HOMONYMS and other Frequently Confused Words

Homonym: a word that sounds the same as another word, but possesses a different meaning.

Commonly confused words:

Affect vs. Effect

Affect =
  Verb: to influence
Ex. The movie affected her perception about the war.

  Noun: feeling or emotion, especially made evident through body language
Ex. His affect suggested intense anger and frustration.

Effect =
  Verb: to bring about (usually some sort of change)
Ex. The large number of accidents effected a change in the traffic pattern.

  Noun: a consequence or result
Ex. Fatigue is an effect of stress.

All ready vs. Already

All ready = a phrase that means ‘to be prepared’
Ex. We are all ready to go to Disney World tomorrow!

Already = ‘beforehand,’ ‘previously,’ ‘prior to some specified time’
Ex. Brad and Angelina had already left for Africa when their agents received a call about a new movie deal.

  = ‘now,’ ‘so soon’
Ex. I can’t believe it’s midnight already!

All right vs. Alright

All right = ‘satisfactory,’ ‘safe,’ or ‘all correct’
Ex. Ordering pizza tonight is **all right** with me! I think my answers on the test were **all right**.

**Alright** = means the same thing as ‘all right,’ but is much more informal, and is not recommended for use in academic writing.
Ex. I guess that chair will look **alright** in the living room.

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**All together** vs. **Altogether**

**All together** = ‘in a group’
Ex. The family was **all together** for Thanksgiving this year.

**Altogether** = ‘completely’ or ‘totally’
Ex. Lori **altogether** forgot about her dentist appointment this morning.

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**Definitely** vs. **Defiantly**

**Definitely**= ‘positively,’ ‘absolutely’
Ex. James **definitely** needs to get rid of that ugly couch.

**Defiantly**= describes an action that is performed in a challenging or rebellious manner
Ex. Lisa **defiantly** walked out of class when the teacher told her to be quiet.

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**It’s vs. Its:**

**It’s** = *it is*
Ex. It’s raining right now.

**Its**= possessive pronoun (shows ownership)
Ex. The car is due for its inspection.

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**Farther vs. Further**

These words can usually be used interchangeably, but there are some general differences.

**Farther**= used to indicate **physical** distance or advancement
Ex. The bank is **farther** from our house than originally thought.

**Further**= used to indicate **abstract** distance or advancement (sometimes in regards to time)
Ex. The more I watch TV, the **further** behind I get in my studies.
Lie vs. Lay

Lie = verb that needs no direct object
   Ex. I am going to lie down and take a nap.

Lay = verb that needs a direct object (i.e. you lay something down)
   Ex. You can lay your books on the table.
       (direct object)

To make it even more confusing, ‘lay’ is the past tense of lie. Here is a chart to help you remember this all!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>Infinitive</th>
<th>Past Tense</th>
<th>Past Participle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>lie</td>
<td>To lie</td>
<td>lay</td>
<td>lain (i.e. had lain)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lay</td>
<td>To lay</td>
<td>laid</td>
<td>laid (i.e. had laid)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Than vs. Then

Than = used as a conjunction to indicate comparison
   Ex. She is much kinder than her brother.

Then = ‘next,’ ‘in that case’
   Ex. Then, we decided to go to the park.
   Ex. If you want to be a teacher, then you should volunteer at a school.

There vs. Their vs. They’re

There = indicates a position, place, or that something exists / can be seen
   Ex. There are ten people in class today.
       We are having the party over there.

Their = possessive pronoun (shows ownership)
   Ex. Their new dog is adorable!

They’re = they are
   Ex. Today, they’re going to the park.

(Hint: Unless you are indicating ownership or forming the contraction for ‘they are,’ you will use ‘there.’)
**Threw vs. Through**

*Threw* = the past tense of ‘throw’
Ex. Derek Jeter *threw* the ball to Robinson Cano.

*Through* = preposition that indicates passage from one point or boundary to the another
Ex. We drove *through* the mountains to get to the park.

(Hint: unless you are writing about the physical act of *throwing*, then ‘through’ is the correct form to use).

**Who vs. Whom**

*Who* = used for the subject case (performs an action in a sentence)
Ex. Do you know *who* is running in the race?
(i.e. *who* runs)

*Whom* = used for the object case (receives an action in a sentence)
Ex. To *whom* should I address the invitation?
(i.e. address to *whom*)

**Who’s vs. Whose**

*Who’s* = *who is*
Ex. Do you know *who’s* coming out with us tonight?

*Whose* = possessive pronoun (indicates ownership)
Ex. *Whose* dog is this?

**You’re vs. Your**

*You’re* = *you are*
Ex. We will watch the dog while *you’re* visiting your friend in California.

*Your* = possessive pronoun (shows ownership)
Ex. I saw *your* grandmother on her motorcycle today.

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