

COMMONLY MISUSED WORDS

Send your intended message by writing with the correct language. To help, use this cheat-sheet for avoiding commonplace errors in word choice and spelling. And remember, when in doubt the good ole' dictionary is a writer's best ally.

ADVERSE – AVERSE – *Adverse* means “unfavorable, harmful, hostile.” *Averse* means “opposed to, having a feeling of distaste for.”

AFFECT – EFFECT – *Affect* is a verb that means “to have influence on or cause a change in something.” *Effect* is a noun that means “the result or consequence of something.” An easy way to remember is that *affect* starts with an “a” for “action” and “action” reminds the writer it is a verb.

ALL RIGHT – Like *all wrong*, the phrase is correctly spelled with two words.

ANXIOUS – This word implies fear or concern and means “characterized by extreme uneasiness of mind or brooding fear about some contingency; worried.” *Anxious* does not mean “eager” or “looking forward to something.”

BETWEEN – AMONG – Use *between* to refer to two persons or things; use *among* to refer to more than two persons or things.

BETWEEN YOU AND ME (not I)

COMPLEMENT – COMPLIMENT – *Complement* as a noun means “something that completes”; as a verb it means “to complete to be complementary to.” *Compliment* as a noun means “an admiring or flattering remark”; as a verb it means “to praise, to pay a compliment to.”

EVERY DAY – EVERYDAY – *Every day* (two separate words) means “each single day.” *Everyday* (one word) is an adjective that means “ordinary, typically encountered, or used routinely.”

Example:

Every day I buy a cup of coffee.

I buy a cup of coffee as part of my everyday routine.

FARTHER – FURTHER – *Farther* relates to actual distance. *Further* relates to figurative distances and means “to a greater degree or greater extent.”

Example:

He threw the ball farther than any other kid.

I need to look further into how the dog broke out of the pen.

FEWER – LESS – The word *fewer* refers to number and is used with plural nouns; *less* refers to degree or amount and is used with singular nouns.

Example:

There were fewer accidents this year.

Less advertising resulted in fewer sales.

GOOD – WELL – *Good* is an adjective; *well* is typically used as an adverb but may be used as an adjective to refer to someone's health. To *feel well* means "to be in good health"; to *feel good* means "to be in good spirits."

Example:

She's a good swimmer. (Adjective)

Clean the floor as well as you can. (Adverb)

He doesn't feel well today. (Adjective)

IRREGARDLESS VS. REGARDLESS – *Regardless* is the correct word. The meaning is "without regard" and use of the suffix *-less* creates the intended negative; *irregardless* is incorrectly borrowing from such words as *irregular*, *irresponsible*, and *irrespective*.

UNIQUE – There are not degrees of uniqueness and the word should stand alone without modifiers; for example, avoid "most unique" or "very unique."