

Confusing Homophones



Its/it's

Its belongs to a family of other possessive adjectives, none of which contains an apostrophe.

Its her his my our your their

- The dog wagged its tail.
- Susan grabbed her coat.
- David drove his car.

It's is short for it is or it has.

- It's been a great day. (It has been a great day.)
- It's a sunny day. (It is a sunny day.)

There/their/they're

There - "here in where and here in there, so spelling them is not a scare."

Think of the three words, here, where and there as part of a family that all talk about the location of something, and remember this rhyme to help you spell them.

Their - "A throne has an heir, as does their." The word their talks about something that they own, so they are heir to it. Use this to help you remember how to spell their.

They're - "They're over there is quite simple to see, but only the first has an apostrophe."

They're actually means "they are", but because it has been shortened, the apostrophe goes where the missing "a" should be.

Were/where

These two words are actually pronounced differently. "Were" rhymes with "spur", while "where" rhymes with "spare".

Were = third person plural verb: they were, we were, etc. Where = a question word, meaning "in what place?" it is part of the family of question words below, which all begin with wh-

Where when who why what which

Practice/Practise

Practice = noun Practise = verb

An easy way of telling whether something is a noun is to see if you can put the words "the" or "a" or an adjective in front of it. For example, you could put "the" in front of "football practice", therefore "practice" is a noun.

- A doctor practises in his practice.
- In band practice, he practises the trumpet.

Effect/affect

Effect = noun **affect = verb**

- Parents **affect** children with the **effect** of their actions.
 - The **effect** of the revision classes was tremendous. It positively **affected** their exam results.
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Stationery/stationary

- **Stationery** = paper/pens etc.: I am looking for a stationery shop.
 - **Stationary** = not moving: the train was stationary.
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A/an

A/an is the same word that changes its spelling according to the word that follows.

- **A** followed by a consonant: a car/a dog/a boat
 - **An** followed by a vowel: an apple/an aeroplane/an ice cream
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Advice/advise

Advice = noun **Advise = verb**

- The doctor gave him good **advice**.
 - She **advised** him to quit smoking.
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Bought/brought

- **Bought** = past tense of buy: I bought a cake from the shop.
 - **Brought** = past tense of bring: I brought a cake to the party.
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Accept/except

- **Accept** = to take something: he accepted the prize.
 - **Except** = not including: I like all food except tripe
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Break/brake

- **Break** = to smash: will he break the world record?
 - **Brake** = a mechanism for slowing down/to slow down: he needs to put his foot on the brake.
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License/licence

Licence = noun **License = verb: to give a licence to**

- You need a **licence** to practise medicine.
 - I am **licensed** to practise law in this country
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Dependent/dependant

- **Dependant** = someone who is kept or supported by another: I have three dependants.
- **Dependent** = relying on or determined by: whether we go camping will be dependent upon the weather.