Commonly Confused Words

1. **Accept/Except**
   a. *Accept* is a verb that means to receive.
      i. I **accept** your invitation to the wedding.
   b. *Except* is a preposition that means to exclude.
      i. Please bring any guest you would like, **except** your mother.

2. **Affect/Effect**
   a. *Affect* is usually a verb that means to influence.
      i. The medication did not **affect** the spread of the disease.
   b. *Effect* is usually a noun meaning the result.
      i. The **effects** of the hurricane were devastating.

3. **All ready/already**
   a. *All ready* means completely prepared.
      i. John was **all ready** for his test.
   b. *Already* means previously.
      i. Jennifer looked for her friends in the theater, but they had **already** left.

4. **All right/Alright**
   a. *All right* is written as two words and means satisfactory or good condition.
      i. Sarah said the chicken tastes **all right** to her.
   b. *Alright* is nonstandard English and is incorrect.

5. **Are/Our**
   a. *Are* is the plural form of the verb “to be.”
      i. We **are** college students.
   b. *Our* is a plural pronoun that indicates ownership by more than one person.
      i. Our goal is to graduate with honors.

6. **Can not/Cannot**
   a. *Can not* is nonstandard English and is incorrect.
   b. *Cannot* is written together as one word. This is correct English.
      i. The company’s CEO **cannot** understand why she did not receive a raise.
7. **Choose/Chose**
   a. *Choose* is the present tense of “to choose.”
      i. I *choose* to do my homework before I watch television.
   b. *Chose* is the past tense of “to choose.”
      i. Maria *chose* to open her own hair salon.

8. **Could have/Could of**
   a. *Could have* is the correct way to write this phrase. Also, use “have” after other verbs such as “might,” “should,” and “would.”
      i. David *could have* gone to Harvard if he had kept his grades up and attended class regularly.
   b. *Could of* is nonstandard English and is incorrect.

9. **Don’t/Doesn’t**
   a. *Don’t* is the contraction for *do not*. *Don’t* should never be used as the contraction for *does not*, which is *doesn’t*.
      i. I *don’t* want any coffee.
   b. *Doesn’t* is the contraction for *does not*. This form is used for “he,” “she,” and “it”
      i. He *doesn’t* (not *don’t*) want any dessert.

10. **e.g./i.e.**
    a. *e.g.* means “for example” or “for instance.”
      i. I buy a lot of things on Amazon, *e.g.*, paper towels, household cleaners, and snacks for the kids.
    b. *i.e.* means “that is.”
      i. I am going to the place where I work best, *i.e.*, the library.

11. **Farther/Further**
    a. *Farther* usually describes distances.
      i. Boston is *farther* from Miami than I had originally thought.
    b. *Further* usually suggests quantity or degree.
      i. Sally wanted to discuss the issue *further*.

12. **Good/Well**
    a. *Good* is used to describe nouns.
      i. Tina is a *good* writer.
    b. *Well* is used to describe actions.
      i. Tina writes and sings *well*. 

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13. **Hardly**
   a. Avoid using “not” with words such as “hardly” or “barely.” This is considered a double negative in English.
      i. I can (not can’t) **hardly** wait for the party at the lake this weekend.

14. **Himself**
   a. **Himself** is nonstandard English. Use **himself**.

15. **Imply/Infer**
   a. Imply means to suggest or state indirectly.
      i. The manager **implied** that John was a bad employee.
   b. Infer means to draw a conclusion.
      i. Based on John’s messy appearance, rude speech, and tardiness, the manager **inferred** that John was a bad employee.

16. **It’s/Its**
   a. It’s is a contraction for it is.
      i. **It’s** a beautiful day.
   b. Its is a possessive pronoun.
      i. The dog wants its bone.

17. **Lead/Led**
   a. Lead is a type of metal.
      i. Most pencils are lead based.
   b. Led is the past tense of the verb “to lead.”
      i. The coach led his team to a championship.

18. **Lie/Lay**
   a. Lie means to recline or rest on a surface.
      i. I need to **lie** down.
   b. Lay means to put or place something.
      i. Please **lay** the mail on the coffee table.

19. **Loose/Lose**
   a. Loose means not securely fastened.
      i. Bob’s tie is loose around his neck.
   b. Lose means to misplace or to not win.
      i. Joan always loses her car keys.
20. Passed/Past
   a. Passed is the past tense form of the verb “to pass.”
      i. Mom passed the butter to me.
   b. Past refers to a former time.
      i. Historians learn many lessons from past events.

21. Site/Cite
   a. Site refers to a specific location.
      i. Construction workers began work at the site on Monday.
   b. Cite is a verb and means to give credit.
      i. Please cite all your borrowed information according to MLA or APA format.

22. Than/Then
   a. Than is used to make comparisons.
      i. Hershey’s chocolate is better than Nestle’s.
   b. Then is used to indicate time and/or sequence of events.
      i. First we will eat pizza, and then we will watch a movie.

23. There/Their/They’re
   a. There refers to a location.
      i. The post office is over there.
   b. Their indicates ownership by more than one person.
      i. The Browns went to their house after dinner.
   c. They’re is a contraction of they are.
      i. They’re going to the beach next weekend.

24. To/Two/Too
   a. To is a preposition and is used with verbs.
      i. Maria is going to the beach to surf.
   b. Two is the written form of the number 2.
      i. People always say, “two heads are better than one.”
   c. Too means “also” or “as well.”
      i. Robert wants to learn Spanish too.

25. Weather/Whether
   a. Weather refers to the climate or atmosphere.
      i. Meteorologists predict the weather will be bad this winter.
   b. Whether indicates a choice between two alternatives.
      i. Brian had to decide whether or not he wanted to quit his job and go back to school or keep his job and hope for a promotion.
26. **Where/Were/Wear**
   a. *Where* indicates a location.
      i. Can you tell me *where* the party is?
   b. *Were* is the past tense form of the verb “to be.”
      i. They *were* late for the exam because they stayed up all night studying.
   c. *Wear* is a verb and means to be clothed in.
      i. Michael *wears* the same shoes every day.

27. **Who’s/Whose**
   a. *Who’s* is a contraction of *who is*.
      i. *Who’s* going to the beach for the 4\(^{th}\) of July?
   b. *Whose* indicates possession or ownership.
      i. *Whose* dictionary is on the coffee table?

28. **Your/You’re**
   a. *Your* is a possessive pronoun.
      i. I like *your* new haircut.
   b. *You’re* is a contraction of *you are*.
      i. *You’re* smart and funny; that’s why *you’re* my best friend.