

Commonly Confused Words

The Five Most Common Decisions

1. It's vs Its vs Its'

- It's = It is.
 - Example: It's a sunny day outside today.
- Its = possessive of "It".
 - Example: The dog brought its tennis ball to the park.
- Its' = NOT AN ACTUAL WORD!

2. Who vs Whom

- **Who** refers to the subject of a sentence or phrase.
 - Example: The flight attendant who gave me a free bag of peanuts is one of my new favorite people.
 - Example: Who wants french fries?
- **Whom** refers to a direct object, indirect object, or object of a preposition (Always use whom after a preposition, by whom, from whom, of whom, etc).
 - Example: Our new dog walker, whom I met yesterday, seems really nice.
 - Example: Whom did you ask to go with you to the movies?
 - Example: To whom did you send the gift?

TIP: If you can rework a sentence or phrase that contains who or whom into a question, and the answer to that question starts with a "he or she", then who is the correct word to use. If the answer includes "him or her", then whom is the correct word to use.

Example: The flight attendant **who** gave me a free bag of peanuts is one of my new favorite people.

Question: **Who** gave me a free bag of peanuts?

Answer: **He** gave me a free bag of peanuts. → who is correct!

3. Than vs Then

- Use than to compare two things.
 - Example: The polar bear is bigger than the grizzly bear.
- Use then to refer to time or chronological order of two events.
 - Example: The polar bear went to the barn then to the house.

4. There vs They're vs Their

- They're = They are
 - Example: They're going to the store.
- Their = Possessive
 - Example: This is their team.
- There = Location
 - Example: The boy over there is tired

5. Effect vs Affect

- An effect is a result or consequence of something. (Usually a noun)
 - Example: The effect was catastrophic.
- An affect is to have an impression, influence, or effect on something. (Usually a verb)
 - Example: The catastrophe greatly affected society.

Less Common Decisions

1. Whose vs Who's

- Whose = possessive
 - Example: Whose towel is this?
- Who's = Who is
 - Example: Who is the person that owns this towel?

2. Site vs Cite

- Site is a specified place.
 - Example: The construction site was extremely large.
 - Example: The site of the crime is on the other side of town.
- Cite means to quote, give sources, or to mention formally. (Short for citation)
 - Example: The band cited the song as a major influence.

3. Many vs Much and Fewer vs Less

- Many and Fewer refer to countable things.
 - Example: The boy had fewer dollars than the girl.
 - Example: Many people went to the football game.
- Much and Less refer to uncountable things.
 - Example: The boy had less swagger than the girl.
 - Example: People have too much time on their hands.

4. Lay vs Lie

- Lie is used when the object itself is laying itself down.
 - Example: He is going to lie down on the couch.
- Lay is used when the object is being laid down.
 - Example: She lays him down on the couch.

NOTE: The various tenses of lay and lie are incredibly confusing due to overlapping words. For example, the past tense of lie is lay! Due to this fact, the only forms of the two words test takers need to know are lay vs lie and laying vs lying.