

Super Handy Grammar Reference Guide

Don't feel like a professional when you write? Fake it with flawless grammar!

Who and Whom: *Who* is always doing the action, *whom* receives it. So it's *who* before any verbs (action words), such as "*Who* rocks the house?" or "*Who* went to the pond to hunt ducks?" whereas it would be "To *whom* should I address this letter?"

Whose and Who's: *Who's* is simply a contraction for "Who is", such as "Who's letting you borrow a yacht?" On the other hand, one utilizes *whose* for sentences like, "*Whose* yacht did you borrow?" or "*Whose* responsibility is it to order geraniums?"

Its and It's: *It's* is simply a contraction for "it is". That is the only time one uses *it's*. *Its* is the possessive. Ex: "The cat licked *it's* paw" wouldn't make any sense: "The cat licked it is paw"? Nope, "The cat licked *its* paw." ("*It's* going to be a while before the car loses *its* shine".)

Affect and Effect: *Affect* is the verb, *effect* is the noun. So, if you want to *affect* something, make sure you're ready for what the *effect* will be. "AmeriCorps members *affect* change; change is the *effect* we want our members to have."

Fewer and Less: One uses *fewer* when the item is plural with an "s" (anything you can physically count) and *less* when it is either a large mass or a concept. One has *fewer* shoes, fewer friends, fewer options. One has *less* clothing, *less* happiness, *less* power. *Fewer* dollars, *less* money.

Further and Farther: *Farther* is for actual distances, *further* is for distances you can't measure. You'll go *further* in life if you walk a mile *farther* in someone else's shoes.

There, Their, and They're: *They're* is the contraction for "they are"—"They're heading out of town". *Their* is the possessive, so it's *their* jeep, *their* prerogative, *their* apple pie. *There* is a place ("Look! Over *there*—it's Underdog!") and also used for sentences like "*There* are issues that need to be addressed". (Or, to wit, "*They're* taking all *their* possessions and heading over *there*.")

Two, To, Too: *Two*, of course, is the number. *Too* is used in *two* instances: as a word similar to "also" ("I want to go *too*!") and as a precursor to many or few ("There are *too* many aspects of this to explain"). *To* is used most often, in many different ways, as a preposition and as part of infinitive verbs, such as "When I go *to* the store today, I have *to* buy a rubber duckie."

Accept/Except: *Accept* means you receive something, or agree to something. *Except* means "everything but". So, anyone would *accept* a gift of a new truck, *except* Jay, who prefers a Ferrari.

Than/Then: *Than* is a word only used in comparisons, such as "Vermont is better *than* Massachusetts." *Then* is used for time, such as "First we'll dance the tango, *then* we'll dance the cha-cha."

Principal/Principle: *Principal* means first, or most important (therefore, it also means the head of a school): "Our *principal* concern is that we retrieve our daschund." *Principle* means a belief: "I declined to buy anything made in a sweatshop on *principle*."

Irregardless/Regardless: *Irregardless* is not a word. Never use it.

There's and There are: It has become commonplace in conversation to say "There's things we need to look at on this case" or "There's ways around the problem". But if you eliminate that contraction and translate: "*There is things we need to look at.*" "*There is ways around the problem.*" It makes no sense. Say "There are" when using the plural.

Unsure of a grammar rule not listed here? Conduct a Google search that includes the questionable terms plus the word *usage* or *grammar*, such as: "its it's usage" and -- *Voila!* -- you'll receive a list of websites explaining the rule. EnglishPlus.com seems to have concise explanations.