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Homophones Decoded

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The English language is full of confusing words – words that sound the same but are spelt differently! Of course, there meanings are poles apart, but that does not mean that people do not often get confused. We all have had our share of 'oops' moments, when we get confused between similar, but strictly not same, words.Such words are called 'homophones' – identifying and understanding such words is necessary, if you wish to speak correct and fluent English. The number of homophones is plenty; however let us discuss a few:

Affect-Effect: These words make to the top of this list because not only do they 'sound' the same but also their meanings are very close. That is why most people do not even realize that these are two individual words. The word 'affect' means to 'have an influence'. For example, the whole office was affected due to the expense curtailment. On the other hand, Effect pertains to a 'consequence' – 'The effects of the economic meltdown are devastating.'

Αχχεσσ–Εξχεσσ: The sound of these words is same, and when you hear either of the words, it is difficult to deduce which one is being used. When you use 'access', it means that you have the referred subject 'in your proximity'. For example, 'Every place on Earth today has access to the internet'. Excess, this word means 'abundance, surplus, or more than required'. One example for this is, "this bill is in excess to the clothes I purchased!"

Ωεατηερ–Ωηετηερ: We all know that weather is used in reference to climate, like 'Delhi has an extreme weather'. Whether, sounds same as weather, but it is used in the sense of selecting an option from the many available – "I have not decided whether I will go to Delhi or not."

Αδϖιχε–Αδϖισε: These two words are variations of the same word. 'Advice' is the noun form, while 'advise' is the verb form. 'He gives me good advice' and 'he always advises me nicely', both these sentences mean the same thing, but which word you use depends on the sentence structure.

Waist-Waste: Can you make out the difference when you pronounce both these words? No? That is why it has made to this list. The only way you can understand which one is being used is by understanding the context. Waist is a body part, above the hips. Like if you are complimenting someone, you say, "You have such a toned waist!' Waste is a term for useless stuff. The perfect example for this is 'wastebasket'.

Φαρτηερ Φυρτηερ The only difference between these words is an alphabet, and still these two words are completely different in meaning and usage. Farther refers to a geographical distance, which is measurable. For example, 'don't walk farther than that pole to reach her home.' Further is a metaphoric work. For example, 'Do not argue any further, it is futile.' Here is an easy tip to distinguish between the two – farther has 'far', so you know that when you say farther, you are referring to distance.

• **Lie – Lay**: How often have you heard someone going, 'I feel dizzy, I have been wanting to lay down for a while.' Did you spot the mistake here? Chances are that many people won't even realize that there is a mistake in the sentence. The mistake here is that the word 'lay' is used wrongly in the sentence. The word here should be 'lie'. Lay is used only in reference to an object: lay down the carpet. Lie is a verb, an action. So, you can 'lie' down on the bed, while you lay down a mat!

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