



Confusing Words E-H

E

e.g. versus i.e.

E.g. is short for a Latin phrase “exempli gratia” that means “for the sake of example.” It is used to introduce one or more examples and is a signal that one or a few of multiple possibilities will follow.

Example: There are many poor countries (e.g., most of South Asia and Africa) where the population’s suffering is great.

I.e. is also short for a Latin phrase “id est” which means “that is to say” or “in other words” in English. I.e. clarifies by providing more precise information. Where e.g. opens up more options, i.e. narrows them down.

Example: He is a vegan, i.e., he doesn’t eat any animal-based products.

Note: E.g. and i.e. are both lowercase when they show up in the middle of a sentence (i.e., like this). Most American style guides recommend a period after both letters in both abbreviations. In general, a comma is added after e.g. You can enclose e.g. and i.e., along with the examples associated with them, in parentheses if you want your examples or your narrowing-down set apart from the rest of the sentence.

elicit versus illicit

Elicit is a verb which defines the action of extracting information from a person or a source and is mainly used formally rather than in daily conversations.

Example: The detectives elicited information from witnesses to the crime.

Illicit functions as an adjective and describes something that is not approved by society or that is illegal.

Example: The man’s use of illicit drugs caused him to be evicted from his apartment.

emigrate versus immigrate

Emigrate is a verb that means when a person leaves his/her home country with the intention of permanently settling in a new country. The prefix ‘e’ means “away”. People can emigrate on their own, as a family, or in a bigger group. Emigrate is followed by the preposition “from”.

Example: Nadia emigrated **from** Iran to the U.S.

The noun form of emigrate is **emigrant**.



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Example: There are many emigrants from Asia who live in Europe.

Immigrate is a verb that means to move into a new country or region with the intention of permanently living there. The prefix “im” means “into”. Like emigrate, one person or a group can immigrate. Immigrate is followed by the preposition “to”. Example: .Amy’s dream was to immigrate **to** the UK.

The noun form of immigrate is **immigrant**.

Example: The immigrant family is waiting for their visas to Australia.

A word that is often confused with immigrant is **migrant**. Migrant is an adjective or a noun and means someone who moves temporarily to a new country in order to find work.

Example: Big farms hire migrant workers to harvest their crops.

eminent versus imminent

Eminent is an adjective meaning high in station, rank or repute. It also means prominent or distinguished. Eminent can describe a person, place or thing. Examples: The president of the United States is an eminent world figure.(high in station)

The Grand Canyon is an eminent national park in the U.S.(prominent)

Imminent is an adjective meaning something that is likely to happen at any moment, is anticipated, is about to happen, or is threatening to occur. Imminent can be used to describe something that is bad or good.

Examples: The weather service warned of imminent tornadoes in the area. (bad news)

The entire family was happy about the imminent wedding. (good news)

empathy versus sympathy

Empathy is a noun and is the ability to put yourself in the place of another person and understand their feelings by identifying with them. In other words, empathy is putting yourself in someone else's shoes by perceiving how the other person is feeling and sharing those feelings. Empathy is stronger than sympathy .

Example: It is easy to feel empathy if you have been in the other person’s situation yourself .

Sympathy is also a noun that involves feelings of compassion, sadness, sorrow or pity for another person or people who are facing difficult situations. It is an emotional reaction to something that happens to others.

Example: Ava sent her friend a sympathy card when she learned her father had passed away.



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equal versus equitable

These two words can both mean “even” or “fair” in some contexts. However, most of the time they cannot be interchanged.

Equal is an adjective referring to any two things that are the same. When speaking of equal rights, it means that each individual or group of people is given the same resources or opportunities.

Example: Equal measures of trust and respect are crucial to maintaining a successful marriage.

Equitable is also an adjective used to describe policies, rulings and settlements that lead to equal results. “Equitable” is more general in nature, and “equal” is more specific. Example: An equitable plan would consider the well-being of everyone involved.

ethics versus morals

These two words are closely related concepts but have different meanings. Morals refer mainly to guiding principles, and ethics refer to specific rules and actions. **Ethics** are much more practical than morals because an ethical code is just a set of rules for people to follow. These rules define allowable actions or correct behavior. In other words, an ethical code has nothing to do with righteousness or beliefs. Codes of ethics, written or unwritten, are more dispassionate than moral codes. They are more about fairness and keeping a society or an organization as conflict-free as possible. An ethical violation can be thought of as an offense against society.

Example: Mesa Community College has a code of ethics for employees to follow.

Morals is a noun, as in good morals, but moral can also be used as an adjective, as in a moral principle. The word “moral” is an idea or opinion that is driven by a desire to be good. Peoples’ morals tend to be shaped by their surrounding environment and belief systems and make up values that shape their ideas about right and wrong. Moral codes run more deeply than just smooth social functioning and carry more emotional force than ethical codes. A moral violation can be thought of as an offense against humanity. Example: What is moral in one country may be immoral in another.

F

fair versus fare

Fair can be used in many ways. As an adjective it means a pleasant appearance; weather that is free of clouds or storms; something that is done in accordance with



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rules; and moderately good.

Examples: She has a fair complexion. (appearance)

According to the weather forecast, this week will be fair. (free of storms)

Everyone is entitled to fair treatment. (done in accordance with rules)

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Emma gets fair grades in school. (moderately good)

Fair can also be used as an adverb, meaning something done in a proper or legal manner without cheating or trying to take an unjust advantage.

Example: Athletes are expected to play fair.

Used as a noun, fair means an exhibition of goods or services, an exhibition to inform people about business or job opportunities, and an event benefiting a charity or public good.

Examples: We bought homemade jams at the state fair. (exhibition of goods)

He put many applications in at the job fair. (job opportunity)

Every year the city has a fair to raise money for the homeless. (an event benefiting public good)

Fare when used as a verb means getting along or performing in a specific way.

Example: He is not faring well at his new job.

As a noun, fare means 1) money a person pays when using public transportation or 2) a variety of food and drink.

Examples: If you want to ride the city bus, you must pay a fare. (public transportation)

That restaurant serves Middle Eastern fare. (food)

farther versus further

Can farther and further can be used interchangeably? These two words have very similar meanings. However, there is one major difference between them: “Farther” is physical, and “further” is conceptual (having to do with the mind).

Farther is both an adjective and an adverb that means a greater distance away. We use farther when being literal and discussing a physical distance. It is the comparative form of “far” with “farthest” being the superlative.

Example: My house is farther down the street than yours. (adjective) The winning runner ran farther than the other runners. (adverb)

Further is also both an adverb and adjective as well as a verb and is used in a



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figurative sense to talk about time, quantities or degrees. As an adverb, further means more or to a greater degree. It can also mean moreover or additionally. Examples:

The lawyer had nothing further to say. (more)

His careless spending caused him to go further into debt. (greater degree)

You are grounded, and further, you may not call your friends. (moreover) As an adjective, further means additional.

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Example: The teacher asked if there were any further questions.

When used as a verb, further means to advance or to help something to succeed.

Example: Your contribution will help further our ability to feed the homeless.

faze versus phase

Although these two words have the same pronunciation, they have entirely different meanings.

Faze is a verb that means to disturb or bother someone; to break someone's composure.

Example: The sound of the neighbor's barking dog didn't faze him. **Phase**, as a noun, means a stage of a process or a state or condition. Examples:

There are many phases to this huge project. (stage of a process) The phases of the moon affect the tides. (state or condition)

As a verb, phase means to schedule something to begin or end over time and is most often followed by "in" or "out".

Example: The school is phasing out its old textbooks and phasing in the new editions.

figuratively versus literally

Figuratively is an adverb describing something symbolically, not actually; in other words, figuratively is used to describe things metaphorically.

Example: Kamala Harris figuratively broke the glass ceiling when she became the first vice president of the United States. (She didn't really break a glass ceiling.) **Literally** is also an adverb that means "actually, without exaggeration". It should only be used when speaking or writing about something in an exact sense. Examples: He literally died laughing, because the joke was so funny. (This is, of course, an exaggeration because he didn't really die laughing. It shows the misuse of the word "literally")

The weather was literally freezing when she stepped outside.

(The temperature really was freezing. This is a true (literal) statement.)



flair versus flare

Flair is a noun that refers to talent (aptitude), usually followed by the preposition “for”, or a distinctive style.

Examples: Anna has a flair for knitting sweaters. (talent, aptitude)

My favorite restaurant has a Mediterranean flair. (distinctive style)

Flare, as a verb, generally refers to negative concepts such as pain or anger. It also means the action of something burning suddenly, shortly and brightly. Examples:

The old man’s arthritis was constantly flaring up. (pain)

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Mary’s temper flared at the man’s rude remarks. (anger)

The flame from the match flared and quickly died out. (burned suddenly)

As a noun, flare means a piece of equipment used for safety which creates a bright signal. It also defines a sudden, bright light.

Examples: It’s a good idea to carry flares in your car. (safety equipment) The crowd saw the flare of the rocket before it disappeared. (bright light)

follow up versus follow-up

Follow up without the hyphen is a phrasal verb which means to pursue or check on something.

Example: The detective followed up on several witness reports.

Follow-up as a noun means a review or continuation of something, and as an adjective it is used to describe such an event.

Example: The follow-up for employee training will be next week. (noun) Please schedule a follow-up appointment with the doctor. (adjective)

forth versus fourth

Forth is an adverb referring to direction. It means forward or ahead.

Example: The army moved forth in the direction of the enemy.

Fourth, on the other hand, is an adjective that describes a number in sequence (an ordinal number). It corresponds with the number four which is a cardinal number.

Example: She was the fourth of six children.

foul versus fowl

Foul is an adjective that describes something that is bad, against the rules or unpleasant.

Examples: Murder is a foul crime. (bad)

Do not step over the foul line. (against the rules)



Rotten potatoes have a foul smell. (unpleasant)

Foul is a verb that means to make something dirty.

Example: Exhaust from motor vehicles fouls the air.

In sports, “foul” can also be used as a noun to describe 1) an action in a sport that is against the rules and 2) a hit in baseball which goes outside the limits of the playing area.

Examples: The basketball player had two fouls against him.

The batter fouled the first pitch.

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Fowl is a noun meaning a bird that is kept for its meat or eggs, especially ones like chickens or turkeys. In a broader sense, it also refers to any type of bird, even wild birds.

Example: Farmers generally raise several kinds of fowls.

G

gait versus gate

Gait is a noun and means the rhythm of walking or running by people or animals.

Example: The runner’s gait was smooth and unchanged.

Gate is also a noun meaning a door to a fenced or walled outdoor enclosure that is a border to someone’s property.

Example: The gate to the abandoned house was broken and rusty.

grate versus great

Grate is a verb that means grind, scrape or irritate.

Examples: When making a carrot cake, you must first grate the carrots. (grind)

The loud music grated on her nerves. (irritate)

As a noun, grate means a metal structure used to hold wood or coal in a fireplace. A grate is also a latticed metal structure used to cover an opening in a sidewalk or a floor.

Examples: The man put wood on the grate and then made a fire.

There was a large iron grate set in the sidewalk.

Great is an adjective that describes something very good or very big. It is also used as a prefix before nouns such as “grandmother” to show relations between more than two



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generations.

Examples: The children had a great time at the amusement park. (very good)

The great machine was awesome to watch. (very big)

His great grandfather was born in Syria. (relation)

gray versus grey

These two words have the same meaning but different spelling. The way the word is spelled depends on the country where you live. **Gray** is more common in the U.S., while **grey** is usually used in other English-speaking countries. However, in proper names like Earl Grey tea and the unit Gray (absorbed dose of ionizing radiation) the spelling stays the same. Therefore, the spelling of these words needs to be memorized. As a noun, gray usually refers to the color. It can be used as an adjective when we want to say that the color of something is a shade of gray. It can also be used as a verb, for when something grays (i.e., turns gray, such as hair).

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Example: His hair had grayed considerably since I last saw him.

gargle versus gurgle

Gargle is a verb and means the action of holding liquid in the back of the mouth and blowing air out from the lungs.

Example: It's a good idea to gargle a mint mouthwash before going to work.

As a noun, gargle is a liquid used for gargling.

Example: Some people use a salt water gargle to treat a sore throat.

Gurgle is also a verb and means to flow with a bubbling sound.

Example: The water gurgled over the rocks in the stream.

When used as a noun, gurgle means the bubbling sound that gurgling makes.

Example: There's nothing better than hearing a baby's gurgle.

glance versus glimpse

Even though these two words when used as verbs have to do with the eyes seeing something quickly, the difference is that when a person **glances** at something, it is deliberate, but when someone **glimpses** something, it is not intentional. Examples: I glanced at the newspaper headlines as I walked through the library. (deliberate action)

She glimpsed the figure of a man by the window. (not intentional)



Glance as a noun means quick look at something.

Example: The man gave the young woman a glance as she walked by. **Glimpse** as a noun means a quick look that does not allow a person to see something or someone clearly.

Example: The witness only got a glimpse of the hit and run car.

H

half-mast versus half-staff

Many nations periodically fly their flags about halfway up the flagpole, especially upon the deaths of public figures or on the anniversaries of important military engagements in honor of those who died. In the English language, flags flown in this way are said to either be at **half-mast** or **half-staff**. However, while these phrases describe the same practice, there are specific contexts for when each would be more appropriate.

Half-mast refers to flags on ships or naval bases. These are the only places where flags are flown on something called a “mast”.

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Example: The flags in the sailboat race were all flying half-mast in honor of the racer who died in last year’s competition.

Half-staff is used anywhere else, like civilian structures or other buildings on land.

Example: In the U.S. on 9/11, flags on government buildings are flown at half-staff.

hanged versus hung

These two past tense verbs of “hang” are really confusing. Although they both are the past tense of the verb hang, they must not be used interchangeably. **Hanged** has only one meaning and that is when it denotes death by hanging (death caused by suspending a person by the neck using a rope or a wire). Example: The rebels were hanged in the public square.

Hung has a few different meanings. It can mean suspended, drooped or declined, paid attention to something, held on tightly, and time spent with someone. Examples: The teenager hung a poster of his favorite rock singer on the wall. (suspended)

The bad dog hung its head upon seeing its master. (drooped/declined)

Chris hung onto every word his girlfriend said. (paid attention to)

The mountain climber hung on tightly to the rope. (held on)

Tyler hung out at the mall with his friends yesterday. (spent time)

An easy way to remember these two words is to use the phrase: Pictures are **hung**, but people are **hanged**.



hangar versus hanger

Hangar is a noun and refers to a large building with an extensive open floor area that is typically used for parking and maintaining aircraft.

Example: The air museum's hangar contained many World War II aircraft.

Hanger is also a noun meaning an item used to hang clothing. It is also used to describe a person who hangs things.

Examples: There were many empty hangers in her closet.

She is an excellent wallpaper hanger.

heard versus herd

Heard is the past and past participle form of the verb "hear". It can mean to recognize a sound with one's ear, to receive information, or to listen to a legal case. Examples: She heard a loud noise outside her window (recognized by ear) I heard about the music class from a friend, (received information)

The jury heard both sides of the criminal case. (listened to a case)

Herd as a noun refers to a large group of animals that live together, usually hoofed animals or livestock. Herd is a singular noun when referring to a group, but can be plural if there is more than one herd (herds of sheep, herds of antelope).

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Examples: A herd of deer was crossing the road. (hoofed animals)

Traffic was stopped by a herd of sheep. (livestock)

Two herds of horses joined together at the lake.

As a verb, herd can be used to describe the act of gathering a group of animals or people into a group and moving them in a certain direction.

Example: The cowboys herded the cattle into the corral.

hearty versus hardy

These two adjectives sound a lot alike, but it's easy to remember the difference from the initial words they derive from: "hearty" derives from "heart" and "hardy" is a derivative of "hard".

Hearty is associated with feelings of positivity and energy like a friendly person who is full of positivity, welcoming and loving. When referring to meals, "hearty" describes a large, satisfying portion.

Examples: We were given a hearty welcome by our hosts.



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Santa Claus has a hearty laugh.

That restaurant is famous for its hearty meals.

Hardy describes something or someone that is strong enough to resist bad conditions or difficult situations.

Examples: Pioneers had to be hardy to cross the country in covered wagons.

Some plants are hardy enough to survive extreme temperatures.

height versus heighth

Height is a noun meaning a high place or a measurement of vertical size

Examples: She doesn't like climbing ladders because she is afraid of heights.
(high place)

Basketball players are usually tall in height. (vertical measurement)

Height is frequently used in place names, like "Wuthering Heights" where it describes an area that is higher in elevation than its surroundings. **Heighth** is a misspelling of "height" probably brought about because of similarity to other words that end in "ght", like "eighth". The correct form of the word is **height**.

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historic versus historical

These two words are close in meaning, but they are used differently. Also, many wonder if they should use the article "a" or "an" when using these adjectives.

Either article is acceptable, but "a" is more common.

Historic is usually used for important events and famous moments in history.

Example: The moon landing was a historic event.

Historical, on the other hand, is the general term for describing something that happened in history or relates to a characteristic in history.

Example: The historical museum contained many items from the Civil War.

hoard versus horde

Hoard is a noun that refers to a large supply of something that is hidden or carefully guarded for future use.

Example: When cleaning the old house, the new owners found a hoard of cash in a box stored in the basement.



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As a verb, hoard means to accumulate something for preservation, future use, etc., in a hidden or carefully guarded place. Hoarding is often done in a greedy or excessive way. Example: At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, many people hoarded toilet paper.

Horde is a noun that refers to a large group of people or animals/insects. It can also mean a mass or crowd.

Examples: A horde of bees was living in the rafters of the old barn.

Hordes of students were at the beach during spring break.

Horde can also function as an intransitive verb to describe how a group, multitude, or number of people or animals gathers,

Example: *The elephants horded together near the river.*

hyper versus hypo

Hyper when used as a prefix means excess or too much of something. Therefore, when a person is “hyperactive”, it means they are extraordinarily active, or if someone has “hypertension,” it means their blood pressure is abnormally high.

Example: Hypertension can be regulated by medication.

In modern English “hyper” used as an adjective has come to mean overexcited or over stimulated. It can also mean a fanatical or obsessive preoccupation with something.

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Examples: Eating too much sugar can cause children to become hyper. (overexcited)

He is hyper about germs, so he’s always washing his hands. (obsessive preoccupation)

Hypo can only be used as a prefix and is the opposite of “hyper”. It means underneath, less than normal or deficient in some way. A hypodermic needle means under the skin, while hypochondriac refers to a person who constantly thinks he is sick when he isn’t.

Examples: Lightheadedness is a symptom of hypotension (low blood pressure).

Hypothermia is caused by exposure to extreme cold.



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