7. Avoid plagiarism by remembering to always (cite/site/sight) your sources.

HOMONYMS

PS-5

8. Henry wants to (council/counsel) families about drug addiction after he graduates.
9. While the climbers made their (descent/dissent) from the mountain, it began to rain.
10. The National Children’s Fund runs television commercials to (elicit/illicit) donations.
11. He lost his (cite/site/sight) temporarily after the accident.
12. The constant (descent/dissent) among the students prevented them from completing their group assignment on time.
13. Emily wants to start her own business, but she did not have enough (capital/capitol).
14. She decided to take a (course/coarse) in computers.
15. She could not (bear/bare) the thought of putting the dog to sleep.
16. In some countries, people kill their dinner with their (bear/bare) hands.
17. The police officer arrested the two men for possession of (elicit/illicit) drugs.

Group 3:

eminent	adjective, “prominent”
imminent	adjective, “about to happen”
gorilla	noun, “jungle animal”
guerilla	noun, “soldier who works through surprise raids”
its	pronoun, possessive of “it”
it’s	pronoun/verb, contraction of “it is”
lead	noun, “a metal”
led	verb, past tense of “lead” [LEED]
maybe	adverb, “perhaps”
may be	verb, “might be”
miner	noun, “one who works in a mine”
minor	adjective, “small or insignificant” noun, “someone under age”

HOMONYMS

PS-5

passed	verb, past tense of “pass” ; “go by”; “meet standards”
past	adjective, “previous”
patience	noun, “quality of being patient”
patients	noun, “persons under treatment”

Exercise 3: Choose the spelling that is appropriate to the context.

1. (Gorillas/Guerillas) are intelligent animals.
2. (Gorilla/Guerilla) warfare is a common tactic in the jungle.
3. An (eminent/imminent) public official was arrested yesterday for misappropriation of government funds.
4. The psychic warned of (eminent/imminent) danger.
5. (It's/Its) a beautiful day.
6. Jeff decided to (miner/minor) in history
7. (Patience/Patients) is a virtue.
8. He (maybe/may be) the smartest person that I have ever met.
9. A coal (miner/minor) has a dangerous job.
10. The dog lost (it's/its) favorite toy.
11. (Maybe/May be) we can go for ice cream.
12. I (passed/past) a fruit stand on the way to work today.
13. His note (led/lead) me to believe that he had left work for the day.
14. Today, models are a lot thinner than the models of the (passed/past).
15. Dr. Wiley is respected by all of her (patience/patients).
16. Her suitcase was so heavy it felt as if it were made of (led/lead).

HOMONYMS

PS-5

Group 4:

principle	noun, “a rule”
principal	adjective, “major” or “main”
	noun, “head of school”
prophecy	noun, “prediction” [prof uh SEE]
prophesy	verb, “to make a prediction” [prof uh SIGH]
stationary	adjective, “not moving”
stationery	noun, “paper for writing letters”
straight	adjective, “without curves”
strait	noun, “narrow passage, especially in water”
taut	adjective, “tight”
taught	verb, past tense of “teach”
track	noun, “course or road”
tract	noun, “pamphlet”
weather	noun, “atmospheric conditions”
whether	conjunction, “if”
who’s	pronoun, contraction of “who is”
whose	pronoun, possessive form of “who”

Exercise 4: Choose the spelling that is appropriate to the context.

1. A (stationary/stationery) lifestyle has been linked to several health problems.
2. A (strait/straight) line can be drawn with a ruler.
3. My high school’s (principal/principle) retired after twenty-five years of service.
4. Noel purchased new (stationary/stationery) for the office.
5. Lewis made a (prophecy/prophesy) for the future.

HOMONYMS

PS-5

6. The (Straits/Straights) of Gibraltar between Spain and Africa is the entrance to the Mediterranean Sea.
7. The (principal/principle) reason for going to college is to learn.
8. (Weather/Whether) it rains or snows, I will definitely wear boots tomorrow.
9. I prefer to take classes from professors who have (taut/taught) the class before.
10. Some people believe that the American Revolutionary War was won because of the political (tracks/tracts) published every day to inform the public of events.
11. Everyone watches the (weather/whether) forecast before deciding what to wear the next day.
12. It is easy to plant a row of vegetables if you tie a (taut/taught) string over the row as a guide.
13. Lawanda wanted to know (who's/whose) coat was left in the classroom
14. Many of today's roads began as animal (tracks/tracts) to pasture and water.
15. It is fun to (prophecy/prophesy) about the future.
16. (Who's /Whose) going to help me paint the house this weekend?

HOMONYMS

PS-5

Answers:

Exercise 1:

1. altogether
2. aisle
3. alter
4. already
5. aide
6. isle
7. bizarre
8. all together
9. aid
10. altar
11. assent
12. assistants
13. all ready
14. bazzarr
15. ascent
16. assistance

Exercise 2:

1. council
2. site
3. compliment
4. coarse
5. complement
6. Capitol
7. cite
8. counsel
9. descent
10. elicit
11. sight
12. dissent
13. capital
14. course
15. bear
16. bare
17. illicit

Exercise 3:

1. Gorillas
2. Guerilla
3. eminent
4. imminent
5. It's
6. minor
7. Patience
8. may be
9. miner
10. its
11. Maybe
12. passed
13. led
14. past
15. patients
16. lead

Exercise 4:

1. stationary
2. straight
3. principal
4. stationery
5. prophecy
6. Straits
7. principal
8. Whether
9. taught
10. tracts
11. weather
12. taut
13. whose
14. tracks
15. prophesy
16. Who's