

# Confusing words & false friends 1

**Confusing words** are two or more words which:

(a) have a similar meaning to each other but which are used in a different way

or

(b) are related to the same topic, but have a different meaning

or

(c) look similar, but have a different meaning.

**False friends** are words in English which have a similar-looking word in another language, but which have a different meaning.

Complete the following sentence pairs with the appropriate word.

1. **aboard / abroad**

More and more people go abroad for their holiday.

In 2002, she became the first woman to travel aboard the space shuttle *Discovery*.

2. **action / activity**

We decided to take immediate ..... when we realised there was a problem.

The environmental changes in the area are the result of human .....

3. **advice / advise**

Can you ..... me on the best course of action to take?

He offered me some excellent .....

4. **affect / effect**

Diverting the course of the river will have a major ..... on the local ecosystem.

Frequent traffic jams in the suburbs seriously ..... journey times into the city.

5. **appreciable / appreciative**

Widening the road made an ..... difference to the flow of traffic.

The applause at the end of the concert was warm and .....

6. **avoid / prevent**

Rapid international action managed to ..... an environmental disaster from taking place.

There are areas in the city that are wise to ..... after dark.

7. **beside / besides**

The company's main office is ..... the railway station.

..... their regular daytime job, many people do extra work in the evening.

8. **briefly / shortly**

..... before the earthquake began, many animals were seen to be behaving in an unusual manner.

She spoke ..... but passionately about the need to help those in developing countries.

# Confusing words & false friends 1

## 9. canal / channel

A ..... system joined the two main rivers, which made transporting goods much quicker.  
When television first became popular in the early 1950s, there was only one .....

## 10. conscientious / conscious

Most people are ..... of the need to protect the environment.  
..... workers should be rewarded for their hard work.

## 11. considerable / considerate

In my opinion, some people are not very ..... of those around them.  
A ..... amount of money was spent on developing the product.

## 12. continual / continuous

The computer system has given us ..... problems ever since we installed it. Some days it works, other days it doesn't.  
The ..... noise from the new motorway has forced many people to move.

## 13. control / inspect

New teachers often find it difficult to ..... their classes.  
Environmental health inspectors regularly ..... commercial kitchens for cleanliness, especially those in restaurants.

## 14. criticism / objection

I have no ..... to people using their mobile phones on buses or trains.  
Plans for the new stadium have attracted fierce ..... from local people.

## 15. damage / harm / injury

He suffered a serious ..... which needed immediate hospital treatment.  
The low levels of dangerous chemicals in the river were enough to cause ..... to aquatic life.  
A lot of ..... was caused to buildings along the coast during the storm.

## 16. during / for / while

The college closes ..... two weeks at the end of December.  
He died ..... trying to cross the desert alone.  
Many creatures stay underground ..... daylight hours.

## 17. however / moreover

The plan was good in theory. ...., in practice it was extremely difficult to implement.  
The plan was excellent. ...., it was clear from the beginning that it was going to attract a lot of interest.

## 18. injured / wounded

I believe that we should do more to help and support soldiers who have been ..... in combat.  
Several workers were ..... when the drilling platform collapsed.

# Confusing words & false friends 2

Complete the following sentence pairs with the appropriate word or phrase.

1. **job / work**

Everybody has the right to a decent ..... with good pay.

During the economic recession, a lot of people found themselves out of .....

2. **lay / lie**

If you're suffering from dehydration, you should drink plenty of water and sit or ..... down for a while.

Before you begin the experiment, you should ..... a large plastic sheet on the ground.

3. **look at / watch**

We need to ..... the situation carefully over the next few weeks and see how things develop.

We need to ..... the problem carefully and decide if there is anything we can do about it.

4. **loose / lose**

Some people are very competitive and hate to ..... a game or competition.

The surface is mainly composed of ..... soil and small stones.

5. **make / cause**

The noise from traffic outside the school can ..... it hard to hear what the teacher is saying.

Hurricanes ..... widespread damage in urban areas.

6. **nature / countryside**

Thousands of ..... lovers head for the national parks every weekend.

I'd rather live in the ..... than in a city.

7. **per cent / percentage**

It is a myth that only ten ..... of Americans hold a passport.

Only a small ..... of land is privately owned.

8. **permission / permit**

I'm afraid we can't ..... photography in the museum.

We received ..... to attend the meeting, as long as we didn't interrupt.

9. **personal / personnel**

My own ..... view is that professional football players are paid far too much.

The company was in trouble until there was a change of ..... on the management team.

10. **possibility / chance**

We might go to Spain for our field trip. Another ..... is that we'll go to Italy instead.

If we act now, we have a good ..... of finding a cure for the disease.

# Confusing words & false friends 2

## 11. practice / practise

It's important to ..... your English whenever possible.

I think I need more ..... before I take the exam.

## 12. priceless / worthless

..... paintings by artists like Van Gogh and Rembrandt should not be in the hands of private collectors.

As inflation spiralled out of control, paper money suddenly became almost .....

## 13. principal / principle

Many people refuse to eat meat on .....

She was appointed University ..... in 2009.

The country's ..... food products are coffee and sugar.

I believe in the ..... that healthcare should be free for everyone.

## 14. problem / trouble

At night, the streets are full of people fighting and generally causing .....

I was wondering if you could help me with a little ..... I'm having.

## 15. process / procession

The highlight of the carnival is a huge ..... along the town's main street.

In some cases, applying for a visa can be a long and frustrating .....

## 16. raise / rise

As prices ....., demand usually drops.

In response to the oil crisis, most airlines had to ..... their fares.

## 17. remember / remind

I can ..... my first day at school really well.

Language teachers often ..... their students that the best way to remember new words is to use them as much as possible.

## 18. respectable / respectful

We all listened in ..... silence as she outlined her plans for the museum's future.

Everybody wants to bring their children up in a ..... neighbourhood.

## 19. tolerable / tolerant

People need to be more ..... of their neighbours, and not complain every time they make too much noise.

The local authorities say that the noise from passing trains is ....., but many living near the railway lines disagree.

## 20. treat / cure

Many hospitals are so understaffed that they are refusing to ..... patients with minor injuries.

The new drug was unable to ..... the disease, and hundreds died as a result.