

# 20 COMMONLY CONFUSED WORD PAIRS

<http://grammar.about.com/od/200homonyms/fl/20-Commonly-Confused-Word-Pairs.htm?nl=1>

Here, from our Glossary of Commonly Confused Words, are 20 tricky word pairs that look and sound alike but have different meanings.

## **Advice and Advise**

The noun advice means guidance. The verb advise means to recommend or counsel.

## **All Together and Altogether**

The phrase all together refers to people or things gathered in one place. The adverb altogether means entirely or wholly.

## **Baited and Bated**

A hook, witness, or animal is baited (lured, enticed, tempted). Breath is bated (moderated).

## **Cite and Site**

The verb cite means to mention or quote as an authority or example. The noun site means a particular place.

## **Complement and Compliment**

Complement means something that completes or brings to perfection. A compliment is an expression of praise.

## **Discreet and Discrete**

The adjective discreet means tactful or prudent self-restraint. Discrete means distinct or separate.

## **Eminent and Imminent**

The adjective eminent means prominent or outstanding. Imminent means impending, about to occur.

## **Flair and Flare**

The noun flair means a talent or a distinctive quality or style. As a noun, flare means a fire or a blazing light. Similarly, the verb flare means to burn with an unsteady flame or shine with a sudden light. Violence, troubles, tempers, and nostrils can flare.

## **Formally and Formerly**

The adverb formally means in a formal way. The adverb formerly means at an earlier time.

## **Hardy and Hearty**

The adjective hardy (related to hard) means daring, courageous, and capable of surviving difficult conditions. The adjective hearty (related to heart) means showing warm and heartfelt affection or providing abundant nourishment.

## **Ingenious and Ingenuous**

The adjective ingenious means extremely clever--marked by

inventive skill and imagination. Ingenuous means straightforward, candid, without guile.

## **Lightening and Lightning**

The noun lightening means making lighter in weight or changing to a lighter or brighter color. Lightning is the flash of light that accompanies thunder.

## **Mantel and Mantle**

The noun mantel refers to a shelf above a fireplace. The noun mantle refers to a cloak or (usually figuratively) to royal robes of state as a symbol of authority or responsibility.

## **Moot and Mute**

The adjective moot refers to something that is debatable or of no practical importance. The adjective mute means unspoken or unable to speak.

## **Prescribe and Proscribe**

The verb prescribe means to establish, direct, or lay down as a rule. The verb proscribe means to ban, forbid, or condemn.

## **Rational and Rationale**

The adjective rational means having or exercising the ability to reason. The noun rationale refers to an explanation or basic reason.

## **Shear and Sheer**

The verb shear means to cut or clip. Likewise, the noun shear refers to the act, process, or fact of cutting or clipping. The adjective sheer means fine, transparent, or complete. As an adverb, sheer means completely or altogether.

## **Stationary and Stationery**

The adjective stationary means remaining in one place. The noun stationery refers to writing materials. (Try associating the er in stationery with the er in letter and paper.)

## **Track and Tract**

As a noun, track refers to a path, route, or course. The verb track means to travel, pursue, or follow. The noun tract refers to an expanse of land or water, a system of organs and tissues in the body, or a pamphlet containing a declaration or appeal.

## **Whose and Who's**

Whose is the possessive form of who. Who's is the contraction of who is.