Commonly Confused Words

Words that sound alike or nearly alike but have different meanings often cause writers trouble. Here are a few of the most common pairs with correct definitions.

Accept / Except

Affect / Effect

All Ready / Already

Altogether / All Together

Conscience / Conscious

Its / It’s

Lie / Lay

Lose / Loose

Passed / Past

Supposed To /Suppose

Than / Then

Their / There / They’re

Through / Threw / Thorough / Though

To / Too / Two

Who / Which / That

Who / Whom

ACCEPT--to receive EXCEPT**--**to leave out

AFFECT**--**to influence EFFECT--*n*., result; *v*., to accomplish

ALL READY--prepared ALREADY--by this time

ALTOGETHER--entirely ALL TOGETHER--gathered, with everything in one place

CONSCIENCE--sense of right and wrong CONSCIOUS--awake

ITS--of or belonging to it IT’S--contraction for it is

LIE--to lie down (also lying, lay, has/have lain) LAY--to place an object down (also laying, laid, has/have laid)

LOSE--to misplace or not win LOOSE --to not be tight

PASSED--past tense of the verb “to pass,” to have moved PAST--belonging to a former time or place

SUPPOSED TO**--**to be obligated to, presumed to SUPPOSE--to guess or make a conjecture

THAN**--**use with comparisons THEN--at that time, or next

THEIR**--**possessive form of theyTHERE--indicates location (think of “here and there”) THEY’RE--contraction for “they are”

THROUGH--finished; into or out of; by means of THREW--past tense of throw THOROUGH--careful or complete THOUGH--however

TO**--**toward TOO--also, excessively TWO**--**a number

WHO--pronoun referring to a person or persons WHICH--pronoun replacing singular or plural things; not used to refer to people THAT--used to refer to things or a group or class of people

WHO--used as the subject of the verb WHOM--used as the object of the verb

Source: University of Richmond. writing2.richmond.edu. 2010. Web. 11 Nov.2013