



Identifying words that sound the same

Some words in English sound the same when they're spoken but have different spellings and different meanings. For example, the words **write** and **right** sound the same but mean different things and are spelt differently. These words are called **homophones**.

To work out the spelling of a homophone, you first need to check the meaning of the word. It can help to find particular words when you're reading, or you can use the word in a sentence. For example:

- They **write** poems and plays to get their ideas across.
- I agree, what you say is **right**.

There are no spelling rules to help you remember homophones. Don't try to learn the spellings of two or three homophones at the same time, as it can be confusing. It's best to practise one word at a time.

For example, if you want to write the word **there**, there's only one way of sounding out the word, but there are three homophones: **there**, **their** and **they're**. So there are three possible spellings! Rather than try and learn the spellings and the use of all three words, start with one word (eg **there**). The first thing is to check that you know the meaning, and notice the spelling, of the word **there**.

It helps to make a list of words with the same spelling pattern: eg **here**, **there**, **everywhere**. This is a word family. Try to remember a phrase or make up a story with words in the same word family to help you remember the spelling pattern for **there**. This also helps to link the spelling and the meaning of the word in your mind.

Andrea wanted to remember the homophone **right**. She made a list of words with the **-ight** pattern. Here's a story she wrote with the words:

There was a fight right outside my flat last night. It was dark as one of the street lights was broken. However, I caught sight of one man who looked like he was wearing a tight scarf around his neck. The sun was shining brightly the next morning when the police came round to question everybody in my block.

The words with the **-ight** pattern in the story are: **fight**, **right**, **night**, **lights**, **sight**, **tight**, **brightly**.

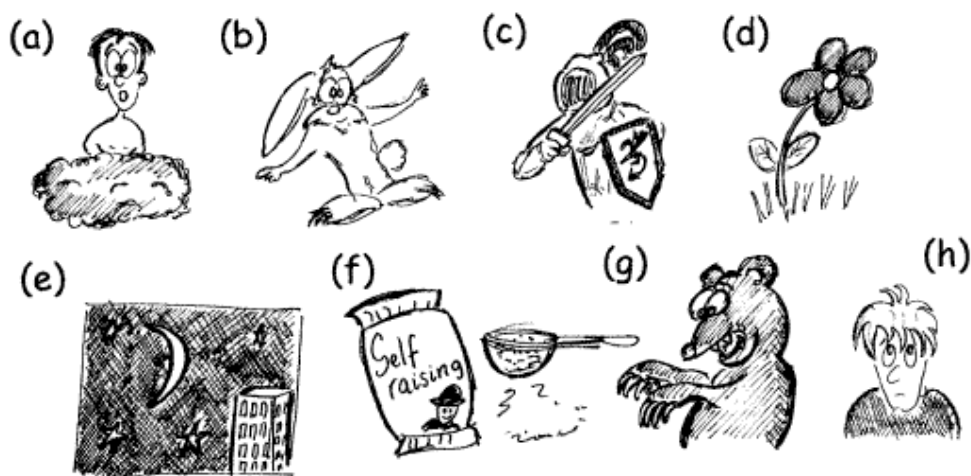
It helps to learn word patterns as you're learning more than one word at the same time. When you're sure of the spelling and meaning of one homophone, it makes it easier to learn the spelling of other words that sound the same.

Level 1

Homophones

Homophones are words that sound the same but are spelt differently and have different meanings.
e.g. to, too and two.

Activity 1



Match the words below to the correct picture.

knight	flower	hair	bare
hare	bear	night	flour

Activity 2

Choose the correct homophone to complete this sentence.

- The boy put shampoo on his (hare/hair).
- Mum put some (flower/flour) in the cake mix.
- James didn't have a very good (nights/knights) sleep.
- A rabbit is a bit like a (hare/hair).
- Tony got chased by a large (bare/bear).

Activity 3

The words below have homophones. Can you think of them?

plane	right	see	there	which	where
be	for	here	knew	no	so

Activity 4

Choose the correct homophone to complete the sentences.

- (a) Lucy couldn't wait to (meet/meat) her friend.
- (b) Andrew (missed/mist) the bus.
- (c) The mouse got his (tale/tail) caught.
- (d) Glen has a long (wait/weight) for the bus.
- (e) The cat hurt its (pour/poor/paw).
- (f) The old man had no money, he was (pour/poor/paw).
- (g) "Could you (pour/poor/paw) the orange juice, please?"
- (h) Mark got a letter in the (mail/male).

Activity 5

Explain the differences between these words.

(a) or and oar	(b) sail and sale	(c) saw and sore
(d) maid and made	(e) main and mane	

Challenge: Try and find homophones for some of these words.

allowed	ball	base	beach	boy
check	days	die	due	faint
fur	great	in	key	lane
leek	war	waste	might	week
packed	pale	place	rain	read
profit	seen	road	sight	

Fact sheet Level 2

Homophones

The word **homophone** is made from two combining forms:

- **homo-** (from the Greek word "homos", meaning "same")
- **-phone** (from the Greek word "phone", meaning "voice" or "sound")

You will see many English words using one or other of these combining forms.

The following list of 70 groups of homophones contains only the most common homophones, using relatively well-known words. These are headwords only. No inflections (such as third person singular "s" or noun plurals) are included.

Are you clear about each of the different meanings? Can you spot any you are not sure about?

air	heir	
aisle	isle	
ante-	anti-	
eye	I	
bare	bear	bear
be	bee	
brake	break	
buy	by	
cell	sell	
cent	scent	
cereal	serial	

coarse	course	
complement	compliment	
dam	damn	
dear	deer	
die	dye	
fair	fare	
fir	fur	
flour	flower	
for	four	
hair	hare	
heal	heel	
hear	here	
him	hymn	
hole	whole	
hour	our	
idle	idol	
in	inn	
knight	night	
knot	not	
know	no	
made	maid	
mail	male	
meat	meet	
morning	mourning	

none	nun	
oar	or	
one	won	
pair	pear	
peace	piece	
plain	plane	
poor	pour	
pray	prey	
principal	principle	
profit	prophet	
real	reel	
right	write	
root	route	
sail	sale	
sea	see	
seam	seem	
sight	site	
sew	so	SOW
shore	sure	
sole	soul	
some	sum	
son	sun	
stair	stare	
stationary	stationery	

steal	steel	
suite	sweet	
tail	tale	
their	there	
to	too	two
toe	tow	
waist	waste	
wait	weight	
way	weigh	
weak	week	
wear	where	

NB: In a few cases, a third homophone, although possible, has not been included for simplicity. Different varieties and accents of English may produce variations in some of these pronunciations. The homophones listed here are based on British English.

Usage of There, Their, and They're

	<i>When to Use</i>	<i>Examples</i>
<i>There</i>	Naming a place, a thing, or the existence of something	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>The bus stop is over there.</i>• <i>There are any biscuits left in the jar.</i>
<i>Their</i>	Showing possession (plural)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Their car is in the garage at the moment.</i>• <i>They have forget their coats in the cloakroom.</i>
<i>They're</i>	Contraction of "they are" into "they're" (informal)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>They're very excited about their holiday.</i>

Test Yourself

1. The teacher told them to leave books on the desk.
2. Billy is often late to school, but Freddie is always on time.
3. are over 900 students at our school.
4. Ask them if coming round tomorrow.
5. Dad was pleased the girls had done so well in exams.
6. We'll go to McDonalds if is time.
7. baking a cake for their Grandma today.
8. Can you give me telephone number?
9. My parents won't be coming as both working on Saturday.

Name: _____

There, Their, They're

<i>they're</i>	-	a contraction for the words <i>they are</i> <i><u>They're</u> going to the airport.</i>
<i>their</i>	-	something that belongs to people <i>We rode in <u>their</u> car.</i>
<i>there</i>	-	a place; or used with the word <i>are</i> or <i>is</i> <i>The box is over <u>there</u>.</i> <i><u>There</u> are five coins in the bag.</i>

Directions: For each sentence, write their, they're, or there in the blank line.

1. Nathan ate dinner at _____ house.
2. Carter said _____ coming over tonight.
3. Olivia set up the computer over _____.
4. My friends cannot find _____ jackets.
5. _____ are four squirrels in the yard.
6. _____ is an exciting movie playing tonight.
7. _____ always late!
8. The house over _____ is made of stone.
9. You can have another cookie if _____ is one left.
10. Can you help me fix _____ computer?

Name: _____

ANSWER KEY

There, Their, They're

<i>they're</i>	-	a contraction for the words <i>they are</i> <i><u>They're</u> going to the airport.</i>
<i>their</i>	-	something that belongs to people <i>We rode in <u>their</u> car.</i>
<i>there</i>	-	a place; or used with the word <i>are</i> or <i>is</i> <i>The box is over <u>there</u>.</i> <i><u>There</u> are five coins in the bag.</i>

Directions: For each sentence, write their, they're, or there in the blank line.

1. Nathan ate dinner at their house.
2. Carter said they're coming over tonight.
3. Olivia set up the computer over there.
4. My friends cannot find their jackets.
5. There are four squirrels in the yard.
6. There is an exciting movie playing tonight.
7. They're always late!
8. The house over there is made of stone.
9. You can have another cookie if there is one left.
10. Can you help me fix their computer?

To, Two and Too

These three are occasionally muddled. Luckily, it is easy to sort out when to use them.

- **Two** is the number. In academic writing it is better to use the written form than to write the numeral '2'.

When I looked in the tin, there were only **two** biscuits left.
Tim has only got **two** friends: Colin and Donald.
Two cars passed the building shortly before the explosion.
We were stopped by **two** angry-looking policemen.

- **Too** is used with adverbs and adjectives in sentences like these:

English grammar is far **too** complicated for me.
I'm not buying this car; it is far **too** expensive.
The French speak **too** quickly for me to understand them completely.
The match was none **too** exciting until the final few minutes.

- **To** is the most common of these three words. It has several different uses.

It is used with verbs in their infinitive form.
I think it is going **to rain** today.
Paul and Steve both had ambitions **to become** professional bowls players.
When I win the lottery, I would like **to spend** a year travelling the world.
There is no need **to shout**.

Remember that you should not put anything in between the 'to' and the rest of the verb infinitive. This is known as a split infinitive.

- 'To' is also used in the sense of 'towards'.

I walk **to** school every day.
Next month I am travelling **to** India and then **to** Thailand.
'Get **to** the back of the queue!'
'Are you going **to** the shops later on today?'

http://www.bristol.ac.uk/arts/exercises/grammar/grammar_tutorial/page_15.htm

Name: _____

To, Too, and Two

Use the word *too*, *to*, or *two* to complete each sentence.

1. Kate and Jan went _____ a football game.
2. James said, "I ate _____ much ice cream."
3. Please pick up _____ gallons of milk from the store.
4. May I play _____?
5. Madison likes _____ ride horses.
6. We will all go _____ the beach on Sunday.
7. My teacher said, "Your voices are _____ loud."
8. Dexter wants _____ be in the school play.
9. Grandma bought me _____ birthday presents.
10. Would you like _____ have beef stew for dinner tonight?
10. Next month, my little sister will turn _____ years old.
11. You have _____ many toys in your bedroom.
12. When Pablo started school, he learned _____ count up to ten.

ANSWER KEY

To, Too, and Two

Use the word *too*, *to*, or *two* to complete each sentence.

1. Kate and Jan went **to** a football game.
2. James said, "I ate **too** much ice cream."
3. Please pick up **two** gallons of milk from the store.
4. May I play **too**?
5. Madison likes **to** ride horses.
6. We will all go **to** the beach on Sunday.
7. My teacher said, "Your voices are **too** loud."
8. Dexter wants **to** be in the school play.
9. Grandma bought me **two** birthday presents.
10. Would you like **to** have beef stew for dinner tonight?
10. Next month, my little sister will turn **two** years old.
11. You have **too** many toys in your bedroom.
12. When Pablo started school, he learned **to** count up to ten.

Name: _____

You're and Your

The word you're is a contraction for the words you are.

The word your is a word to describe something that belongs to you.

Use the word *your* or *you're* to complete each sentence.

1. May I borrow _____ baseball mitt?
 2. _____ my best friend.
 3. Is _____ homework finished?
 4. If you misbehave in school, _____ going to be grounded.
 5. I think _____ the best grandpa in the whole world.
 6. Is this _____ first trip to California?
 7. _____ going to have a great time here.
 8. Paul, _____ friend called on the phone.
 9. I haven't been to any of _____ basketball games this year.
 10. After dinner, _____ going to help clear the table.
- ★ **Challenge** _____ going with _____ father to pick up
_____ friends at the park.

ANSWER KEY

You're and Your

The word you're is a contraction for the words you are.

The word your is a word to describe something that belongs to you.

Use the word *your* or *you're* to complete each sentence.

1. May I borrow your baseball mitt?
2. You're my best friend.
3. Is your homework finished?
4. If you misbehave in school, you're going to be grounded.
5. I think you're the best grandpa in the whole world.
6. Is this your first trip to California?
7. You're going to have a great time here.
8. Paul, your friend called on the phone.
9. I haven't been to any of your basketball games this year.
10. After dinner, you're going to help clear the table.

★ **Challenge** You're going with your father to pick up
your friends at the park.