

Business Vocabulary: Confusing Words

accept / except

accept = *to receive*

Please accept my apology.

except = *to exclude; other than; if it were not for*

The admission fee is \$10, but children are excepted.

It has been said that democracy is the worst form of government except all the others that have been tried. (Winston Churchill)

affect / effect

affect = *to influence or to touch the emotions* (verb)

The weather will affect our picnic plans.

effect = *a result* (noun); *to produce or to cause* (verb)

Hate and force cannot be in just a part of the world without having an effect on the rest of it. (Eleanor Roosevelt)

The committee vote will effect true change in the company.

complementary / complimentary

complementary = *completing*

Google has placed its faith in data, while Apple worships the power of design. This dichotomy made the two companies complementary. (Ben Parr)

complimentary = *flattering, free*

He received eight complimentary tickets to the conference.

cite / sight / site

cite = *to mention*

We always cite our sources when we write reports.

sight = *to see or a view*

Have you ever seen a more beautiful sight?

site = *a location*

The construction crew visited the site for the new administration building.

envelop / envelope

envelop = *to cover completely or to surround*

The smoke will envelop the room quickly if a fire starts in the kitchen.

envelope = *a folded paper container for a letter; a covering*

We need to order more envelopes before we begin our new mail campaign.

incite / insight

incite = *to urge to action*

His speech almost incited a riot in London last week.

insight = *an understanding of the true nature of something; an instance of understanding*

A moment's insight is sometimes worth a life's experience. (Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr.)

moral / morale

moral = refers to ethical conduct; also *the lesson of a story*

It is curious that physical courage should be so common in the world and moral courage so rare.

(Mark Twain)

morale = refers to a mood or spirit

Morale was low after the layoffs.

principal / principle

principal = *most important, also part of a loan*

It isn't making mistakes that critical; it's correcting them and getting on with the principal task.

(Donald Rumsfeld)

principle = *rule, guideline, fundamental truth*

In matters of style, swim with the current; in matters of principle, stand like a rock.

(Thomas Jefferson)

sale / sell

sale = *act of selling; market; transfer of property for a price; to be sold (for sale)*

Who will oversee the sale of our old office furniture?

sell = *to exchange goods, services, etc., for money; to deceive*

The superior man understands what is right; the inferior man understands what will sell.

(Confucius)

stationary / stationery

stationary = *not moving*

The chairs were stationary, so we could not rearrange the seating in the room.

Stationery = *writing paper and envelopes*

We printed green and yellow company logos on our stationery.

their / there / they're

their = possessive form of *they*

They will deliver their papers at the conference in San Diego next month.

there = refers to location or signals that the subject will follow the verb

Our office was there for 32 years.

There were several reasons for our hiring a new advertising agency.

they're = contraction of *they are*

They're ready to give the presentation this afternoon.

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