

WHICH WORD DO I USE?

A HANDY DESK REFERENCE GUIDE

A lot/Allot

- A lot: Always two words, signifies a large amount (never "alot")
- Allot: Designates a portion

Advise/Advice

- Advise: Verb, the action of offering guidance
- Advice: Noun, the guidance being offered

Affect/Effect

- Affect: Verb, the action
- Effect: Noun, the result of the action

Among/Between

- Among: Use with a group of three or more people (avoid "amongst")
- Between: Use with two people

Assure/Ensure/Insure

- Assure: Make confident
- Ensure: Make certain
- Insure: Make an insurance policy

Complement/Compliment

- Complement: To complete something
- Compliment: To give praise (The "l" is for "I like compliments!")

Criteria/Criterion

- Criteria: Multiple requirements
- Criterion: One requirement

Desperate/Disparate

- Desperate: Hopeless
- Disparate: Different in every way

Each other/One another

- Each other: Use with two people
- One another: Use with three or more people

Eager/Anxious

- Eager: Excited anticipation
- Anxious: Worried anticipation

Famous/Notorious

- Famous: For something good
- Notorious: For something bad (also: infamous)

Farther/Further

- Farther: Literal distance
- Further: Metaphorical distance

Fewer/Less

- Fewer: For nouns that can be counted
- Less: For nouns that can't be counted individually (hint: these nouns are never pluralized, e.g., "coffee" and "clutter")

Hole/Whole

- Hole: Missing
- Whole: Complete

Imply/Infer

- Imply: Applies to the speaker or writer
- Infer: Applies to the listener or reader

Its/It's

- Its: Indicates possession
- It's: Conjunction of "it" and "is"

Lose/Loose, Loser/Looser

- Lose/Loser: Signifies defeat
- Loose/Looser: Signifies a slackening

Meet/Meat

- Meet: Use for introductions
- Meat: Use for food

Plain/Plane

- Plain: Land formation, or something that is unadorned
- Plane: Abstract space, or a flying vehicle

Pour/Pore

- Pour: Think "liquid"
- Pore: Think "skin" (or "study")

Principal/Principle

- Principal: Schoolmaster, loan amount or key person
- Principle: Rule or noble belief

Then/Than

- Then: Use when telling a chronological story
- Than: Use when comparing

There/Their/They're

- There: Location
- Their: Possession
- They're: Conjunction of "they" and "are"

Ware/Wear/Where

- Ware: Merchandise
- Wear: To carry on your body, or to diminish
- Where: Refers to a place

Weather/Whether

- Weather: Use for the atmosphere
- Whether: Use for comparisons

Which/That/Who

- Which: Refers to groups or things, introduces nonessential clauses, typically preceded by a comma
- That: Refers to groups or things, introduces essential clauses, no comma
- Who: Refers to a person

Who/Whom

- Who: Corresponds with "he" and "she"
- Whom: Corresponds with "him" and "her"

Whose/Who's

- Whose: Use to question ownership
- Who's: Use as a conjunction of "who" and "is"

Would've/Should've/ Could've/Must've/Should of/ Could of/Would of/Must of

- Would've: Would have
- Should've: Should have
- Could've: Could have
- Must've: Must have
- Should of: Wrong!
- Could of: Wrong!
- Would of: Wrong!
- Must of: Still wrong!

Your/You're

- Your: Indicates ownership
- You're: Conjunction of "you" and "are"

