

L

labor union

See **TRADE UNION**.

lady, Madam, ma'am, madame, mesdames

lady *noun*, is a rather formal way to refer to a woman: *We stepped back as the elderly lady began to pick up her bag*. It is the correct title to give to the wife of a lord or knight, and also appears as part of some job titles: *tea lady*. In the House of Commons, a female member of another party is called the Hon. Lady: *I am grateful to the Hon. Lady for her support*. When addressing a mixed group in a formal situation the standard initial phrase is: *Ladies and Gentlemen*.



(Cocktail lounge notice)

Madam *noun*, is a polite way of addressing a woman at the start of a formal letter or email: *Dear Madam*, and is thus the female equivalent of *Dear Sir*. In speech, it is used before a title to address a female: *Madam President, Madam Mayor*. Otherwise its only use is to refer respectfully to a female customer in shops or restaurants: *Would Madam like a seat by the window?* In all these senses, **Madam** has an initial capital letter.

Without a capital letter, a *madam* is the woman in charge of a brothel, or a bossy or cheeky girl.

ma'am *noun*. In spoken AE, **ma'am** is used as a polite way to address any woman: *Pleased to meet you, ma'am*. In BE, this is used as the equivalent of 'sir' when addressing a superior female military or police officer, pronounced *maam* /mɑ:m/, and in addressing female royalty, when it is pronounced *mamm* /mæm/ to rhyme with 'jam', and written with a capital M.

madame *noun*, is the French word for lady, and is used in English as a title for women in certain areas of the arts such as ballet, or for fortune tellers.

mesdames *noun*, is the plural of *madame*.

lager

See **BEER**.

laid

See **LIE**¹.

lama

See **LLAMA**.

landscape

See **SCENERY**.

landward, landwards

landward *adjective*, means facing towards land: *You will get a better view of the island from the landward side of the boat*. Note that this is only used before a noun.

landwards *adverb*, is the corresponding adverb, and describes a movement towards land: *After three hours, the ship sailed landwards*. *Landward* is an alternative form, especially in AE.

lane, carriageway (roads)

lane *noun*, means a division of a road marked by painted lines to separate the lines of traffic: *Extensive bus lane and priority traffic signalling has been approved for the city centre*. Three-lane motorways are divided into the *inside lane*, *middle lane* and *outside lane*. The *inside lane* is also called the *slow lane* and the *outside lane* (*passing lane* in AE) is also called the *fast lane*. Figuratively *life in*

the fast lane means a life full of excitement, danger and expense. **Lane** also means a road in a town or city where it sometimes occurs in road names like *Park Lane*. It can also be a small narrow street between buildings in a town and a narrow road, often in the countryside. See **STREET**.

carriageway *noun*, means one of the two sides of a large road or motorway for traffic moving in the same direction: *The northbound carriageway on the M25 is blocked*. This is a BE term that is often combined with ‘dual’ as in *dual carriageway* (this is called a ‘divided highway’ in AE). See **AMERICAN ROAD TYPES**.

La Niña

See **EL NIÑO**.

lapse

See **ELAPSE**.

large, substantial, considerable, big

large *adjective*, refers to size, quantity or extent: *a large hole, a large retail chain, a large population centre*. It is found in several set expressions, including *at large, as large as life* and *by and large*.

substantial *adjective*, means extensive in size, amount, form or significance: *If you have followed through all the exercises in this book, you have done a substantial amount of work*.

considerable *adjective*, also means extensive in size, amount or significance, but usually less than substantial: *Teaching machines had considerable appeal to the military and to large-scale industry*.

big *adjective*, means extensive in terms of size and importance: *Your wedding should be the biggest day of your life*. In the sentence *He was a big man*, **big** may mean either important or tall. In such cases, it is better to choose a less ambiguous adjective. **Big** has a variety of informal meanings, including enthusiastic: *He’s a big Stones fan*. In formal writing, **big** is often a poor choice and it is better to use a more precise word such as *large, great, substantial* or *considerable*.

last, latest

See **RECENT**.

last name

See **SURNAME**.

Latin abbreviations in English

Many of the abbreviations used in formal written English are the short forms of Latin words. See entries for: **ca, cf., e.g., etc., et al., ibid., i.e., op. cit., viz.** for some tips about how to use some of the most common ones.

Latin America

See **AMERICA**.

latitude, longitude

latitude *noun*, means the distance of a geographical position from the equator, expressed in degrees, minutes and seconds. The North Pole is 90° N (= ninety degrees north), and the South Pole is 90° S (= ninety degrees south): *San Francisco is situated at 37°46’45.48” N*.

longitude *lɒŋjɪtʉwd /’lɒŋdʒɪtʉjd/ noun*, means the distance of a geographical position east or west of an arbitrary meridian, expressed in degrees, minutes and seconds. The universal prime meridian, 0° of longitude, was fixed in 1884 as Greenwich. Places are shown as a number of degrees east or west of Greenwich. The maximum distance from Greenwich is thus 180° (half the circumference of the earth): *San Francisco is situated at 122°25’9.12” W*.

Degrees, like hours, are divided into 60 minutes, and the minutes in turn are divided into 60 seconds.

latter

See **FORMER**.

laudable, laudatory

laudable *adjective*, means admirable, or worthy of praise, even if not totally successful: *The winter Olympic plans were laudable, the result – no gold medals – is sadly not*. See **CREDITABLE**.

laudatory *lɔwdətəri /’lɔ:dətəri/ adjective*, means expressing praise: *The new manifesto included a laudatory front-page endorsement*

lawful – learning difficulty

from two national daily newspapers. This is a formal word.

Note that *laudable* and *laudatory* should never be interchanged.

lawful

See **LEGAL**.

lawyer

See **SOLICITOR**.

lay

See **LIE¹**.

lb

See **POUND**.

lead, led

lead¹ noun, is a soft metal, with the chemical symbol Pb: *From the late 1980s, lead was gradually eliminated from petrol.* **Lead** rhymes with ‘fed’. *Lead pencils* actually contain graphite.

lead² noun, means the front of a group of moving people or animals: *As the procession reached the corner, we could see the school band in the lead;* or the advantage of one person or team in a competition: *The home team took the lead from a fifth-minute penalty.* Note that **lead** in this sense rhymes with ‘feed’.

lead verb, means to be in charge of something: *Last year’s captain will continue to lead the club this season;* or to be at the front: *The Irish horse was leading as they came to the last furlong marker.* *Lead* to can also mean to cause: *Excess stress on the body can ultimately lead to prolonged illness and possible death.* In another sense, **lead** means to experience: *She wanted to live in a flat, lead an ordinary life, and wait.* Note that **lead** in this sense also rhymes with ‘feed’.

led verb, is the past tense and past participle of the verb *lead*: *Ahead of me was a glass-panelled oak door which led out to the sun terrace.*

Never confuse the spellings of *lead* (metal) and *led* (past tense of the verb *to lead*), although they are pronounced the same.

leak, leek

leak noun & verb, refers to the accidental loss of gas or liquid from a pipe or container: *A gas leak at Bhopal, India, killed 2,500 people.* Figuratively, **leak** refers to the disclosure of confidential information: *The leader denied that any member of the party was connected with the leak; I can’t carry on employing staff who might have been able to leak sensitive information.*

leek noun, is a vegetable related to the onion. It is also the Welsh national emblem: *The soup of the day is leek and cauliflower served with a crusty roll.*

lean

See **THIN**.

learned, learnt

learned¹ adjective, means scholarly, or refers to a person with much knowledge: *a learned author.* It can also be applied to publications: *In Britain, a learned journal about the impact of global warming has just been launched.* Note that with this meaning, the word is always pronounced as two syllables: *lérnid* /ˈlɜːrɪnd/.

learned² adjective, refers to knowledge that has been acquired: *Affirmative assessment must go beyond seeing anxiety, anger, guilt and sadness as simply newly learned reactions.* With this meaning, the word is pronounced as one syllable: *lernd* /lɜːrɪnd/.

learned verb, is the past tense and past participle of the verb *to learn* in BE and AE. In AE, **learned** is the only past participle form. *Learn* means to acquire knowledge through study or experience: *I learned a great deal from Fred.* When used as a past tense or past participle, **learned** is pronounced as one syllable: *lernd* /lɜːrɪnd/.

learnt verb, is an alternative form of the past tense and past participle of *to learn* but as the past participle is only used in BE: *I never went to drama school, but have learnt my craft the hard way.* See **LEARN (TEACH)**.

learning difficulty, mental handicap

learning difficulty noun, means a mental problem that may affect how well a person can learn something: *Dyslexia is a common*

learning difficulty, but one that is hard to define. This can also be termed a *learning disability*. This is regarded as a positive term and is an accepted alternative to the negative term *mental handicap*. See **BACKWARD**.

mental handicap *noun*, is a term formerly used in Britain for a learning difficulty. It is now considered discriminatory by many people, as it focuses on the cause of the problem, not its effect. The phrases *mentally handicapped*, *mentally retarded* and *mentally defective* should also be avoided. See **DISABLED**.

lease

See **HIRE**.

leave, holiday, vacation, recess

leave *uncountable noun*, means time spent away from work for an approved reason, for example a holiday or illness. It is usual to differentiate between types of leave, such as *compassionate leave* (following a bereavement, or to look after a sick relative, for instance); *sick leave* (when the person on leave is ill; or *maternity/paternity leave*). Otherwise, **leave** is understood to mean the normal holiday entitlement of someone in the armed forces or public service: *We took three weeks' leave and had a fantastic time in Italy*.

holiday *noun*, is the standard BE term for a period of time spent away from work or school, and often from home as well: *A fifth of British animal lovers refuse to take a holiday if the pet cannot come too*. See **PUBLIC HOLIDAY**.

vacation *noun*, is a standard AE term for holiday: *They are on vacation in Hawaii at the moment*. It is also used in BE for the interval between terms at university: *While I was an undergraduate, I worked in a factory on a vacation research project*.

recess *noun*, is used in BE and AE for the time when Parliament or Congress is not sitting: *The Bill will be published before the Commons rises for the Christmas recess*.

Recess is also used in AE to mean a break during the school day, which in BE is termed break(time) or playtime. Note that in this sense the word is stressed on the second syllable in BE: *rɛssɛs* /rɪ'ses/, but in AE it is stressed on the first syllable: *rɛsɛss* /'rɪses/.

lecture

See **TALK**.

lecturer, senior lecturer, don

lecturer *noun*. In the UK this refers to the holder of a permanent position in a university which involves both teaching and research.

senior lecturer *noun*. This is the level above lecturer in the UK university hierarchy. In some of the newer universities in the UK, a third rank has been established – principal lecturer. See **PROFESSOR**.

don *noun*, is either a general term for a university teacher, especially at Oxford or Cambridge, or it refers to a tutor or fellow at an Oxbridge college. In AE, **don** means among other things the head of a family in the Mafia. See **SCHOLAR**, **FELLOW**.

led

See **LEAD**.

leek

See **LEAK**.

left, left-hand, left-handed

left *noun, adjective, adverb & verb*. As a noun, adjective or adverb this refers to the side of a person or thing which is facing west when that object or person is looking north. As a noun, it means the **left** side or direction: *The wind was gusting, swirling, coming at you from the left*. It can also refer to socialist groups or parties: *The President, addressing the Supreme Council, warned of a creeping coup from the left*. The adjective form means on, towards or connected with the **left** side of something or someone: *She was very afraid of taking the weight on her left leg*. As an adverb, **left** means on or to the **left** side: *After 600 yards turn left at the fork (signposted)*. **Left** is also the past tense and past participle of the verb *leave*: *We want to find out what time it left Euston*.

left-hand *adjective*, only means on or towards the *left*. Note that **left-hand** as an adjective is hyphenated: *The breakthrough came after an excellent left-hand catch by Smith at short leg*. It can only come before a noun.

L

left bank – libel

left-handed *adjective*, refers to people who use their **left** hand more naturally than their right: *This was the third century in 10 Tests for the left-handed opener*. This form can also occur when it follows the verb: *You will find it easier to reverse the positioning of your hands if you are left-handed*. See **BACK-HANDED COMPLIMENT**.

left bank

See **BANK**.

legal, lawful, legitimate

legal *adjective*, means related to the law: *Legal principles are laid down by the decisions of judges over time, or proclaimed in legislation*. In this sense it must precede the noun. **Legal** also means permitted by law: *A roadside breath test showed he was two and a half times over the legal alcohol limit*. See **ILLEGAL (UNLAWFUL)**.

lawful *adjective*, also means permitted by law, or rightful, but its use is mostly limited to technical contexts, such as the wording in a court judgment or Act of Parliament: *The correct lawful fare for the journey was in the region of £10.50*. See **UNLAWFUL**.

legitimate *adjective*, means correct and acceptable according to the law: *The will of the people, all democrats agree, is the legitimate basis of political order*. **Legitimate** can also mean justifiable: *He accepted that the local archaeological society had legitimate cause for concern*. Children born to parents legally married to each other are also called **legitimate**. See **ILLEGITIMATE (UNLAWFUL)**.

legate

See **AMBASSADOR**.

legation

See **EMBASSY**.

legible

See **READABLE**.

legislation, legislature, legislative

legislation *uncountable noun*, means laws made by a parliament or a collection of laws: *Legislation had to be brought in to control 'houses in multiple occupation'*.

legislature *noun*, is a lawmaking body, such as Parliament in Britain or Congress in the US: *Only through the legislature of the nation can the battle for common justice be effectively fought*.

legislative *adjective*, means lawmaking, or having the power to make laws: *The doctrine of the legislative supremacy of Parliament is often referred to as 'Parliamentary Sovereignty'*.

legitimate

See **LEGAL**.

lend

See **BORROW**.

lesbian

See **GAY**.

less

See **FEWER**.

let

See **HIRE**.

lethal

See **DEADLY**.

letters and emails

See **WRITING SKILLS**.

levee, levy

levee *noun*, means an embankment to stop a river from overflowing: *Various flood damage mitigation options need to be investigated, such as property height raising, levee construction and flood proofing*.

levy *noun & verb*. As a noun, this means a tax: *Each training board was financed by a levy on the relevant industry*. As a verb, **levy** means to make a charge: *Inheritance tax is levied on the value of a deceased's estate on the date of death*.

liable

See **APT**.

libel, slander

libel *noun & verb*. As a noun, this refers to a written, broadcast or published statement:

Libel is a defamatory statement made in writing, or – in the case of films and videotapes – at least in some permanent form. When it is used as a verb, the past tense and past and present participles all have double ‘l’ in BE, but a single ‘l’ in AE. The related adjective is *libellous* in BE but *libelous* in AE.

slander *noun & verb*, refers to a spoken statement or even a gesture that is considered offensive: *I consider your defamatory comment is slander, sir*. The related adjective is *slanderous*.

Both terms are the act of damaging a person’s reputation by a false statement. As *libel* is written and *slander* is spoken, one easy way to remember the difference is that *slander* is spoken.

liberal arts

See [ARTS](#).

licence, license

licence *noun*. As an uncountable noun, **licence** means freedom: *Some politicians think that they should have greater licence in law when dealing with terrorists*. As a countable noun, **licence** refers to a specific permit such as a *driving licence*, or *television licence*. This spelling is used only in BE.

license *verb & noun*. As a verb, this means to give permission. This is the correct spelling of the verb form in both BE and AE: *Some firms license the use of the results of their own research out to their competitors*. **License** is also the correct spelling of the noun form in AE. The process of obtaining a *licence* is called *licensing*. Cars in the US have *license plates*. These are called number plates in the UK. See [REGISTRATION \(RECORD\)](#).

The verb is spelt *license* in BE and AE, the noun is spelt *licence* in BE and *license* in AE.

licorice

See [LIQUORICE](#).

lie¹, lay, laid

lie¹ *verb*, means to be in a horizontal position: *For a few moments the clouds open and we lie in the heat of a hazy sun*. In standard English

it is incorrect to say *We are laying in the sun*. This should be *We are lying in the sun*. Note that **lie** is an intransitive verb, i.e. it does not take an object and is followed by a preposition before a noun. The past tense of **lie¹** is *lay*, and the past participle is *lain*.

lay *verb*, means to set someone or something down or in place: *Instructions: Lay paper under the hole, and mark the edges with a very sharp pencil*. It is always followed immediately by a noun or pronoun. An animal or insect is said to **lay** eggs, when eggs are produced from its body and deposited: *The females lay their huge eggs in the same nest*. Note that **lay** is also the past tense of the verb *lie¹*.

laid is the past tense and past participle of the verb *lay*: *She went back into the kitchen and laid a cloth on the table*. The statement ‘*She was hoping to get laid*’ is an explicit informal sexual comment.

Note that the past tenses of *lie* and *lay* are a source of confusion.

lie², economical with the truth, window dressing

lie² *verb & noun*. As a verb, this means to write or say something that is untrue: *I could lie, I could bluff, but what I told you is the truth*. This verb, which has a different origin from both *lay* and *lie¹*, has the past tense and past participle form *lied*: *The police said: ‘He lied and took us on a wild goose chase.’* As a noun this means that something that is written or said is untrue. *Although he was photographed in the bank waving a pistol, he told the police a barefaced lie*. In AE this is termed a *bald-faced lie*.

economical with the truth *adjectival phrase*, is a euphemistic way to say someone is lying or deliberately not telling all the facts: *The UN’s press officer was often economical with the truth – a failing common to such people around the world*.

window dressing *noun*, means literally the skill or job of making the display in the glazed frontage of a shop: *Effective window dressing and attractive in-store displays are an important form of advertising*, but it is also a term used figuratively for doing or saying something in a way that hides the true

lieutenant – likeable

situation: *This was more to do with window dressing and the government's need to be seen to be doing something, rather than a serious attempt to tackle the problems.*

lieutenant

See **SERGEANT**.

lifelong learning

See **CONTINUING EDUCATION**.

Life Sciences

See **EARTH SCIENCE**.

lift, elevator

lift, *noun*. This is the BE name for the machine that moves people vertically between floors of a building: *Leaving the lift at the third floor, instead of the fourth, he stood listening.*

elevator *noun*, in its most common meaning, is the American equivalent of the BE *lift*: *We entered an elevator and went down.* It has two other meanings, which are more specialized. First, by extension, in AE a *grain elevator* is a place for storing large quantities of grain – in BE this is called a silo: *The grain elevator and the stock pens reflect the whole life of the community and its local region.* Second, it is the name given to the hinged flap on an aircraft's tailplane that controls pitching: *Gliders today have a fixed tailplane and a normal elevator.*

light¹, illuminate

light¹ *noun & verb*. As a noun, this means the electromagnetic radiation from the sun or another source that makes it possible to see things: *We tidied the tent as the light started to fade.* In this use, **light** is an uncountable noun. In another sense, **light** means an object such as a lamp: *They've switched the Christmas tree lights off.* In this use, **light** is a countable noun. As a verb, **light** means either to start to burn, or to make something brighter: *The hotel neon sign lights up our faces.*

illuminate *verb*, means either to light something up: *He switched off the light, letting the moon illuminate the room;* or, in formal use, to make a matter easier to understand: *The purpose of learning about geology is to*

illuminate people's understanding of the environment.

light², lite

light² *adjective*, means not heavy: *The binoculars were light enough to be hand-held without awkward shake.*

lite *adjective*, means calorie-reduced (for food). It occurs in the name of the beer *Miller Lite*, but in both AE and BE, most brands that sell a less calorific version alongside the original use the word *diet* instead: *Diet Coke, Diet Pepsi.* **Lite** is an informal spelling and is restricted to the names of the same brands sold in non-English-speaking countries: *Coca Lite, Pepsi Lite.* It may also be used to make a critical comment on someone's character, or the quality of their work, by comparing it with a good example: *Many inferior late eighteenth century composers may be considered as 'Mozart lite'.* A simplified version of something may also be described as **lite**, as in this headline from 'The Times': *The rise of imperialism lite is prolonging the Iraqi horror.*

lightning, lightening

lightning *uncountable noun*, is a high-intensity, natural discharge of electricity: *The thunder and lightning seemed to have moved away.* This word has only two syllables: *līt-ning* /'lɪtɪnɪŋ/.

lightening *verb*, means either making something lighter in weight: *Fennel makes a delightfully feathery green addition, lightening other, heavier and denser blocks of foliage;* or becoming less dark: *If you've been lightening your hair for years, this is the time to rethink your shade.* This word is the present participle of the verb *lighten*. Note that it has three syllables: *lītēning* /'lɪtəɪnɪŋ/.

light year

See **MILE**.

like

See **SIMILAR**.

likeable, likable

likeable *adjective*, means pleasant and friendly: *He is an extremely likeable type of person.*

likable is an alternative spelling of *likeable* which is commonly used in AE.

limit, delimit

limit *verb & noun*. As a verb, this means to restrict the amount of something: *Candidates were asked to limit their replies to three or four minutes*. As a noun, **limit** means boundary, an extreme point that may not be crossed: *Of these adverts, 88.5 per cent mentioned an age limit of 40*.

delimit *verb*, means to determine or fix boundaries or limits: *We must first delimit the area we are to consider*. This is a formal word.

linage, lineage

linage *uncountable noun*, is the number of lines of printed or written matter: *The cost depends on the linage*. It is pronounced as two syllables: lín-ij /'laɪnɪdʒ/.

lineage *noun*, means descent from an ancestor: *She was an orphan of noble lineage with no immediate family*. It is pronounced as three syllables: línni-ij /'lɪniɪdʒ/. This is a formal word and ancestry is a less formal alternative.

linguistic, linguistics

linguistic *adjective*, means related to language or linguistics: *Perhaps the most dramatic opportunity being developed for linguistic studies is the British National Corpus*.

linguistics *uncountable noun*, is the scientific study of language and its structure. Like other academic subjects ending in '-ics', it always takes a singular verb: *Linguistics is becoming very popular among advanced students*.

link words

See **WRITING SKILLS**.

liqueur

See **ALCOHOL**.

liquid, liquidate, liquidize

liquid *noun & adjective*. As a noun, this means a substance that flows, such as oil or water. It is also one of the three most familiar states of matter: gas, **liquid**, solid. These can

be changed from one to another by variations in temperature or pressure: *The hottest parts of a liquid are also the least dense*. As an adjective, as well as referring to physical matter, **liquid** also has a financial sense, when it means easily convertible into cash: *In most countries the supply of liquid assets is directly controlled by the central bank*.

liquidate *verb*, as a business term usually means to sell assets to raise money: *With commercial property companies crying out to liquidate their assets these are boom days for auctioneers*. **Liquidate** also means to kill by violent means: *His followers had tried to liquidate the guerrilla movement in the south but had failed*. See **EXTERMINATE (MASSACRE)**.

liquidize *verb*, means to make liquid: *Liquidize a large, raw carrot to a smooth paste*. The machine that **liquidizes** substances is called either a *liquidizer* or *blender*.

liquor

See **ALCOHOL**.

liquorice, licorice

liquorice *noun*, is a chewy, black sweet made from the root of a plant. The root itself can be chewed, and it has certain medicinal properties. This is the BE spelling. It is pronounced either líckēriiss /'lɪkəriɪs/ or líckēriish /'lɪkəriʃ/.

licorice is the AE spelling of *liquorice*.

lists

See **WRITING SKILLS**.

lite

See **LIGHT**².

liter

See **LITRE**.

literally, verbatim, literal, littoral

literally *adverb*, means in a literal sense, or exactly: *This year's plum harvest is so good that some trees literally can't take the strain*. It is not advisable to use **literally** as an intensifier without a lot of thought; otherwise nonsense appears: *This record is literally aglow with vibes*.

literate – llama

verbatim *verbáytim* /vɜːr'beɪtɪm/ *adverb & adjective*, means word for word, exactly as something has been said or written on an earlier occasion: *He repeated the famous Gettysburg address verbatim* (adverb). *The transcript was a verbatim account of our phone conversation* (adjective).

literal *adjective*, refers to the basic meaning of a word, not a figurative or metaphorical meaning: *'Eat or be eaten' is a phrase with literal meaning in the animal kingdom and a metaphorical one in the human*; or it refers to a translation which represents the exact words of the original text: *A literal translation might turn out to be very stilted, and not the way most people would use the language*.

littoral *noun*, means a geographical area near to the coast: *The states of the Baltic littoral have formed a regional council*. These countries are the ones that have a coastline on the Baltic Sea. It is a technical word.

literate, numerate, computerate

literate *adjective*, means able to read and write: *Written records of the past, for example, will by definition have been written by the literate*. By extension, it means competent in some field of knowledge: *Many children are becoming literate in the ways of the countryside*. Note that the related noun is *literacy*. See **ILLITERATE (ILLEGIBLE)**.

numerate *adjective*, means able to manipulate numbers and do simple mathematical calculations: *A key skill for students in accountancy is being numerate*. Note that the related noun is *numeracy*. See **INNUMERATE**.

computerate *adjective*, is a blend word formed from *computer* and *literate*, meaning knowledgeable about and able to use computers: *All students on this programme will acquire extensive computerate skills*. See **BLEND WORDS**.

litre, liter

litre *noun*, is a measurement of volume, equivalent to about 1.75 pints. This is the BE spelling.

liter is the AE spelling of *litre*.

little, small

little *adjective & adverb*. As an adjective, **little** means not large in size, quantity or

degree: *Most commuters have little leisure time*. When **little** is used without an article, as in the above example, it means a smaller amount than if the indefinite article is included: *Some commuters have a little leisure time* (meaning some spare time). **Little** is sometimes used to express a sneering dislike: *I bought a couple of magazines from a seedy little newsagent*; or an approving attitude: *It's a lovely little cottage and the owner has a sweet little border collie*. As an adverb, **little** means not much, or not at all: *He was fully occupied at home, and came to London as little as possible*.

small *adjective*, means not large in size, quantity or degree: *Our village has a small junction station on the local railway system*. **Small** is less colloquial than *little*, and so in technical or official contexts, it is often a better choice: *Another thousand pounds would perhaps be sufficient for the building of a small laboratory*.

littoral

See **LITERALLY**.

live-in, live together

See **COHABIT**.

livid, lurid

livid *adjective*, means extremely angry: *One farmer was livid that he could not go into his local National Park and chop wood for his barbecue*. In another sense, when it refers to bruises or other discolorations of the skin, it means dark-coloured: *The wound was swollen and livid: the colours of bruising were showing already*. However, in literary use, a *livid face* means a pale one.

lurid *adjective*, means deliberately shocking and explicit: *People used to tell their lurid dreams when we were in the locker rooms*. In another sense it means overly brightly coloured: *They repainted the car in a lurid purple colour*.

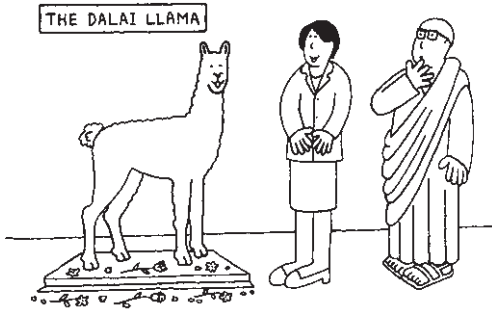
living room

See **SITTING ROOM**.

llama, lama

llama *noun*, is a member of the camel family found in South America.

lama *noun*, is the name given to a priest in Tibetan Buddhism. The *Dalai Lama* is the spiritual leader of Tibetan Buddhism.



'Nancy Pelosi made one of the highest-ranking US official visits ever to the home of the Tibetan spiritual leader, the Dalai Llama, today.'
(ABC News, March 2008)

loan

See **BORROW**.

loath, loathe

loath *adjective*, means reluctant and unwilling: *She paused, loath to voice the dreadful rumour.* This word is mostly used in formal English. It has an alternative spelling, *loth*, and is pronounced to rhyme with 'both'.

loathe *verb*, means to detest someone or something: *I hate him, I loathe him; he never says anything nice to me.*

As these words are frequently confused, it may be better to use one of their close synonyms: reluctant for *loath* or detest for *loathe*.

local, locale

local *adjective & noun*. As an adjective, this describes someone or something which belongs to, or inhabits, the immediate neighbourhood: *If you are not already an active supporter, contact your local branch to find out what is being organized in your area.* As a noun, it means an inhabitant of a particular community and can be used instead of terms like *local inhabitant* or *local resident*: *The Tourist Office has revamped certain traditional festivals so they will appeal*

more to both tourists and locals. In BE, the *local* can mean a neighbourhood pub. The *local* in AE means a branch of a union. See **INHABITANT**.

locale *lɔːkɑːl /ləʊˈkɑːl/ noun*, is a place connected with a specific event or type of event: *There is a small group that sees the countryside as a locale for recreation.* It can also be a venue, or setting, the place where something happens: *The locale is described as a university in the north of England: it could be anywhere from Nottingham to Newcastle.* Note that the stress is on the second syllable.

local authority, local council

local authority *noun*, is a body that administers local government: *The local authority is going to have a tough time getting these measures accepted.* This is more commonly used in BE than in AE.

local council *noun*, refers to the elected officials in local government, and may also be used as a synonym for *local authority*: *The local council elections in May appeared to be a watershed in the party's fortunes.* See **COUNCILLOR**.

locality, location

locality *noun*, means the area being spoken of, usually referred to as *the locality*: *The 'village community' can also mean the pattern of social relationships which exist in the locality.* It also means a specific site: *The main Sussex wintering locality for this species is Rye Bay.*

location *noun*, is a particular position or site: *The Safari Beach is in a stunning location in 12 acres of tropical gardens.* **Location** as in the phrase *on location* refers to the process of making a film outside the studio.

loch, lough, firth, fjord

loch *noun*, is the Scottish word for what is usually called a lake in England, or a *lough* in Ireland: *The whole Loch Tay area has a fascinating and rich history.* It is usual for the word **loch** to come before the specific name: *Loch Lomond*, but there are exceptions: *Duddingston Loch* in the Queen's Park in Edinburgh, for example. The Scottish pronunciation of the final *-ch* uses the same sound as the German 'achlaut': *loch* /lɒx/ although many English people say 'lock'.

log – loud

lough loch, lock /lɒx, lɒk/ *noun*, means a lake. This is the Irish spelling of *loch*: *Below Enniskillen, the lough kept appearing and reappearing, interrupted by birch woodlands.*

firth *noun*, is a Scottish word for an estuary: *While approaching the Firth of Forth the ship took on a lot of water; or an inlet of the sea, when it may also be called a sea loch: Our loch is a sea loch, but that isn't the same as the sea – it's much tamer.* In names, **firth** may appear first or last, but for each individual **firth**, its place is fixed: *Firth of Forth*, but *Solway Firth*, for instance. The word has the same root as *fjord*.

fjord fi-órd /fi'ɔ:rd/ or féé-ord /'fi:ɔ:rd/ *noun*, means a long, usually narrow inlet from the sea with high cliffs or mountains on each side, and is usually restricted to Scandinavian contexts. When referring to a specific **fjord**, it is advisable to spell it as two words, both capitalized: *Hardanger Fjord*. **Fjord** can also be spelt *fiord* in English.

log

See **BLOG**.

logarithmic

See **EXPONENTIAL**.

longitude

See **LATITUDE**.

loose, loosen, lose

loose *verb & adjective*. As a verb, this means to detach, set free or release: *As the sail whipped free of the masthead, he leaped back into the cockpit to loose the spinnaker sheets.* More common alternatives are *set loose*, *cut loose* or *loosen*. **Loose** is usually an adjective, when it means not firmly fixed: *A loose valve seat usually falls out totally and damages the engine very quickly; or not confined: Emily took her hat off and shook her hair loose.*

loosen *verb*, means make something less tight: *If your waistband is too tight, loosen it.*

lose *verb*, means to be deprived of something: *We lose some of the sense of taste as we get older; or, as the newspaper headline below should have said: Use it or lose it.* It also means to cease to have: *There are parents who lose control of their children for reasons that are entirely understandable; or to*

fail to win: Arsenal won their first five matches and did not lose until the tenth.

Lose is the only English word ending in the spelling '-ose' that is pronounced /u:z/. The only English word that ends in '-oose' and pronounced /u:z/ is *choose*. All other words that end in -oose are pronounced /u:s/ (*goose, loose, moose*).

'Use it or lose it.'
(Newspaper review of book that encouraged the elderly to have an active sex life)



lopsided

See **ONE-SIDED**.

loquacious

See **GRANDILOQUENT**.

lorry, truck, juggernaut

lorry *noun*, means a large vehicle for goods transported by road. This is a BE term. *Lorry drivers* are known as *truckers* in AE. An *articulated lorry* is a lorry with a flexible joint that allows its two sections to turn corners easily.

truck *noun*, means, in BE, a small *lorry*, or an open wagon for goods on the railway. In AE, **truck** is the normal term for what in BE is called *lorry*. *Trailer-truck* is the AE term for an *articulated lorry*.

juggernaut *noun*, is a large articulated lorry. This is a disapproving term. Figuratively it can mean any action that is carried out despite opposition and that seems to be unstoppable: *The truth is that public spending is a juggernaut that is almost out of control.*

lose

See **LOOSE**.

loud, loudly, aloud, out loud

loud *adjective & adverb*, means making a lot of noise: *Her laugh was so loud it attracted glances from the people in the room.* It can also be used for clashing or extreme colours: *She wears rather wonderful, loud print dresses.* As an adverb, it has the same meanings: *She taught me how to sing loud or sing softly.*

loudly *adverb*, means noisily: *This was shouted so loudly that passers-by reacted.* It is also used figuratively to mean garishly: *He was dressed loudly in a bright red shirt, and yellow check trousers.*

aloud *adverb*, means reading or saying something so that others can hear: *They all looked at her questioningly and she explained: 'I was just thinking aloud.'* **Aloud** can also mean in a loud voice: *Privacy was not a word in our vocabulary, and postcards and diaries were mercilessly read aloud.*

out loud *adverb*, means speaking aloud, especially so that others can hear: *We couldn't help laughing out loud.* It is less formal than *aloud*.

lough

See **LOCH**.

lounge

See **SITTING ROOM**.

Low Countries

See **NETHERLANDS**.

Ltd

See **PLC**.

lumber

See **TIMBER**.

lurid

See **LIVID**.

luxuriant, luxurious

luxuriant *adjective*, means rich and profuse in growth: *The heavy rains have brought luxuriant green vegetation to these normally arid islands.* Hair, beards and moustaches may also be described as **luxuriant**.

luxurious *adjective*, means characterized by luxury, extravagant: *This magnificent hotel is undoubtedly one of the most luxurious and well equipped in the Middle East.*

lyric, lyrics, lyrical

lyric *adjective & noun*. As an adjective, this refers to a type of poetry that expresses strong personal emotions: *The ideas of the lyric poet are projections of himself.* As a noun it means the words of a song: *He only knew one word in three of the lyric he'd chosen.* It is less common in this sense than the plural form *lyrics*.

lyrics *plural noun*, means the words of a song, particularly a popular song: *I sang the first 16 bars in a soft velvet voice, and let the sad lyrics speak for themselves.* See **-ICS**.

lyrical *adjective*, means beautifully expressed and full of emotion: *It was an extremely lyrical account of his youth.* This does not need to have anything to do with poetry and is often used in the expression *to wax lyrical*: *Some people still wax lyrical about arcane grammatical rules.* When it is used to describe music, **lyrical** often means tuneful and romantic: *The music for the two lovers is predominantly lyrical, rather than heroic.*

Spelling

labor <u>atory</u>	Note -ory at the end
lac <u>quer</u>	Note the -cq- and the -er ending
lat <u>itude</u>	Note the single -t- each time
lea <u>gue</u>	Remember the -a- and the -u-
lea <u>rn</u> er	Remember the -a-
legit <u>imate</u>	Note -tim-
le <u>is</u> ure	Note -e- before -i-
length	Remember the -g-
leni <u>ent</u>	Note the -ent ending
lea <u>opard</u>	Remember the -o-, and the single -p-
lett <u>uce</u>	Note the ending -uce

<u>liaison</u>	Note the second -i-
licen <u>s</u> ed	Remember this word has an -s-
<u>lieu</u> tenant	Note the three vowels together: -ieu-
lightning (<i>noun</i>)	Note there is no 'e' in this word
lique <u>f</u> y	Note the -e- in the middle of this word
lique <u>ur</u>	Note there is no 'c' in this word, and that it ends in -eur
liquo <u>r</u>	Note there is no 'c' in this word, and that it ends in -or
liza <u>r</u> d	Note there is only one -z- in this word
longi <u>t</u> ude	Note there is only one -t- in this word
lo <u>s</u> ing	Note there is only one -o- in this word
lux <u>u</u> ry	Note this word ends in -ury

N

nadir

See **ZENITH**.

naked, nude, bare

naked *adjective*, refers to a person not wearing clothes: *The boy was drying his wet, naked brown body in the sun*, or, less commonly, to a part of the body that is unclothed: *The sun beat down mercilessly on his naked head*. It can also refer to something that is not enclosed by a cover such as a *naked light* or *naked flame*. **Naked** can be used to refer to truth or aggression that is open for all to see: *The invasion of the island was an act of naked aggression*.

See **ALTOGETHER (ALL TOGETHER)**.

nude *adjective & noun*. As an adjective, this means wearing no clothes, and is used especially to describe a *naked* human form in art or photography: *The paintings were executed with the nude model directly in front of the artist*. It can also refer to something being done by people who are not wearing clothes such as a *nude scene* in a film. As a noun, **nude** means a *naked* human form in a work of art. The expression *in the nude*, used after the verb, describes a person who is wearing no clothes.

See **NATURIST (NATURALIST)**.

bare *adjective & verb*. As an adjective, this means not covered by clothes, and is frequently used to refer to a part of the body: *Her red hair flowed over bare white shoulders*. However, the informal expression *bare-arsed* means completely *naked*. **Bare** can also mean not decorated or empty: *He was standing in the bare, empty front room of his own house*. As a verb, **bare** means to uncover: *There were people lined up on both sides of the street, bared heads bowed as we passed*.

Note that *naked* and *nude* refer to being without any clothes, but *bare* usually means that only a part of the body is uncovered.

namely, viz., videlicet

namely *adverb*, means that is to say, and is used to mention the names of those referred to: *Two players were outstanding, namely Gerrard and Torres*. It can also identify or specify something mentioned immediately before: *Special tools should be used, namely the block brush and the block scraper*.

viz. *adverb*, is the abbreviation for *videlicet*, and means *namely*. It is best used in formal written English, especially BE, to give an explanation rather than to name people: *Several such telescopes are in use, viz. the facilities in San Diego, New Mexico and Hawaii*. Although in informal English this is often pronounced *vizz* /vɪz/, in formal spoken contexts most people would read it as 'in other words' or 'namely'. The use of 'z' in the abbreviation is explained by 'z' being a medieval symbol for 'et'.

videlicet *vidéllisset* /vɪ'delɪsɪt/ *adverb*, means *namely* and is a more formal term for *viz.*

nationality words

There are no easy rules to learn for the derivation of nationality words from country names. In many cases, the adjective and language name have the same form, and often the noun describing a national of the country is also the same. Here are some examples:

1. Many adjectives end in **-(i)an**: *German, Ghanaian, Indian, Italian, Norwegian*. All South American nationality adjectives end in **-an** or **-ian**, but note *Argentinian* (alternative *Argentine*), *Brazilian, Ecuadoran, Peruvian* and *Venezuelan*. In other words, the way the country name ends does not determine the form of the nationality ending. The noun to describe nationals of almost all these countries is the same as the adjective form.
2. A smaller group has adjectives ending in **-ese**: *Burmese, Chinese, Congolese, Portuguese*. There is no noun for these nationalities, and a person from one of these countries has to be described as 'a person from . . .' or 'a . . . ese man/woman'.

3. Many Asian nationality words end in *-i*: *Bangladeshi, Iraqi, Omani, Pakistani, Qatari*.
4. Some mainly north-western European nationalities end in **-(i)sh**: *English, Irish, Welsh, Danish, Swedish, Turkish*. *French* and *Dutch* may also be included here. In this group the noun form is always different: either add *-man/woman* to the *-(i)sh* form, or in some cases use a different word: *Dane, Swede, Turk*. *Scottish, Scots, Scotch* have particularly specialized uses. See **SCOTS**.
5. Some country names ending in **-land** form the adjective by adding **-ic**: *Greenlandic, Icelandic*, and the nationality noun by adding **-er** (*New Zealander* follows this pattern for the noun). Although it is not a nationality, *New Englander* follows the same pattern.
6. Exceptions: *Arab/Arabian/Arabic, Greek* and *Filipino*. See **ARAB, GREEK, PHILIPPINES (FILIPINO)**.
7. Nationality words are capitalized, and this also applies in fixed phrases where there is a clear connection with the country: *Russian roulette, French fries, Danish pastry*.

There are some combining forms which are used in hyphenated words to indicate bilateral relations between states: *Anglo-* (which in effect also means 'British'), *Dano-*, *Euro-*, *Franco-*, *Hispano-* (Spanish), *Indo-*, *Luso-* (Portuguese), *Russo-*, *Sino-* (Chinese): 'Dano-Norwegian language'; 'Hispano-Suiza cars'; 'Indo-European languages'; 'Sino-Soviet pact'. Note that both parts are capitalized. See **CAPITAL LETTERS, FOREIGN PLACE NAMES**.

native, indigenous

native *adjective & noun*. As an adjective, this refers to someone's birthplace: *After some time in London he returned to his native Ayrshire*. When **native** refers to plants or animals, it means originating or existing naturally: *The bird garden operates a breed and release scheme for native owls*. As a noun, **native** means someone who is born in a certain place: *I am a native of Stoke on Trent, although I haven't lived there for many years*. The word **native** was formerly used by

Europeans for the inhabitants of countries that they were colonizing. This is now considered offensive, although the plural form is sometimes used humorously in colloquial BE to mean the local residents of a town or village: *You really must visit us here. The village is lovely and the natives are friendly*.

indigenous *adjective*, is a formal equivalent to **native**, in the sense of originating or occurring naturally in a place. It can refer to people, plants or animals: *In the 1950s, the colonial powers in Africa started to hand over government to the indigenous populations*.

When these words are followed by 'to', the area or habitat follows: *Tea is the leaf from the plant Camellia sinensis which is native to Assam, China and Japan; This bird is indigenous to all parts of Canada*.

Native American, American Indian, Red Indian, redskin

Native American *noun*, is the politically correct term used officially today for the American Indians in the USA. Canadians use the terms *Native Peoples* or *Natives* in official contexts. See **BLACK**. Alaskan native peoples are sometimes included in the term **Native American**. See **INUIT**.

American Indian *noun*, is the preferred term for *Native Americans* used by the **American Indians** themselves and is a widely accepted term. An alternative is to refer to the specific people, for instance the Cherokee or Apache. Note that an Indian American is an American with ancestry from India.

Red Indian and **redskin** *nouns*, are offensive terms for *Native Americans* and are to be avoided except in historical references.

naturalist, naturist

naturalist *noun*, is an expert in or student of natural history, especially one who works out of doors rather than in a laboratory. *Local naturalists are to play an important role in the world's first global bird conservation organization*. In art or literature, a **naturalist** is someone who depicts natural life realistically.

naturist *noun*, is a term that is used especially in BE for someone who enjoys the opportunity to wear no clothes because they consider this practice to be more healthy and

natural: *During the Second World War a nudist village for evacuee naturists was established near here.* An alternative term is *nudist*. See **NAKED**.



Sally is both a naturist and naturalist.

Natural Science

See **EARTH SCIENCE**.

nature reserve, national park, reservation

nature reserve *noun*, is an area of land set aside for the protection of wildlife and the landscape. This may also be known as a wildlife sanctuary or simply a reserve. See **RESERVE (CONSERVE)**.

national park *noun*, is an area of countryside designated by the state for the public to use and also for the welfare of the wildlife.

reservation *noun*, is an area of land kept for a specific purpose. Lands assigned to Native American tribes in the US or Australian Aborigines in Australia are called *reservations*. See **CENTRAL RESERVATION**.

naught

See **ZERO**.

nauseous, nauseated

nauseous *adjective*, means feeling sick, as if about to vomit: *She suddenly felt nauseous, and went to the sink and heaved uncontrollably.* It also refers to something that makes a person feel sick: *The smell in the village was nauseous: we were walking ankle-deep in slops.*

nauseated *adjective*, means either disgusted: *The crude pornography made my broad-minded friend feel nauseated and he left;* or affected by nausea: *She felt nauseated most of the time during her pregnancy.*

naval, navel

naval *adjective*, refers to the navy: *In 1982, a naval task force was despatched to the Falkland Islands.*

navel *noun*, is the round depression in a person's belly caused by the cutting of the umbilical cord: *He disapproved of shaving and had grown a beard down to his navel.* **Navel** is also a type of orange.

'Alfred von Tirpitz – 1849–1930, German Navel officer responsible for submarine warfare.'
(Web article on Famous Freemasons)



nay

See **YEA**.

NB, sic

NB is used in writing to make a reader take special notice of something: *NB The Welding Regulations 1970 are fictitious.* It is an abbreviation of *nota bene* but is read as énn béé /'en 'bi:/. It may be punctuated as: *N.B.* Do not use an exclamation mark after **NB**.

sic *adverb*, means as written, and is used in square brackets immediately after a typo or strange word to show that a quoted word or passage is what was written in the original and is not the present writer's mistake: *The Chenin Blanc conferes [sic] this wine a touch of sophistication [sic], combining a sour taste and fruty [sic again] flavour.* This is not an abbreviation, and thus should not be followed by a stop.

near, nearby

See **CLOSE**.

negative

See **POSITIVE**.

negative prefixes

See **WORD FORMATION**.

negligible, negligent

negligible *adjective*, means too slight or unimportant to have an effect: *The amount of lead is so small that it represents a negligible hazard to health.*

Negro – Netherlands

negligent *adjective*, means inattentive, or careless, leading to serious consequences: *Due to John's negligent driving the car crashed and Brian was injured.*

Negro

See **BLACK**.

neighbourhood, vicinity

neighbourhood *noun*, means the locality or district where someone lives: *There has been an increase in violent attacks in the neighbourhood.* The term 'the whole neighbourhood' can refer either to the location or its residents. In another context it means approximately: *The work in the kitchen will cost in the neighbourhood of £10,000.* In the region of something has the same meaning.

vicinity *noun*, means the area around a particular place: *The gang was said to operate in the immediate vicinity of the station.* In another sense it means close to an amount or measurement: *Each of these paintings will fetch in the vicinity of £500,000.*

neither . . . nor

See **EITHER . . . OR**.

nervous, nervy

See **ANXIOUS**.

Netherlands, Holland, Low Countries, Dutch, Flemish

Netherlands *noun plural*, is the official English name for the European country. Its name goes back to the times when they were literally 'the nether (i.e. low) lands'. The definite article is no longer part of the name. However, *The Netherlands* is still found in a few dictionaries. As with other countries with a plural form 'the' (with lower case 't') is normally used in running text: *A chemical fire caused toxic materials to be transported as far as the Netherlands.* See **ARTICLES (GRAMMAR TIPS)**.

Holland *noun*, is often used as a synonym for the Netherlands. This should be avoided as the name **Holland** refers only to the western provinces of the Netherlands.

Low Countries *noun plural*, is the historical name for the area covered by the present-day

Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg. This is sometimes referred to by the acronym Benelux.

Dutch *adjective & noun*, means the people of the Netherlands or their language. **Dutch** is a Germanic language that is spoken by over 20 million people mainly in the Netherlands, parts of Belgium and in former Dutch colonies. Some common expressions with **Dutch** include *going Dutch* which means sharing the cost of a meal in a restaurant equally among those eating it; a *Dutch auction* which means a public sale where the price of the item goes down until someone bids for it; a *Dutch uncle* who is a person who gives friendly but firm advice (mainly an AE expression); and *Dutch courage* which means the false confidence that a person may get from drinking alcohol (mainly a BE expression); *double Dutch* is an informal expression meaning badly expressed spoken or written language that is difficult to understand.

Flemish *adjective & noun*, refers to the people and culture of Flanders, an area of north-eastern France, Belgium and the Netherlands. As an uncountable noun, **Flemish** is a variant of standard *Dutch* spoken in parts of Belgium. The local Germanic language spoken there is called *Dutch* by some and **Flemish** by others.

netiquette

Netiquette means an Internet code of behaviour. Some have taken this to apply just to email etiquette. However **netiquette** is more. It covers email, chat groups, mailing lists, voice messaging, in fact the whole range of communications using the World Wide Web. There is no one authoritative source that defines **netiquette**. A search on the web reveals that there is a host of useful suggestions. Some differentiate between guidelines for users and those for administrators. Most suggestions boil down to using common sense, accountability, stating your sources and remembering that email and other web media are open to others and that there is no such thing as a private conversation in such a medium. A confession, suspicion, hoax, gossip or just a hunch can be on the desks of

competitors, news media, the authorities and people you have never met half way around the world in seconds. Now that courts have started to admit emails as evidence in some countries this is a reminder of how careful one must be when sending mails from a corporate email system. The impact of an email has proved to be just as powerful as that of a letter.

neurotic

See **INSANE**.

new

See **INNOVATIVE**.

news

See **INFORMATION**.

nice, delightful

nice *adjective*, is a word with a broad range of meanings, including pleasant, delightful, agreeable, pretty and satisfactory: *We'll find a nice dress for you to wear.* Since **nice** has such a variety of meanings, it is often used without careful thought. Therefore, it may be more appropriate to use other adjectives such as beautiful or lovely when expressing an opinion informally: *Look. What a beautiful sunset!* Note that **nice** is not generally used in formal writing, except in the older sense, not found in informal English, of a very small, but important, distinction: *There is a nice distinction in management between giving advice to employees and interfering in their work.*

A British politician in California told a colleague, 'That was the 21st today. I'll murder the next person who tells me to have a nice day.'

delightful *adjective*, means very pleasant, agreeable and satisfactory and can often replace *nice*, especially in formal English: *The programme you laid on was full of delightful music.*

niceness, nicety

niceness *noun*, means pleasantness or basic goodness: *The politician was perplexed that*

his niceness was considered an electoral disadvantage. It is often combined with the word *essential* to mean that this is a deep-seated characteristic: *Some people still pretend to believe in the essential niceness of the human race.*

nicety *noun*, means a small detail, particularly of behaviour: *This is no semantic nicety: the distinction reveals their political differences.* It is more commonly found in the plural: *The leader's faith in legal niceties was only a gesture.* The phrase *to a nicety* means exactly: *The egg was perfectly boiled: he had timed it to a nicety.*

nicknames, sobriquets

nicknames may be formed by a play on the surname or appearance of a person, as in *Chalky* for *White* and *Lofty* for someone who is tall or (ironically) very short. However, most nicknames are pet names for people formed by making a short form of their first name such as:

Ed, Ned, Teddy for *Edward* or *Edwin*

Rick, Dick for *Richard*

Jen, Jenny for *Jennifer*

Kate, Katie for *Katherine*

Liz, Lizzie, Bet, Betty for *Elizabeth*

Moll, Polly for *Mary*

Nowadays these names may be used on birth certificates, in which case they are not nicknames.

A **sobriquet** is a type of nickname that is formed because of characteristics associated with a person or thing and is just as much used as the correct name. Examples include:

Alma mater for *your university*

Auntie, Beeb for the *BBC*

Big Apple for *New York*

Buck House for *Buckingham Palace*

Frogs for *the French* (derogatory)

Kiwis for *New Zealanders*

Pommie, Pom for *the British* (Australian, New Zealand term)

Stars and Stripes for *the US flag*

Uncle Sam for *the USA*

nil – nor

nil

See **ZERO**.

no

See **AYE**.

nobody

See **NO ONE**.

nocturnal

See **DIURNAL**.

Noel

See **XMAS**.

no-go area, dead zone

no-go area *noun*, means an area – part of a city, for instance – to which normal access is denied, either because of the violence likely to be suffered by intruders, or by means of barricades to keep people out: *People in the area blame vandals and troublesome youngsters for making it a nightly no-go area.*

dead zone *noun*, can mean the same as *no-go area*, but its more usual meanings are first a place where nothing interesting ever happens: *They were happy to live in the dead zone between the High Street and the Leisure Centre*; and second an area where there is no signal for mobile phones.

noise

See **SOUND**.

non-availability, non-existence

non-availability *noun*, means a temporary situation where a given product or service cannot be supplied at that particular moment: *Their work was halted because of the non-availability of medical supplies.*

non-existence *noun*, means something that is unreal and has never existed or does not yet exist: *These swamps were impassable in the nineteenth century because of the non-existence of hovercraft.*

Note that both *non-availability* and *non-existence* usually have 'the' before them or a linked adjective such as 'total'.

non-flammable

See **INFLAMMABLE**.

non-invasive

See **INVASIVE**.

non-religious

See **IRRELIGIOUS**.

no one, none, nobody, nonentity

no one *pronoun*, means no person: *The owner is accountable to no one in the running of his business.* Note that **no one** always takes a singular verb, because it refers to 'no single one', and 'one' is the subject: *'Supper is a family gathering and no one leaves the table till it's over!'*

none *pronoun*, means not one or not any: *Don't use any more hot water, or there'll be none left for me.* When *none of* is followed by a plural noun it means not one of three or more things and can take a singular or plural verb: *None of these questions has a satisfactory answer; None of the girls complain, because they are afraid.*

nobody *pronoun & noun*. As a pronoun, **nobody** means *no one*, and is mainly used in less formal contexts than *no one*. As a noun, a **nobody** is a person who is unknown or unimportant: *The captain of the England football team was a nobody until the age of 19. Nobody* takes a singular verb.

nonentity *noun*, means a person without any special abilities or achievements, although he or she may enjoy high status: *According to one historian, 'George III went mad, George IV was a playboy and William IV was a nonentity.'* This is a term of disapproval.

None is the only one of these words that can take a singular or plural verb, depending on the context.

nor, or

nor *conjunction*, is used with 'neither' to form the second part of a negative alternative: *She looked neither older nor younger than her age.* It may also be used on its own: *Her ambition never faltered, nor did the belief of her parents.*

or *conjunction*, is used with 'either' to form the second part of a positive alternative: *The eight-cylinder engine could be either*

supercharged or non-supercharged. It is also used on its own to offer an alternative: *He looked like a traditional elderly headmaster, or an obscure peer of the realm*. See **EITHER . . . OR**.

If both nouns that are linked by *nor/or* are singular, the verb will be singular: *Either the conductor or the orchestra has to go*. If these nouns are plural, the verb will also be plural: *Neither the violins nor the other strings were impressive*. If there is a singular and a plural noun involved, the verb agrees with the nearest noun. *Neither the violins nor the conductor was satisfied*. *Neither the conductor nor the violins were satisfied*.

Nordic countries

See **SCANDINAVIA**.

normal

See **COMMON**.

north, northern

north *adverb, adjective & noun*, is the direction of the North Pole. When it refers to a direction, **north** is not usually capitalized: *To the north of the village there is extensive meadowland*. It is capitalized when it is part of a continent, country or region: *Passenger traffic through North American airports increased every year*.

See **CAPITAL LETTERS (WRITING SKILLS)**.

northern *adjective*, means located in the north or connected with the north in some way: *Somehow he had been persuaded to leave the northern frontier*. **Northern** is only capitalized when it is part of a proper noun: *Northern Ireland* or *Northern Territory*.

North America

See **AMERICA**.

northerly, northward, northwards, northbound

northerly *adjective*, means either in the north: *Caithness is mainland Scotland's most northerly county*; or in a direction towards the north: *The boat drifted while we repaired the sail, then we reassumed our northerly course*. It also means a wind that is blowing from the north: *Nearly all harbours on the south coast of England are problematic in a northerly*

wind. Note that **northerly** is normally immediately followed by a noun.

northward *adjective & adverb*, means moving in a northerly direction: *Soon we were off, heading northward, along the coastal road*.

northwards *adverb*, means towards the north: *The birds migrated northwards*. This can only be used with verbs.

northbound *adjective*, means travelling towards the north: *The northbound lanes of the M6 were blocked at junction 33*.

notable, noteworthy, noticeable, prominent

notable *adjective*, means deserving attention: *The students have made a notable improvement, and should be congratulated*. This is a formal word.

noteworthy *adjective*, means deserving attention or to be noticed as the person, object or fact referred to is unusual or important: *It is noteworthy that over 200 students were registered for the course but fewer than 40 sat the examination*.

noticeable *adjective*, means clear and definite: *The students made a noticeable improvement, but they can still do better*.

prominent *adjective*, means well known and important: *He was one of a number of prominent Labour figures*. It also means easily seen, noticeable or sticking out: *Other natural sites acting as terminal points are prominent rock outcrops and springs*.

note, notice, message, memo, memorandum

note *verb & noun*. As a verb, this means to pay particular attention: *As you go up the stone steps, note the view over the city*. The phrasal verb *note down* means to record something briefly in writing, for future reference: *Note down clearly what he says*. As a noun, **note** means a few words written down, for example as a reminder: *It might help to make a note of your doctor's answers as a reminder of what is said*. If someone or something is *of note* this means especially interesting or important: *The launch of a new type of electric car is an event that is worthy of note*. See **BANKNOTE**.

notice *verb & noun*. As a verb, this means to be aware of something: *They were too busy*

nothing – a number of

shouting at one another to notice that she had disappeared. As an uncountable noun, **notice** means attention: *Green issues are important and everyone should take notice of the problems.* It can also mean a warning that something is going to happen: *A committee member may resign by giving notice in writing.* As a countable noun, it means an announcement in a newspaper or on a sheet of paper: *A formal notice of the decision reached will appear in the next available issue of 'Banker's Monthly'.* See **FIRE**.

message *noun*, means any sort of communication that is spoken or written, sent to, or left for, another person: *On the black paint of the door was chalked a message: eleven o'clock.* Even the most formal communications by email are called messages, rather than letters.


memo *noun*, means a written message, and is most often used in a professional context: *I refer to my earlier memo in connection with the above.* It is an abbreviation of *memorandum*. See **CLIPPED WORDS (WORD FORMATION)**.

memorandum *noun*, means a note, but can formally mean a document which records agreed terms, for instance a company's *memorandum of association*: *This memorandum was a formal, public document, evidently intended by the parties to be binding upon them.* Both *memoranda* and *memorandums* are acceptable plural forms.

nothing, nothing but

nothing *pronoun*, means not a single thing: *'You've said nothing about getting married.'* As the subject of a verb, **nothing** always takes a singular verb: *Nothing was learned from the experiments.*

nothing but *pronoun + preposition*, is an emphatic expression which means only: *What I said to you was nothing but the truth.* This also takes a singular verb.

'The mess food is aptly named and leaves you nothing to hope for.' 
(Warning to recruits)

noticeable

See **NOTABLE**.

notorious

See **INFAMOUS**.

nought

See **ZERO**.

Nowell

See **XMAS**.

no-win

See **WIN-WIN**.

noxious

See **OBNOXIOUS**.

nude

See **NAKED**.

nuisance

See **GADFLY**.

a number of, the number of, amount

a number of *noun phrase*, means several or some. It is followed by a plural countable noun, and takes a plural verb: *A number of people are undecided.*

the number of *noun phrase*, means the size of the total. It is followed by a plural noun, but always takes a singular verb: *The number of people outside is increasing.*

amount *noun*, means a quantity. In the phrase *an amount of/the amount of . . .* it is followed by an uncountable noun, and the verb is always singular: *An unknown amount of money has gone missing.*

One way to remember whether to use a plural or singular verb with *number* is the codeword **PAST**. This stands for **P**lural with **A** number, **S**ingular with **T**he number.

numbers

numbers in digits

101 – means a basic level course in a specific subject at university: *Composition 101 is a mandatory course at this university.* This is mainly an AE term.

20/20 – means perfect eyesight not needing either glasses or contact lenses: *The doctor said I still had 20/20 vision.* This is read ‘twenty twenty’.

24/7 – means 24 hours and 7 days a week, and refers to shops that never close: *There’s a garage just down the road that’s open 24/7.* This is read ‘twenty-four seven’.

4 × 4 – means a vehicle with four-wheel drive: *Sales of 4 × 4 vehicles have continued to boom despite tax increases.* This is read ‘four by four’.

2.2 – is an example of a decimal number and is read as ‘two point two’.

See **MEASUREMENTS**.

Digits are used in various ways for expressing time, dates, and telephone numbers. See **DATES, TELEPHONE NUMBERS, TIME OF DAY**.

ordinal and cardinal numbers

Ordinal numbers are those that indicate the order things are grouped in: 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th, etc., or first, second, third, fourth, etc. These are used either to indicate rank: *He is second in command at the moment;* or the order of events: *The team managed to equalize in the 47th minute.* Ordinal numbers are also used in music to indicate the size of an interval between two notes: *major third, minor sixth.*

Cardinal numbers are absolute, and say nothing about ordering: 1, 2, 3 and 4, etc., or one, two, three, four, etc. These are used when expressing size or quantity. See **DATES**.

numbers in words

decade *noun*, is the normal word for a period of 10 years: *This has been around for a decade or more.* A decade expressed in numerals should be *1990s* without any apostrophe before the ‘s’. If two or more decades are referred to, it is best to add the plural to each part: *In the 1970s and 1980s.* The decades in the present millennium are being increasingly referred to in speech as the ‘twenty-twenties’, etc. rather than the ‘two thousand and twenties’, etc.

ten years *noun*, means the same as *decade* but most people use ‘ten years’ in informal

English: *They have been here for about ten years.* When the number ten is important, the more specific ‘ten years’ must be used: *The money was paid over a period of nine or ten years.*

teens *noun* means the period of a person’s life between 13 and 19 years old. The span can be narrowed by adding early or late to teens: *Even in their late teens they still enjoyed holidays with their parents.* The related adjectives are *teenage* and *teenaged*.

twenties, thirties, forties, fifties, etc.

All describe temperature, age, decades and sometimes banknotes or coins. For temperature, words like ‘low’, ‘mid’ and ‘high’ are added to show what part of the range is referred to: *The temperature in summer is always in the mid-twenties.* With age, words like ‘early’, ‘mid’ and ‘late’ can be added: *Several of the teachers were in their early sixties.* See **NUMBERS IN NUMERALS OR WORDS (WRITING SKILLS), NUMERALS – ARABIC OR ROMAN (WRITING SKILLS)**.

dates For years up to 1999 inclusive, pronounce in two ‘halves’ – ‘nineteen ninety-nine’, or for the century year, 1900 ‘nineteen hundred’. 2000 is always ‘two thousand’, but 2001–2009 may be pronounced either ‘two thousand and one . . .’ (the more usual way), or ‘twenty oh one . . .’ (much less common). For 2010 onwards, most people have started to say ‘twenty ten . . .’ rather than ‘two thousand and ten . . .’.

zero or **nil** can be expressed in several ways depending on the context. See **INDEFINITE ARTICLE (GRAMMAR TIPS), ZERO**.

numbers given by prefixes

It is often possible to work out what an unusual word means by looking at its prefix: For example, the word ‘quinquennial’, which means lasting for five years or recurring every five years, starts with ‘quin’ – the number five. Here are some examples of prefixes that indicate a number, and words that are formed in this way:

<i>uni-</i> (one)	<i>unilateral negotiations</i> – one-sided
<i>mono-</i> (one)	<i>monolingual</i> – speaking only one language

numerate – nutritious

<i>bi-</i> (two)	<i>bilateral negotiations</i> – two parties involved
<i>duo-</i> (two)	<i>duologue</i> – a dialogue between two actors
<i>tri-</i> (three)	<i>a triangle</i> – a three-sided plane figure
<i>quad-</i> (four)	<i>quadruplets</i> – four babies in one birth
<i>tetra-</i> (four)	<i>tetrasyllable</i> – a word with four syllables
<i>quin-</i> (five)	<i>quincenary</i> – a five-hundredth anniversary
<i>penta-</i> (five)	<i>pentagon</i> – a five-sided plane figure
<i>sex-</i> (six)	<i>sextet</i> – six musicians in a group
<i>hex(a)-</i> (six)	<i>hexapod</i> – a six-footed animal (e.g. an insect)
<i>sept-</i> (seven)	<i>September</i> – originally the seventh month in the Roman year
<i>hepta-</i> (seven)	<i>heptathlon</i> – a seven-event athletics contest
<i>oct-</i> (eight)	<i>octopus</i> – an animal with eight tentacles
<i>nona-</i> (nine)	<i>nonagon</i> – a nine-sided plane figure
<i>deci-</i> (ten)	<i>decimal</i> – the ten-numeral system
<i>deca-</i> (ten)	<i>decathlon</i> – a ten-event athletics contest

numerate

See **LITERATE**.

Spelling

necessary

niece

niggardly

ninetieth

nondescript

nostril

noticeable

numerous

nuptial

Remember: single -c-, double -ss-

Remember -i- before -e-

Remember -ar-

Note the -e- before the -t-, and the -ie-

Note there is no 'e' before the -d-

Note the ending: -il

Do not forget the -ea-

Remember the -e-, but no 'b' in this word

Note that this word ends in -ial, not -ual

numerator, denominator

numerator *noun*, is the part above the line in a fraction, so in $\frac{3}{4}$, the numerator is 3.

denominator *noun*, is the part below the line in a fraction, so in $\frac{3}{4}$, the denominator is 4.

numerous

See **INNUMERABLE**.

nuptial

See **MARITAL**.

nutritionist, dietitian

nutritionist *noun*, means someone who is an expert on the relationship between food and health: *The sports nutritionist states that regular exercise reduces tension and improves the ability to cope with stress.*

dietitian *noun*, means someone whose job is advising people on the kind of food they should eat to stay healthy or build up their health: *All patients received advice from a dietitian at the hospital on diet and food supplements.* This is also spelt *dietician*.

nutritious, nutritional

nutritious *adjective*, refers to food ingredients that are full of things that are good for the body: *You should get all the main vitamins and minerals by eating a balanced, nutritious diet.*

nutritional *adjective*, refers to the efficiency with which the body processes the nutrients in food: *Green, leafy vegetables and yellow and orange fruits are of especial nutritional value to good health.* Note that food cannot be described as **nutritional**, but it can be *nutritious*.

T

table a motion, second a motion

table a motion *verb phrase*, means in BE to put forward a formal proposal for discussion in a meeting: *The motion was tabled and carried by four votes to three.* In AE, the same phrase means to forget the matter or put it aside indefinitely. As these different uses are a source of transatlantic misunderstanding, this phrase must be used with care. See **SHELVE**.

second a motion *verb phrase*, means to support a proposal: *I wish to propose the following motion. Will anyone second it?* See **SECOND (SECONDMENT)**.

These words can also be combined with other nouns including *bill* and *proposal*; *table a bill*, *second a proposal*.

tables

See **STYLE GUIDELINES (WRITING SKILLS)**.

tack

See **DRAWING PIN**.

tactic

See **STRATEGY**.

take

See **BRING**.

take a rain check

See **ADJOURN**.

take on

See **EMPLOY**.

tale, story

tale *noun*, means an imaginative story or an exciting description which may or may not be true: *She wondered how any of them had survived to tell the tale.* Note that to *tell tales* means to inform someone in authority

about another person's wrongdoing. This is commonly used by children. The informer can be called a *telltale* (*tattletale* in AE).

story *noun*, means a description of events by a writer or speaker. In some contexts as in a newspaper's *exclusive story* or *lead story*, this may be accurate and true. In other contexts, such as a *children's story*, or a *hard luck story*, many elements are invented. The word **story** should be handled with care: if someone tells the **story** of their life, it may be completely true, but if someone is *telling stories* they are probably untrue; and a *tall story* is utter fantasy. See **GROUND**.

These two words can be used interchangeably in idioms such as *to tell a different tale/story* meaning to give some information that is different from what you expect or have been told, and *to tell its own tale/story* meaning to explain itself, without needing any further comment or clarification: *The expression on the doctor's face told its own story.*

talisman, amulet, charm

talisman *noun*, means an object that is considered to be magic and that will bring good luck: *Melanie folded the letter and kept it, as a kind of talisman, to remind her the past was real.* The plural is *talismans*.

amulet *noun*, means a piece of jewellery that is worn because it is considered that it will bring protection from illness or bad luck: *She felt no fear as she entered, but briefly touched the jet amulet round her neck for luck.*

charm *noun*, means a small object worn usually hooked on a bracelet, that is believed to bring good luck: *The small horseshoe was her lucky charm.*

talk, speech, lecture, address

talk *noun*, means an oral presentation that is usually prepared: *We went to a talk on alternative medicine.* When **talk** is used as an uncountable noun it means the process of communication: *It used to be said in the Second World War that careless talk costs lives.* See **TALKS**.

speech *noun*, is a presentation that is carefully prepared and designed to gain support or present an argument: *The Foreign Secretary gave a major speech on relations with France. An after-dinner speech is*

talks – tasteless

supposed to be prepared and entertaining. When **speech** is used as an uncountable noun it means the ability to speak: *The doctors helped him recover the faculty of speech.*

'Here speaking American.'
(Continental shop sign)



lecture *noun*, is a prepared presentation for teaching purposes: *This lecture will be transmitted to students on three campuses.*

address *noun & verb*. As a noun, **address** means a formal oral presentation. *He gave an address at Washington University on 'American Language and American Literature'.* In BE the second syllable is stressed in both the noun and the verb, but in AE the first syllable is stressed when **address** is used as a noun: *address* /'ædres/.

All these words may be combined with the verbs give and deliver.

talks, discussion

talks *plural noun*, means serious formal discussions between governments: *Britain and China ended their third round of talks about environmental issues yesterday.* In a domestic setting, **talks** between unions and management may decide about levels of pay and conditions. See **TALK**.

discussion *noun*, means a meeting that considers different ideas or opinions on a particular subject: *Discussions between the two leaders are now taking place in Cairo.* See **CONVERSATION**.

tall

See **HIGH**.

tap, faucet

tap *noun & verb*. As a noun, this is a device to control the flow of liquid from a pipe or container: *The most likely reason the waste pipes have frozen is that you have a dripping tap.* In electronics, **tap** also means a device for listening in to phone calls: *a wire tap*. As a verb, it can mean to make use of a resource: *He tapped into the expertise of his colleagues.* It can also mean to listen secretly to phone calls or electronic communications.

faucet *noun*, means a water tap and is the usual AE term. This is a French word for the device used to draw a liquid from a cask.

target

See **AIM**.

tartan, plaid

tartan *noun*, is a chequered woven woollen cloth in a Scottish textile design. Each design is associated with a particular Scottish clan: *The tartan cloth was made into a kilt.*

plaid *pladd* /plæd/ *noun*, is a length of tartan fabric worn over the shoulder as part of Scottish Highland dress: *He looked magnificent in his plaid and kilt.*

Plaid is often confused with *tartan* outside Scotland.

tasteful, tasty, delicious

tasteful *adjective*, refers to something that is made or selected with good taste. This especially applies to clothing and decor: *We were all very surprised to see the modern bathrooms and tasteful surroundings.*

tasty *adjective*, generally refers to food with a pleasant taste: *Mussels make a very tasty pasta sauce.* However, *a tasty bit of news* means gossip.

delicious *adjective*, means very pleasant to the taste or smell: *What a delicious aroma coming from the kitchen – roast beef and Yorkshire pudding.*

tasteless, unsavoury

tasteless *adjective*, is the opposite of tasty when referring to food. As it is also the opposite of tasteful it can refer to a lack of tact, or something that is offensive and inappropriate: *But if the sculpture seemed tasteless, vulgar and dumb, its power was undeniable.*

unsavoury *adjective*, means unpleasant to taste, smell or look at. It is frequently used figuratively to refer to offensive actions that are morally unacceptable: *His disclosures have already caused several deaths, and every time he talks it reminds the world of his unsavoury past.*

taught, taut

taught *verb*, is the past tense and past participle of to teach: *'I don't want my child taught by that teacher!'* See **TEACH**.

taut *adjective*, means stretched tight. This can apply to ropes and sails or to skin and muscles: *He began rubbing his taut muscular shoulders.* People can also be **taut** if they are anxious or tense: *Charles's nerves were so taut: he jumped when the cork popped.* See **TIGHT**.

tautology

Tautology means the unnecessary repetition of the same idea, in the same phrase, often using synonymous words or expressions, where just one is sufficient. Here are some examples that careful writers should try to avoid:

<i>bisect in two</i>	<i>sad misfortune</i>
<i>future plans</i>	<i>past history</i>
<i>large in size</i>	<i>red in colour</i>

Tautology also appears in expressions like:

6 a.m. in the morning
They stood in a line, one behind the other
He was ambidextrous and could use both hands equally well

Sometimes, **tautology** occurs because writers do not remember what the last letters in acronyms and abbreviations stand for. Common examples include: *LCD display* (liquid crystal display – use just *LCD*), *HIV virus* (human immunodeficiency virus – use just *HIV*), *PIN number* (personal identification number – use *PIN* or *PIN code*) and *OPEC countries* (Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries – use *OPEC member(s)*, or *member(s) of OPEC*). Reports often contain tautology caused by combining 'such as', 'like' and 'examples include' with 'etc.' or 'and so on' at the end. Example: *Traffic such as: lorries, trucks and vans, etc.* Combining foreign words with English sometimes leads to **tautology**. Examples: 'and etc.', 'salsa sauce' ('salsa' means sauce) and 'RSVP, please reply'.

taxi (noun and verb)

taxi *noun*, means a vehicle with a driver that can be hired for transport.

taxi *verb*, is used of aircraft, and means to move slowly along the ground (or water, if a seaplane) before take-off or after landing: *He had already done his instrument checks as he was taxiing.* Note the double 'i' spelling in *taxiing*. The past tense is spelt *taxied*.

teach, train, learn

teach *verb*, means to give instruction in a subject in an educational setting or on an informal basis. One can also teach people to act or think differently: *You can teach a young dog old tricks, but not an old dog new tricks.* In AE the expression *to teach school* means to teach in a school. See **INSTRUCTION, TAUGHT**.

train *verb*, means to instruct a person or an animal in the skills necessary for a particular job or activity: *A choke chain is used to train dogs like these to walk properly on the leash.* **Train** also means to devote a lot of time for exercise to prepare for a particular sport or activity.

learn *verb*, means to receive instruction or gather experience by hands-on practice over a period of time: *We learned how to use that new program yesterday; Jane began learning French at the age of 6.* See **LEARNED**.

One way to distinguish between *teach* and *learn* is to consider the direction of the instruction: *I taught French last week, but the pupils learned very little.*

team

See **TEAM**.

technician, technologist, techie, technocrat

technician *noun*, means either someone whose job is keep machinery functioning or equipment in good condition or a very skilled person in some technical aspects of a sport or science: *A surgical technician of great standing will head the operation.*

technologist *noun*, means an expert in technology.

techie *noun*, means a technologist or someone who is enthusiastic about

technical – teething troubles/problems

technology, especially computers. It is also spelt *techy*. This is an informal term.

technocrat *noun*, means someone with great scientific expertise, often one who is a member of a scientific elite in politics. The related term *technocracy* means a society controlled by technocrats.

technical, technique, technology

technical *adjective*, means relating to practical use of machinery or methods in science and industry. It can also refer to a subject, such as technical terminology, or the skill required for doing a particular task: *Technical skill is a fundamental basis for most, if not all, great art.*

technique *noun*, means the way of doing something, especially involving the learning of special skills. It can also refer to one practical skill: *Karajan, it seems, always had a superb baton technique.* An AE spelling of **technique** is *technic* which is pronounced *téchnik* /'tekni:k/ or *tecknéek* /tek'ni:k/.

technology *noun*, means the application of the most recent scientific knowledge to design new systems: *Information and communication technology is one of the leading areas of research here.*

technical drawing

See **DIAGRAM**.

teem, team

teem *verb*, means either be full of something: *Morton drifted into the grand salon, which was teeming with people;* or pour, rain hard: *By the time the game was due to start it was teeming with rain.*

team *noun & verb*. As a noun, this is a group of people who cooperate in playing a game or work together on a particular job: *The sales team is having a meeting for the rest of the day.* As a verb, *to team up* means to join a group or a colleague for a specific activity: *Why not team up with another couple and get a reduction on the sightseeing trip?*

'Paphos is positively teeming with history.'
(www.cyprusisland.com)

teething troubles/problems, growing pains

teething troubles/problems *plural noun*, means the minor difficulties with a product launch or after starting up a company: *There were an awful lot of teething troubles in the first year or so, but it is working very well.* Note how these phrases are mainly used in the plural.

growing pains *plural noun*, means problems experienced by a company as it starts to expand: *Its goals of supporting advanced features will inflict costs in reliability while it experiences its share of growing pains.*

Both these terms refer to short-term problems experienced by young companies, just as they are by babies and young people.

telephone numbers

reading telephone numbers

When giving someone a telephone number it helps to group them in two or three digits at a time. There is also a tendency to use a rising intonation and pause at the end of each group, and for the intonation to drop at the end.



+44 20 7437 4514 (or, within the UK, 020 . . .)

+4'4 2'0 7'4 3'7 4'5 1'4

+4'4 2'2 3'4 6'6 9'6

When using English to non-native speakers it will help if all the digits are in the range of 0 to 9. Thus 34 is three-four, not thirty-four.

0 is normally pronounced 'oh' in BE and usually 'zero' in AE.

telephone keys *noun*, on most phones there is a  star button or star key and a  hash button or hash key. In AE, this is called the pound button or pound key.

writing telephone numbers

According to international standards, telephone numbers are written in pairs, without hyphens between digits:

+32 16 23 90 96

the + sign means the international code, which is usually 00 today.

In Britain, telephone numbers are usually divided into two or three parts, the first is the area code (e.g. 01279), and the second is the local number, which may be six, seven or eight digits. If it has six digits, they are written together, e.g. 579579. If there are seven or eight digits, the last four are written apart from the first three or four, e.g. 020 7765 4305, or 0131 554 1923.

In informal English, *telephone numbers* can mean large sums of money.



(This expression often refers to high numbers, not just long ones.)

teller

See **CASHIER**.

temerity

See **TIMIDITY**.

temperature, fever

temperature *noun*, means the measurement of how hot or cold a person, object or place is. This can be in general terms like high and low, rising and falling, or expressed in exact terms by degrees indicated by a number: *It is 25 degrees Celsius today.* The phrase to *have a temperature* means that a person has a higher temperature than normal. This may be a symptom of an illness. See **CELSIUS**.

fever *noun*, means an illness or medical condition where the patient has an abnormally high body temperature: *The girl had not regained consciousness and she had a very high fever.* **Fever** can also mean nervous excitement: *World Cup fever comes to Trinidad and Tobago.*

tempo, pace

tempo *noun*. In music, this means the speed or rhythm of a piece. Here the plural is *tempi*. In other contexts it means the speed of action or movement: *The tempo of speech differs depending on the urgency (rapid) or deliberation (slow) of the speech.* The plural here is *tempos*.

pace *noun and verb*. As a noun, this means the speed at which something happens.

Pace refers to something which is fast or slow: *Children can work at their own pace.* As a verb, it means to walk in a restricted area many times as a sign of nervousness or anxiety: *He began to pace silently along the bridge;* or to measure a distance by the number of steps it takes to cover it: *The referee paced out the ten yards and told the players to stay there.*

These words can sometimes overlap: *We can increase or decrease the tempo and pace of life.* But something can only gather *pace* or move at a walking *pace*.

temporary, temporal

temporary *adjective*, refers to something that lasts for a short time and is not permanent: *Temporary work seems to have an important role to play in the transition from unemployment to employment.*

temporal *adjective*, refers to the physical world, as opposed to religious affairs. The division between spiritual and **temporal** is often used: *Almost all Bills in Parliament are discussed by the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and the Commons.* See **SPIRITUAL**.

temporary solution, band-aid solution

temporary solution *noun phrase*, means something that is not permanent: *This is only a temporary solution. Get the car to the garage as soon as you can.*

tender – terminal

band-aid solution *noun phrase*, means a temporary solution that does not satisfy a long-term need: *Sending tinned food to the earthquake zone is just a Band-Aid solution.* This is an expression which comes from **Band-Aid**, an American trademark for an adhesive bandage similar to Elastoplast in the UK.

tender, bid

tender *noun & verb*. As a noun, this means a formal statement of the price charged for doing work or supplying goods or services. Someone who submits a **tender** is called a *tenderer*. As a verb, it means to submit a **tender**: *Next week we will issue an invitation to tender.* This is a formal BE term.

bid *noun & verb*. As a noun, this means either *tender*, which is commonly used in AE, or an attempt to win something: *He was within a few inches of Olympic disaster last night in his bid for the 110 metres hurdles crown.* As a verb, **bid** means to make an offer to buy something, especially at auction, and the past tense of the verb is **bid**: *She decided to bid for the painting.*

In the context of tendering, in BE *tender* is used as the noun and verb, while in AE only the noun form of *bid* is used.

tenure, term¹

tenure *uncountable noun*, means the period of time when a person holds an important position. In politics this is limited by the constitution or practice. It can also refer to the right to live somewhere. In universities, getting tenure or security of tenure means that a lecturer or professor has the right to stay permanently in their job.

term¹ *noun*, means the period of time something lasts. In politics it can be the US President's term of office (four years). It also means the period that money is loaned for: *The term of the loan is 15 years.* Note that both *short-term* and *long-term* contain hyphens.

term², semester, trimester, quarter (university terms)

term² *noun*, means one of the three periods in the academic year. This is a typical BE

term: *We have teaching in the autumn, spring and summer terms.* Some universities have other names for their terms: Oxford has *Michaelmas, Hilary* and *Trinity*, Cambridge has *Michaelmas, Lent* and *Easter*.

semester *noun*, means one of the two periods in the academic year. This is typically used in universities in North America, parts of Europe and also in a few universities in Britain such as Bath and Edinburgh. **Semesters** usually last for four months: *Spring* and *Fall semesters* (AE) or *Spring* and *Autumn semesters* (Europe), though the word literally means six months.

trimester *noun*, means one of the three periods in the academic year. This is a typically AE word, and spring, fall and winter are common names for *trimesters*: *We would like to congratulate all the students who have achieved Dean's List status during the Fall trimester.* Note that the first syllable rhymes with 'try'.

quarter *noun*, means one of the four periods in the academic year. This is a typically AE word: *Spring Quarter '08 began on March 31.*

terminable, terminate

terminable *adjective*, describes something that can be ended: *Both have contracts with the company terminable at three years' notice.*

terminate *verb*, means to stop or end something such as an agreement, pregnancy or a journey: *This contract terminates at the end of January.*

terminal, terminus

terminal *noun & adjective*. As a noun, this means a large building for passengers at an airport, or a place where journeys by sea, rail or road begin or end: *The fifth terminal at Heathrow caused a lot of trouble in its first week.* In computing, a **terminal** is usually a keyboard and screen connected to a central computer system: *The terminals are now replaced by PCs.* As an adjective, it refers to a fatal illness that has reached its final stages such as *terminal cancer*.

terminus *noun*, is the station or stop at the end of a bus or train line, such as a *railway terminus*. The plural is either *termini* or *terminuses*.

terraced house

See **TOWN HOUSE**.

testify

See **WITNESS**.

testimonial, testament

testimonial *noun*, means a tribute to someone. If it is in writing, it is usually a formal statement or reference about a person's abilities and character: *She was given an excellent testimonial*. In sport, it is usually a game arranged in honour of a player who receives a share of the profit: *The testimonial at Elland Road brought him over £100,000*. See **TESTIMONY (EVIDENCE)**.

testament *noun*, means either a section of the Bible, when it is capitalized; or a will: *But here in her last will and testament she revealed some of the disappointments in her life*.

thankful, grateful

thankful *adjective*, is used either to express pleasure and gratitude about something: *Not for the first time, I was thankful that she was such a good barrister*; or to express relief that the outcome of something was better than feared: *The car was written off but we are thankful that no one was injured*.

grateful *adjective*, describes a wish to thank a person, group of people or organization that has been helpful to you: *I am grateful to the following people for the assistance they have given me in writing this report*.

The spelling 'greatful' is wrong. Even so Google picks up almost 100,000 hits for the phrase 'I am greatful' on the Web.

thankfully, hopefully

thankfully *adverb*, means with thanks: *He accepted the new boots thankfully*. When it modifies a sentence, it means fortunately: *Thankfully, leather mountain boots are reasserting themselves*. As **thankfully** can be misunderstood, it should be used with care. The sentence *Thankfully, he moved out*, opens up the question whether he was pleased to be going, or whether she was pleased that he was leaving.

hopefully *adverb*, means either in a hopeful way: *He waited for her phone call hopefully*, or when it modifies a sentence, it means it is hoped that: *Hopefully, he would wait for her phone call before he left for Spain*.

The use of both these words to modify a sentence has been criticized, but most linguists find no grounds for this criticism and as about 80 per cent of the entries in the British National Corpus show they are widely used as sentence modifiers, *hopefully, people will stop criticizing this usage*.

that, who and which (in clauses)

that and **who** are used interchangeably to refer to *people* in clauses like *The student that/who rang yesterday is on the phone now*. The information in the clause *that/who rang yesterday* identifies which student and is essential to understand the meaning of a sentence. Clauses like this are not marked off by commas and are called *restrictive relative clauses*. Though both these relative pronouns are correct in a clause like this, **who** is more formal than **that**. If you refer to a noun that represents a group of people, use **that** not **who**: *The students that you met yesterday are arriving now*.

Both **that** and **which** can be used in *restrictive relative clauses* to refer to *things*: *We stayed at the hotel that/which you told us about*. In informal English, the relative pronoun is often omitted: *We stayed at the hotel you told us about*.

who is used to refer to a *person* in clauses that add extra information like *Mary, who is a real chatterbox, is on the phone now*. Clauses like this add extra information (which can be omitted without changing the meaning of the sentence) and are marked off by commas. These are called *non-restrictive relative clauses*. Dashes and brackets (like the 'which' clause used two sentences earlier) can also be used to mark off such a clause. See **COMMA (PUNCTUATION GUIDE)**.

which is used to refer to *things* in *non-restrictive relative clauses*. As these clauses add extra information, remember the commas: *My folding bike, which has eight gears, saves me using the car*. It is non-

T



the – the writing on the wall

standard to use **that** here instead of **which**. A simple rule of thumb is to use **that** in *restrictive relative clauses* (those without commas) and **who** or **which** in *non-restrictive relative clauses* (those with commas).

the

See [ARTICLES \(GRAMMAR TIPS\)](#).

theatre, theater, movies

theatre *noun*, is a place where people are entertained, or where they are operated on in a hospital. Note that in a hospital the BE *operating theatre* is called operating room in AE. In another sense, **theatre** can also mean a lecture hall. This is the BE spelling.

theater *noun*, is the AE spelling. Note that a **theater** can be a cinema in AE where it is usually called *movie theater*.

movies *noun*, is either an abbreviation of *movie theatre* or usually in the singular a film: *All she wants is a star role in that movie*. When it is used as the plural in this sense it means films in general: *This was the sort of thing that only happened in the movies*. This word is typically used in AE.

there, their, they're

there *adverb & pronoun*. As an adverb, this can mean in that place or position and contrasts with *here*. As a pronoun, it acts as a 'temporary' or 'dummy' subject to allow the real subject of a sentence to follow the verb: *There is still a lot of furniture to move*.

their *possessive determiner*, means belonging to or connected with people or things that have already been mentioned: *The Irish are renowned for their folk music traditions*.

they're *verb*, is the contraction of *they are* or *they were*: *He looked down the road and said 'they're coming'*. See [CONTRACTIONS](#).

thereafter, thereby, therein, thereof, thereon, thereto, thereunder, thereupon, therewith

Apart from **thereby** which means as a result of a move or measure: *He got to his feet, thereby prompting a steadily growing cheer*; all these adverbs are common in legal English, but can seem very formal or

archaic and are best replaced by *afterwards*; *in there* or *of it*; *of there*; *on there*; *to there*; *under there*; *on there*; *with the thing mentioned*.

Here can also be prefixed to the same prepositions and the resulting words are equally formal.

therefore, therefor

therefore *adverb*, means for that reason or consequently: *I was late and therefore I was very agitated, I'm sorry*.

therefor *adverb*, means for that purpose. It is a very formal word and is classified in modern dictionaries as an archaic piece of legal terminology to replace 'for'.

thesis, dissertation

thesis *noun*, means a long piece of work that is part of an advanced university degree in British universities. In many American universities, a **thesis** is a piece of work submitted for a lower or master's degree: *She finally submitted her thesis*. The plural of **thesis** is *theses*. The second syllable of the plural is pronounced like the word 'seas'.

dissertation *noun*. In most British universities this means a lengthy piece of work that is written as part of a degree: *He was delighted when the completed dissertation could be presented*. In most American universities, a **dissertation** is work at doctoral level: *A dissertation for the degree of Ph.D. should contain at least five chapters*.

In other parts of the English-speaking world, both terms are used for doctoral work.

the writing on the wall

See [GRAFFITI](#).

they, them, their and themselves for singular nouns

It is often argued that if a noun is singular, any following reference to it by means of a pronoun should also be singular, i.e. by using *he/him/his*, *she/her/hers* or *it/its*. Logic, as applied to mathematical formulae, would demand this, but

language does not always follow the rules of mathematical logic. Examples of the third person plural pronouns being used to refer to a singular noun have been found in writing dating back 400 years, including in the King James translation of the Bible (1611) – a translation often held up as a model of English style. For instance, in Deuteronomy 17:5, we read *Then shalt thou bring forth that man or that woman . . . and shalt stone them with stones.*

An alternative to using a pronoun is to repeat the noun in full, but this often results in unwieldy phrases. The Canadian Department of Justice has published guidelines that illustrate this, and contrasts:

Every person who is qualified as an elector is entitled to have the person's name included in the list of electors.

with

*Every person who is qualified as an elector is entitled to have **their** name included in the list of electors.*

The first phrase is heavy as well as ambiguous: does *every person* and *the person* refer to the same person? The second with *their* is immediately understandable and unambiguous.

Informally, the reflexive pronoun *themselves* has started to appear for cases where the sex of the individual is unknown or not relevant. Many dictionaries still consider this form to be incorrect, and Word will not allow it – it is automatically corrected to *themselves*, but the British National Corpus has 26 examples of its use, including: *Paula asked her 'how could someone hang themselves?'* and *You won't be the first or last man or woman who gets themselves involved in a holiday romance.* These are both examples of colloquial speech, and it is best to avoid using the word in any contexts except very informal English.

There are cases when it is advisable to use *he*, *she* or *it* to refer to a singular noun but the relevant plural pronoun *they*, *them*, *their*, is an alternative that is recommended by modern BE dictionaries and therefore used in this book. See [HE](#), [SHE](#), [THEY](#).

they're

See [THERE](#).

thieve

See [BURGLE](#).

thin, lean, slim, skinny, emaciated

thin *adjective*, is a general word to describe a person who has little fat on their body. It is often disapproving and may suggest weakness: *She was thin, with a bony face and bulging, frightened eyes.*

lean *adjective*, means thin in a healthy way that implies fitness: *He was a lean and athletic high jumper.*

slim *adjective & verb*. As an adjective, this refers to someone who is attractively thin: *She looked at the young, slim beauty of his body, the clear, healthy eyes, the shining hair.* As a verb, to **slim**, or to *slim down*, means to lose weight by eating differently or taking more exercise. If a company downsizes, the process can be called *slimming down*.

skinny *adjective*, means very thin, unattractive and also implies weakness: *In a race on Sports Day, his skinny, uncoordinated limbs flung out in all directions.*

emaciated *adjective*, refers to an animal or person who is thin and weak, usually because of illness or lack of food: *I noticed a girl at our local swimming pool, painfully emaciated, like something out of a concentration camp.*

thing

thing is a word careful writers try to avoid as it means anything and everything. Instead of writing 'an important thing about English is its rich vocabulary', note how *an important attribute of/characteristic of/feature of/English is its rich vocabulary* lifts the level of your language.

thorough, meticulous, fastidious

thorough *adjective*, means complete in all details: *The doctor reappeared and began to administer the most thorough medical check-up I have ever experienced.* Informally it can emphasize how annoying something is: *This will make a thorough mess of the local ecosystem.*

though – timber

meticulous *adjective*, means paying careful attention to every detail: *It was a dedicated task for meticulous and logical individuals with a mathematical bent.*

fastidious *adjective*, means caring about details and wanting everything to be correct: *My fastidious fiancée gave me a comprehensive briefing on ironing strategy.* In another sense it means disliking things that are untidy or dirty: *He was extremely fastidious about his appearance and personal hygiene.*

though

See **ALTHOUGH**.

thousand, thousands

thousand *number*, means an exact number. When **thousand** follows a number like: *five thousand*, or the words *a, a couple, a few, several, or many: three thousand people, a few thousand soldiers, several thousand litres: Fifty thousand people were watching the football match*, a plural verb is used. However, when **thousand** is used in a unit of time, distance, money, temperature, or such like, it takes a singular verb: *Fifty thousand pounds is required by next week.* This is often abbreviated to 'k' for kilo in job advertisements: *25k plus car.*

thousands *number*, means an inexact number. **Thousands** may be preceded by *several or many* but it should not have an exact number before it: *Several thousands of pounds were wasted on that project.* Note that **thousands** takes a plural verb.

thread, cotton

thread *noun*, means a long thin strand of cotton, nylon, silk or other fibres, but not metal: *The thread was loose and the button fell off.* **Thread** is also used figuratively for a connection or theme: *A common thread was their interest in soccer.*

cotton *noun*, means thread spun from the cotton plant that is used for sewing: *You must use a doubled piece of red cotton with this button.*

through, thru

through *preposition & adverb*, describes movement from one side of something to the other. In AE, expressions of duration like

Monday through Friday include both Monday and Friday as well as the days in between.

thru *preposition & adverb*, is an informal abbreviation for *through*. This is used in SMS messages but should not be used in formal writing unless it is the name of a highway in the USA: *The New York State Thruway (officially the Governor Thomas E. Dewey Thruway).*

throughway, thruway

See **AMERICAN ROAD TYPES**.

thumb tack

See **DRAWING PIN**.

tidbit

See **TITBIT**.

tight, tightly

tight *adjective & adverb*. As an adjective, this means close fitting: *Her dress was too tight*; or strictly controlled: *They kept a tight grip on fiscal policy.* **Tight** also indicates a lack of time: *a tight schedule.* As an adverb, **tight** means very firmly: *Ma came and picked her up, holding her so tight she could hardly breathe.*

tightly *adverb*, means very firmly and closely: *She held the baby tightly in her arms.*

In many cases, either form may be used as the adverb, but *tight* often follows the past participle: *The case was packed tight*, while *tightly* often comes before it: *The case was tightly packed.* However some adjective phrases reverse this order, such as *tight-lipped* and *tight-fisted*.

till

See **UNTIL**.

timber, timbre, lumber

timber *noun*, means wood prepared for building and carpentry: *There were massive timber beams in the house.*

timbre *noun*, is the characteristic quality of a musical instrument or a voice: *A man's voice answered, husky, with a pleasant timbre.* Note that **timbre** is pronounced 'tamber'.

lumber *noun*, in BE is an old-fashioned word for furniture or other large objects that are unused and being stored. In AE, **lumber** means timber, and is commonly used in the term *lumberjack*: *One of the best remembered songs on 'Monty Python's Flying Circus' is the Lumberjack Song.*

time of day

There are three systems to choose from when presenting the time of day. They should not be mixed. The **o'clock** and **a.m./p.m.** systems are both based on the 12-hour clock, and there is also the **24-hour** system.

o'clock

In formal writing, use *o'clock* with words, not digits: *six o'clock*, not '6 o'clock'. Do not use *o'clock* with a.m. or p.m. It is incorrect to write 'nine o'clock a.m.', use 'in the morning/afternoon/evening' or 'at night' after *o'clock*: *nine o'clock in the morning* and *ten o'clock at night*. Note that *o'clock* is only used for whole hours. *O'clock* comes from the days of the town crier: 'three of the clock', thus it is important to remember the apostrophe after 'o'.

a.m./p.m.

When writing the a.m./p.m. system for hours or fractions of an hour, use digits, not words: *8 a.m.* or *9.15 p.m.*, not *eight a.m.* The abbreviation a.m. means 'before noon' (Latin: *ante meridiem*) and is the period from midnight to noon; p.m. means 'after noon' (Latin: *post meridiem*) and is the period from noon to midnight. An easy way to remember this is that a.m. comes before p.m. alphabetically. As there is confusion between '12 a.m.' which is midnight, and '12 p.m.' which is noon, 'midnight' or '12 midnight' and 'noon' or '12 noon' can be used instead. With this system, write and say: *8.35 a.m.* and *4.20 p.m.* In AE, a colon is used instead of a stop between the hour and the minutes. The system is commonly used in schedules and programmes and if it is obvious when the events take place, a.m./p.m. can be omitted: *9.15 Opening, 10.30 Coffee, 1.00 Lunch, 5.15 Closing*

Session. A careless error is combining *in the morning/afternoon/evening* and *at night* with a.m. or p.m., as in: '8.30 a.m. in the morning'. See **TAUTOLOGY**.

The 24-hour clock system

This is common in transport timetables and military use. Only four-digit numbers are used in this system and there is no combination with *o'clock* or a.m./p.m. The time can be written with or without a stop between the hour and minutes: *13.25* or *1325*. Note that *12.00* means 12 noon and *24.00* is 12 midnight.

When discussing the time of a meeting with Germans, Scandinavians or Dutch people it is best to use the form 'eight thirty', 'nine thirty', 'ten thirty', etc. rather than 'half eight', 'half nine' or 'half ten'. This is because in all these Germanic languages the half + time phrase means 30 minutes before the hour referred to. So the Swedish 'halv tio' (literally half ten) means 'half before ten' or 9.30.

'Nobody calls me stupid: meet me outside when the little hand points down, and the big hand points up.'



timetable

See **SCHEDULE**.

timidity, temerity

timidity *noun*, means a lack of confidence, shyness or fearfulness: *She had seen his timidity, his ignorance of housekeeping, his lack of authority as a man.*

temerity *noun*, means daring or contempt for danger. This is a formal word and an informal equivalent is *cheek*: *The master of the hunt brandished his whip at the protesters for having the temerity to stand in his way.*

Note that these two words have opposite meanings.

tin

See **CAN**².

time zones with abbreviations

Note that the plus and minus signs in these selected time zones indicate the number of hours ahead or behind UTC (which stands for Coordinated Universal Time) which is the same as GMT (Greenwich Mean Time).

Abbreviation	Full name	Location	Time zone
BST	British Summer Time	Europe	UTC + 1 hour
CEDT	Central European Daylight Time	Europe	UTC + 2 hours
CEST	Central European Summer Time	Europe	UTC + 2 hours
CET	Central European Time	Europe	UTC + 1 hour
CST	Central Standard Time	North America	UTC – 6 hours
EEDT	Eastern European Daylight Time	Europe	UTC + 3 hours
EEST	Eastern European Summer Time	Europe	UTC + 3 hours
EET	Eastern European Time	Europe	UTC + 2 hours
EST	Eastern Standard Time	North America	UTC – 5 hours
GMT	Greenwich Mean Time	Europe	UTC
PST	Pacific Standard Time	North America	UTC – 8 hours
UTC*	Coordinated Universal Time	Europe	UTC

* UTC is used as the abbreviation because the International Telecommunication Union wanted a single form for all languages. Since the English speakers and the French in this international advisory group could not agree, the compromise UTC was arrived at.

tinge, tint

See **TONE**.

tire

See **TYRE**.

titbit, tidbit

titbit *noun*, means a morsel or small selected piece of food: *When the puppy comes to your calling its name, reward it with a titbit.* If it refers to gossip it means a small but interesting snippet: *The papers might as well be handed that titbit in tomorrow's press statement.*

tidbit *noun*, is the AE form of *titbit*.

titillate, titivate

titillate *verb*, means to excite or stimulate, especially in a sexual way: *But they are paid, like the tabloids in England, to titillate their public.* This is a disapproving term.

titivate *verb*, means to improve the appearance by making small changes that

smarten up something or someone: *Is there any way he can titivate that flat?*

titles: use in writing and meetings

See **WRITING SKILLS**.

toboggan

See **SLEDGE**.

today, tomorrow

today *adverb & noun*, means on this day or in the present period. The spelling *to-day* is old-fashioned.

tomorrow *adverb & noun*, means on the day after today or in the future. The spelling *to-morrow* is old-fashioned.

toilet, toilette, WC, bathroom, public convenience

toilet *noun*, is both the room and the WC. In AE, the term *bathroom* is common and **toilet** is rarely used. In a meeting the term 'comfort break' is used to see if anyone

wants to go to the **toilet**/bathroom. The expression *toilet water* refers to a kind of mild perfume.

toilette *twaalétt* /twu:'let/ *noun*, is an old-fashioned term that means washing, dressing and attending to one's hair: *This painting shows some scantily clad maidens at their toilette.*

WC *noun*, is an abbreviation for *water closet*, which is a dated term, although **WC** is used on maps and signs, and in other places to save space.

bathroom *noun*, means a room with a bath or shower, a washbasin and sometimes a toilet. In AE, it means a room in which there must be a toilet. Thus, the AE expression *I need to go to the bathroom* means 'I want to use the toilet'.

public convenience *noun*, means a toilet in a public place.

In Italy, Schweppes Tonic Water was translated as 'Schweppes Toilet Water'.



tomorrow

See **TODAY**.

tone, tint, tinge

tone *noun*, means a shade of a colour: *Rich Plum is mid brown with purple tones.* See **SHADE**.

tint *noun*, means a shade or small amount of a specific colour: *He wears sunglasses that have a fading inbuilt, pinky-orange tint.* See **SHADE**.

tinge *noun*, means a small amount of a colour: *The light had a cold bluish tinge and the air was cooler too.*

Although *tone* and *tint* are often found in the plural, *tinge* is rarely used as a plural. This word should not be confused with its near soundalike *twinge*.

'My back might be showing signs of strain . . . the little tinges of pain confirm I have done a lot of heavy lifting.'
(Editor, *Sea Angler*)



tonne, ton

tonne *noun*, means 1,000 kg. This may be referred to as the *metric ton* or alternatively, *metric tonne*. The plural is **tonne** or *tonnes*.

ton *noun*, as a measurement of weight needs to be specified carefully as it means the *metric ton* (1,000 kg), the *short ton* which is the American system (2,000 lb or 907.19 kg) and is used a lot in the oil industry, or the *long ton* in the imperial system (2,240 lb or 1,016.5 kg) which is used in parts of the English-speaking world.

topic, issue

topic *noun*, means a subject that is to be talked about, written or learnt: *With a talk, the topic is specified in advance and you will be expected to keep to your brief.*

issue *noun & verb*. As a noun, this means an important topic for discussion, or it can also mean a problem: *The Canadian Court turned to an analysis of the game of ice hockey to address this issue.* In another sense, an **issue** is a particular edition of a periodical publication, such as a newspaper or magazine: *'The Bookseller' is publishing a special feature in its issue of 4 June.* Informally, **issue** means problem and is used in phrases such as *to have issues with somebody*: *The website specializes in helping those who have had issues with credit card companies.* As a verb, **issue** means to publish: *I issue regular catalogues about every 3–4 months.* This is also used in a formal or official context: *The opposition issued a press release accusing the government of inconsistency.*

When referring to subjects for discussion, a *topic* is more up to date than an *issue*.

tornado

See **HURRICANE**.

tortuous, torturous

tortuous *adjective*, refers to something that is winding like a steep mountain path. In another sense it refers to things that are complicated and difficult to understand: *You knew the law with all its tortuous language and convoluted clauses.* In its second meaning this is often a disapproving term.

T

total – toxic

torturous *adjective*, refers to something that involves torture, pain or suffering: *his former teammates undergo a torturous five days of fitness testing abroad.*

As *tortuous* means complicated and lengthy it can overlap with *torturous* when one is referring to something like a carefully scheduled fitness programme.

total

See **SUM**.

touch upon

See **BRING UP**.

tough

See **STRICT**.

tour

See **TRAVEL**.

Tourette's syndrome

See **SYNDROME**.

tournament

See **CHAMPIONSHIP**.

towards, toward

towards *preposition*, means in the direction of something. A plane may fly **towards** a direction: *Flying towards the east*; but *to*, not **towards**, its destination: *We are now flying to Beijing*. In another sense it means close to a point in time: *It happened towards the end of our holiday*. Also it can mean in relation to someone or something: *Our attitude towards pollution has changed*. This is the BE spelling. **toward** *preposition*, is the AE form of *towards*.

tower

See **SPIRE**.

town, city

town *noun*, means an urban settlement that is smaller than a city. Sometimes part of a city is called a **town**, as in the *old town*. If one goes *up to Town* (capitalized), in the UK this means London. *Small-town* refers both to

small towns in general and to narrow-minded values. See **VILLAGE**.

city *noun*, usually means more than just a large *town*. In Britain and the USA, *civic status* is an honour conferred on a community officially by the monarch or the state, respectively. Most *cities* have a cathedral and/or a university. Size is usually, but not always, important. The *City of London*, for example, has over a million people working there, but has an area of only one square mile and a resident population of about 6,000. When **city** is used to mean the *City of London*, it is capitalized and requires the definite article: *He is something in the City*. There are also quite small *cities* in the American West. In other parts of the English-speaking world, many large *towns* are called **city** without any legal rights or royal charter.

town house, terraced house, row house, brownstone

town house *noun*, means a multi-storey urban house, that can be attached or detached. It is typically built close to the street and scaled similarly to surrounding houses. **Town houses** are usually tall and narrow and are often built to be slightly different from neighbouring houses. In AE, it is usually spelt as one word: *townhouse*.

terraced house *noun*, means one of a row of attached houses, usually in the same style as other parts of the same development. The row itself is called a *terrace*. This is typically a BE term.

row house *noun*, is the AE term for a terraced house, all the houses in a row usually being in the same style.

brownstone *noun*, is the AE term for a townhouse or row house that has a brown sandstone façade.

toxic, toxics, toxin

toxic *adjective*, refers to something that is poisonous: *Public health groups are worried about toxic discharges from paper mills that use chlorine bleach*. The related noun is *toxicity*.

toxics *plural noun*, means poisonous substances: *Some dangerous toxics were stolen from the laboratory*.

toxin *noun*, means a poisonous substance produced by living cells or organisms that causes disease: *Most countries joined the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention of 1972.*

track, trail, path

track *noun & verb*. As a noun, this means a rough road such as a cart track through the scrub. It can also mean the marks or signs left by the passage of a person, animal or vehicle: *He had been tempted to use the President's Land-Rover but the tracks would have shown.* This is normally used in the plural. As a verb, it means to use strenuous efforts to locate an object, animal or person that is difficult to find: *Underground networks try to track down women and girls who have run away from their families.*

trail *noun & verb*. As a noun, this means a narrow track in the countryside: *From here the trail enters forest land taking paths leading to many lovely reed-fringed lakes.* It also means the marks or signs left by someone or something. As a verb, it means to follow behind someone or something: *Wales were convincing winners even though they trailed 15–6 with half an hour to go.*

path *noun*, means a narrow track that is either built, or made by people walking: *A path takes you through a delightful forest, past an incredible waterfall, and up to the ridge.* The word *footpath* shows that this track is reserved for walking.

tract

See **STRETCH**.

trade union, labor union

trade union *noun*, means an organization in a particular trade or profession that represents workers. This is a BE term. An alternative is *trades union*: *Trades Union Congress (TUC).*

labor union *noun*, is the equivalent term to *trade union* in AE: *The Coalition of Labor Union Women supports the rights of working women and families.*

In BE, the phrase *trade union* is stressed on 'union', while in AE, *labor union* is stressed on the word 'labor'.

trademark, brand name, brand

trademark *noun & verb*. As a noun, this means the special sign, word or name that is found on a product to characterize a product sold by a company. A **trademark** cannot legally be used by another company. Some *trademarks*, such as Xerox or Polaroid, have become generic for the type of product. Upper case is usual for the **trademark** such as Frisbee when referring to the company owning the **trademark**. In another sense, a **trademark** also means a characteristic way of dressing or behaving: *She was instantly recognizable with her trademark pink hair and pink hat.* As a verb, lower case is used for *trademarks* such as to Hoover (vacuum clean) and to Xerox (photocopy). See **XEROX**.

brand name *noun*, means the name given by a manufacturer to one of its products: *The advertising agency came up with the brand name 'Corny', but it was rejected by the company.*

brand *noun*, means the type of product made by a company with its particular name or design: or refers to a range of products: *This brand of toothpaste comes in four different flavours and three tube sizes.*

trail

See **TRACK**.

trailblazer, pathfinder

trailblazer *noun*, originally meant a person who found a new track through unknown country. This is often used today to refer figuratively to an innovator: *He was a trailblazer in this important area of genome research.*

pathfinder *noun*, originally meant a person or a group that found their way over unknown land. This is often used today for an innovative way of doing something. The term was formerly used for pathfinder aircraft that mark targets for bombers, but more recently NASA and others have used the term for space missions and innovative software.

trailer

See **CARAVAN**.

train

See **TEACH**.

train of events – transmit

train of events

See **STRING (OF)**.

traitor

See **TREACHERY**.

tranquil

See **CALM**.

transcribe, transliterate

transcribe verb, means to transfer thoughts, notes, data or often recordings into full text: *I'll transcribe the tape more or less verbatim and then work in the other material.*

transliterate verb, means to write or print words or letters from one alphabet to another using corresponding letters: *If you transliterate the Danish word *sjørøver* into English it will be *sjoeroever*. If you translate it, it means 'pirate'.* See **TRANSLATE**.

transcript, academic record

transcript noun, means a written version of material noted in another medium: *a complete transcript of the video dialogue*. In an academic context, a **transcript** is an academic record. This term is common in AE and is used in many universities around the world.

academic record noun, means the official record of a student's work with courses they have taken and the marks/grades achieved: *You can obtain a copy of your academic record from the Student Services Centre or Student Registry Services.*

transfer, relocate, resettle

transfer verb, means to move from one organization or job to another, or to make someone else move within the same organization: *At the end of the year, the development team will be transferred to our Glasgow office.* Money, property, skills and phone calls are all transferred from one person to another. When travelling, **transfer** means to change to a new flight or take a bus to your hotel.

relocate verb, means to move to a different place: *The tax incentives are very attractive for businesses that relocate to Northern Ireland.* People can also be *relocated*: *Six families had to be relocated when the new bypass was built.*

resettle verb, means to go to live in a new country or new area, or to help people do this: *Syria secretly offered to resettle 300,000 refugees as part of a comprehensive settlement.* This word also means to settle again, and refers to people returning to an area that was formerly settled.

translate, interpret

translate verb, means to express the meaning of something that is in one language by means of another. This includes written as well as spoken language. The word is often used figuratively to mean convert: *Anyone who sought to translate their feelings into political activity soon found themselves in jail.*

interpret verb, means to *translate* a speech or discussion from one language to another orally as it is going on. In another sense it means to explain the meaning of something in simpler or more understandable terms: *People find it easier to interpret and take in pictures than words.* In a figurative sense it means to obtain meaning and understanding from something: *These early experiments were sometimes difficult to interpret.*

transliterate

See **TRANSCRIBE**.

translucent

See **TRANSPARENT**.

transmit, broadcast

transmit verb, means to send electrical signals containing messages or information. Although emails are *transmitted*, most people use the more informal term *send*. **Transmit** has a variety of other meanings connected with passing one thing on to another. These can be diseases or feelings such as fear or anxiety: *The survivors of the crash transmitted their joy at being rescued to the people watching on television.*

broadcast verb, means to transmit radio or TV programmes: *During the week the BBC took the opportunity to broadcast part of another pre-recorded interview.* The past tense, past participle and present tense are all spelt **broadcast**.

transparency, slide, overhead

transparency *noun*, means three things beside the quality of being transparent (see next entry). First, a sheet of plastic through which light can be shone to throw an image on to a large screen. Second, a transparent photograph that is printed on glass or plastic and can be viewed using a device such as a slide projector: *Avoid too many transparencies and talk to the audience, not to the screen.* Third, as an uncountable noun, it means the quality of being honest and easy to understand, especially when explaining an idea or policy: *The system will allow greater transparency and make clear how the extra funding will be spent.*

slide *noun*, in the context of photography means a mounted transparency that can be placed in a projector and viewed on a screen: *The whole family suffered two hours of John's holiday slides of Tenerife.*

overhead *noun*, means a transparency designed for use with an *overhead projector*. The term **overhead** often refers to the projector as well: *Let me use a couple of overheads, I will just find out how to turn the overhead on.* Some people use the term *overhead transparency* when referring to sheets of plastic film: *I have this presentation both on PowerPoint and overhead transparencies.*

Technology is overtaking these terms and most of the items referred to are now only found in digital form on a laptop. Even so, we refer to *transparencies, slides and overheads.*

transparent, translucent

transparent *adjective*, refers to something such as clear window glass that allows light through and the objects on the other side to be seen clearly: *The tiny eel was almost transparent, except for the jet black, pinprick eyes.* **Transparent** is also used figuratively to mean clear and understandable: *Our government will lay out a series of transparent measures.*

translucent *adjective*, refers to something that lets light pass through, such as frosted glass where the light can be seen, but no clear objects can be seen on the other side: *At this thickness most rock-forming silicate*

minerals are translucent. It can also mean very pale and delicate as in *her translucent skin.*

transport, transportation

transport *noun & verb*. As a noun, this means the system or means of conveying people and goods from place to place: *Cycling is a totally sustainable form of transport: it creates no pollution, and minimal congestion.* As a verb, **transport** means to convey things. Note the stress in the verb is on the second syllable.

transportation *noun*, means the system or means of transport for people and goods: *It would mean that British Gas would put a mileage rate on the transportation of gas.* This word also has a historical meaning: the act of sending convicts out of England to settle new territories: *The transportation of convicts to the colonies ended in 1868.* In AE, **transportation** corresponds to the BE use of *transport*.

transportable

See **PORTABLE**.

travel, journey, trip, tour, voyage

travel *noun & verb*. As a noun, this means the activity of travelling especially over long distances. As an uncountable noun, **travel** refers to types of movement like *air travel, business travel*, never to a specific trip. As a plural noun, *travels* means journeys to places far away, usually for pleasure: *'Travels with my Aunt'* (Graham Greene novel). As a verb, it means to make a long journey, especially abroad. Note that in BE, the verb forms are spelt *travelled* and *travelling*. In AE, the equivalent forms are spelt *traveled* and *traveling*.

journey *noun & verb*. As a noun, this means the act of travelling from one place to another especially when they are far apart: *We have a long journey in front of us through mountains and deserts.* A **journey** may also be short, if it is done regularly: *He only had a 15-minute journey to work.* In AE, *trip* is an alternative in this sense. As a verb, to **journey** means to *travel*. This is a literary word.

trip *noun*, means a *journey* to a specific destination, particularly for pleasure: *We only had time for day trips last summer.* As this term may be associated with pleasure, it is

treachery – trimester

common to use *business trip* to indicate a *journey* where pleasure was not the objective. Such trips are collectively called *business travel*.

tour *noun & verb*. As a noun, this means either a journey for pleasure where several places are visited; a thematic trip: *a tour of Shakespeare's England*; or a conducted visit to a tourist attraction: *The guided tour of Stratford-upon-Avon starts at 6 p.m.* **Tour** also has the idea of visiting and performing (for music) or playing (for sports) in several different places: *the All Blacks' tour of England*.

voyage *noun*, means a long journey in a spacecraft or ship: *The Greek-registered ship left Singapore on a voyage advertised as a 'cruise to nowhere'*. **Voyage** is a word typically used in writing, and *trip* is more usual in other contexts.

Note that *travel* puts the emphasis on general movement from place to place. *Journey* puts the emphasis on the activity of travelling, and *trip* puts the emphasis on where you are going or why you are going there.

treachery, treacherous, traitor, treason

treachery *noun*, means betrayal of a trust: *Selling the computer code was an act of treachery*.

treacherous *adjective*, refers to someone or something that is untrustworthy or dangerous: *Black ice is a treacherous road surface*.

traitor *noun*, means a person who betrays another person, a cause or a principle: *He was denounced as a traitor*. The related adjective *traitorous* is a formal word.

treason *noun*, is the legal term for the offence of betraying one's country: *It was a clear act of treason*. This is commonly termed *high treason*. The related adjectives are *treasonable* for an act or offence and *treasonous* for a person.

treaty, accord

treaty *noun*, means a formal written agreement between two or more governments or states: *NATO stands for the 'North Atlantic Treaty Organization'*. See **AGREEMENT**.

accord *noun*, often means a formal agreement between countries or groups, that is less formal than a treaty: *The general Peace Accord ended the country's 16-year civil war*.

treble, triple

treble *verb, adjective & noun*. As a verb, this means to become three times as large in size or number: *Land prices in some areas have trebled in a year*. As an adjective, it means consisting of three parts: *He bought a new treble-pronged fish hook*. As a noun it has various meanings in sport such as *Chelsea are heading for the treble* (meaning success in three competitions), and it means the relatively high pitch in music: *Turning down the treble helps to control fuzziness in the violin sound*. In music, a **treble** is a child with a high voice (especially a boy), and the **treble** is the top line of music sung by the child.

triple *verb, adjective & noun*. As a verb, this means to increase by three times as much: *We have tripled our production*. As an adjective, **triple** means three times as much: *Average earnings there are triple those in Britain*; or being in three parts: *a triple-glazed window*; a *triple rhyme* means a rhyme using three syllables. *Triple time*, in music, means having three beats in a bar. As a noun, **triple** refers to a set of three things, such as a betting system demanding that the first three horses in a race be placed in the specified order.

The verb forms overlap but the use of *triple* is more common in AE and many BE speakers would use the verb *treble*: *We have trebled our production*. Note how *treble* and *triple* have very different meanings in music.

trendy

See **POPULAR**.

trilateral

See **UNILATERAL**.

trillion

See **BILLION**.

trimester

See **TERM**.

trip

See **TRAVEL**.

triple

See **TREBLE**.

troop, troupe

troop *noun*, means a group of soldiers or more generally people or animals: *UN peacekeeping troops are deployed in the region*.

troupe *noun*, is a group of touring actors or dancers: *The Chippendales troupe is currently on tour in Europe*.

trooper, trouper

trooper *noun*, means a soldier in the cavalry: *The mounted troopers filed past the visiting president*. In AE, a **trooper** can mean a police officer.

trouper *noun*, means a professional actor or entertainer with long experience. Informally it also means a dependable person: *Frank was a real trouper*.

truck

See **LORRY**.

true, truly

See **REAL**.

truth, truthfulness, veracity

truth *uncountable noun*, means the state or quality of being true, based on fact and not imagined: *The truth is, I look upon both candidates in the same light*. **Truth** is also a countable noun with a plural, but this usage is less common: *We hold these truths to be self-evident . . .* (US Declaration of Independence).

truthfulness *uncountable noun*, means the honesty of a person: *You can always rely on the truthfulness of his answers*. It can also mean the facts about something in a statement: *No one could question the truthfulness of the statement he made in court*.

veracity *uncountable noun*, means the accuracy and truth of something: *The reporter checked the veracity of the claim made by the opposition*. This is a formal word.

try

See **ENDEAVOUR**.

tumour, tumor

tumour *noun*, means a swelling caused by abnormal growth of cells in or on a part of the body where they should not be. This is the BE spelling.

tumor *noun*, is the AE spelling of *tumour*.

turnip, swede, rutabaga

turnip *noun*, is a general term for a group of root vegetables. In some parts of Britain, it contrasts with *swede*, a large vegetable (*Brassica rutabaga*) with yellowish flesh. The **turnip** (*Brassica rapa*) is smaller, about the size of an onion, with white flesh. In other parts of Britain, **turnip** means both *Brassica rutabaga* and *Brassica rapa*.

swede *noun*, is a large round root vegetable: *The vegetarian diet of swede, potatoes and beans provided some healthy meals*. This is called a *turnip* in some parts of Britain.

rutabaga *rootäbäygä* /ru:tə'beigə/ *noun*, is the AE term for a *swede*.

turn King's/Queen's evidence

See **PLEA BARGAINING**.

turnpike

See **AMERICAN ROAD TYPES**.

tuxedo

See **DINNER JACKET**.

two weeks

See **FORTNIGHT**.

type in

See **KEY IN**.

type of

See **KIND OF**.

typhoon

See **HURRICANE**.

typical, characteristic, usual, customary

typical *adjective*, refers to something distinctive about a particular type of person or thing: *It*

T

typo – tyre

was as we hoped for – a typical English Sunday lunch. **Typical** also refers to things that are normal: *Table 4 is an example of a typical day's food intake.* See **DISTINCTIVE (DISTINCT)**.

characteristic *adjective & noun.* As an adjective, this means typical of a particular person, group, place or thing: *A refusal to linger is often characteristic of the true professional.* As a noun, it means a feature of someone or something that is typical and easily recognizable. It is often used in the plural: *The distinguishing characteristics of this car were its doors that opened upwards.*

usual *adjective,* means normal or typical regarding what is habitual or occurs frequently: *The British got there in their usual resourceful way.* The phrase *business as usual* implies carrying on as if no difficulties had occurred, such as after a fire.

customary *adjective,* refers to things that are usual and typical of specific social groups or situations: *He was beginning to feel unaccountably cheerful despite the disappointment of missing his customary pint of beer.* **Customary** is more formal than *usual*.

These words are very close in meaning but *typical* is something normal and *characteristic* can refer to an attribute or quality.

typo, misprint

typo *noun,* means a typographical error caused by a slip of the hand when typing, but

does not extend to a mistake caused by the ignorance of the writer. Examples include poor word division between lines of type, such as 'legends' split into 'leg-ends', and using the wrong font or case. The word **typo** is used informally and often too broadly to include mistakes in books which do not come from the printers.

misprint *noun,* means a mistake in spelling when a document or book is printed. One **misprint** to avoid is misspelling *misspell* as *mispell*.

To indicate that the mistake in a text you are quoting was in the original, it is common practice to write [sic] after it. See **SIC (N.B.)**.

'Ms Gray is Head of Department Six, and not as reported in our June Newsletter, Department Sex.'
(Staff magazine)

tyre, tire

tyre *noun,* means a rubber covering around a wheel. This is the spelling in BE: *Snow tyres may have studs fitted in parts of the world where there is a long icy season.*

tire *noun,* is the AE spelling of *tyre*. Note that the verb *to tire* means to become weary. This is the only spelling in BE and AE.

Spelling

tar <u>iff</u>	Note single -r- and double -ff
tempo <u>r</u> al	Note the -o-
tempo <u>r</u> ary	Note the -o- and that -r- comes twice
the <u>ir</u> s	No apostrophe
therefo <u>r</u> e	Note the final -e
thie <u>f</u>	-i- before -e-
thres <u>h</u> old	Note that there is only one -h- in the middle of this word
tin <u>s</u> el	Note the ending: -sel
tomato <u>es</u>	Note the ending with -e-
traditio <u>n</u> al	Note the single -d-
tranquill <u>l</u> ity	Note the -ll- in British English
tru <u>l</u> y	There is no 'e' in this word
tyran <u>n</u> y	Note the single -r- but double-nn-