



Spelling: *Accept/Except* and *Affect/Effect*

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Errors in writing that involve sound-alike words (homophones) are known as "wrong word" errors. Such errors are more significant than simple spelling mistakes, since they involve word-level confusion, not merely incorrect spelling of the correct word. Two common sources of wrong word errors are the homophone pairs *accept/except* and *affect/effect*. For more information on sound-alike words, see our handout on this topic at http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/grammar/g_spelhomo.html.

Accept and Except

Meanings for the most common uses:

ac•cept (transitive verb) [Middle English, from Middle French *accepter*, from Latin *acceptare*, frequentative of *accipere* to receive, from *ad* - toward + *capere* to take]

1a: to receive willingly <*accept* a gift> b: to be able or designed to take or hold (something applied or added) <a surface that will not *accept* ink>

2: to give admittance or approval <to *accept* her as one of the group>

3a: to endure without protest or reaction <*accept* poor living conditions> b: to regard as proper, normal, or inevitable <the idea is widely *accepted*> c: to recognize as true; believe <refused to *accept* the explanation>

4a: to make a favorable response to <*accept* an offer> b: to agree to undertake (a responsibility) <*accept* a job>

5: to assume an obligation to pay; also: to take in payment <we don't *accept* personal checks>

1. ex•cept (preposition) [Originally past participle; see meaning 3, below] with the exclusion or exception of <open daily *except* Sundays>

2. ex•cept (conjunction)

1: on any other condition than that; unless <you face punishment *except* if you repent>

2: with the following exception <was inaccessible *except* by boat>

3: only (often followed by that) <I would go *except* that it's too far>

Meanings for less common uses:

3. ex•cept (transitive verb) [Latin *exceptus*, past participle of *excipere* to take or draw out, to except; *ex* - out + *capere* to take]

To take or leave out (anything) from a number or a whole; to exclude; to omit <if we only *except* the unfitnes of the judge, the trial was a perfect enactment of justice> <Adam and Eve were forbidden to touch the *excepted* tree (past participle)>

You can try exercises on using *accept* and *except* correctly at http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/grammar/g_spellprobEX1.html.

Affect and Effect

Meanings for the most common uses:

Affect

1. af•fect (transitive verb) [Middle English, from *affectus*, past participle of *afficere*]

to produce an effect upon, as a: to produce a material influence upon or alteration in <paralysis *affected* his limbs> b: to act upon (as a person or a person's mind or feelings) so as to bring about a response; influence

Effect

1. ef•fect (noun) [Middle English, from Middle French & Latin; Middle French, from Latin *effectus*, from *efficere* to bring about, from *ex* - out (of) + *facere* to make, do]

1a: purport; intent <the *effect* of their statement was to incite anger> b: basic meaning; essence <her argument had the *effect* of a plea for justice>

2: something that inevitably follows an antecedent (as a cause or agent) <environmental

devastation is one *effect* of unchecked industrial expansion>
3: an outward sign; appearance <the makeup created the *effect* of old age on their faces>
4: accomplishment; fulfillment <the *effect* of years of hard work>
5: power to bring about a result; influence <the content itself of television is therefore less important than its *effect*>
6 plural: movable property; goods <personal *effects*>
7a: a distinctive impression <the color gives the *effect* of being warm> b: the creation of a desired impression <her tears were purely for *effect*> c (1): something designed to produce a distinctive or desired impression, usually used in plural (2) plural: *special effects*
8: the quality or state of being operative; operation <the law goes into *effect* next week>

in effect: in substance; virtually <the committee agreed to what was *in effect* a reduction in the hourly wage>
to the effect: with the meaning <issued a statement *to the effect* that he would resign>

Meanings for less common uses:

Affect:

2. af•fect (transitive verb)

1: to make a display of liking or using; cultivate <*affect* a worldly manner>
2: to put on a pretense of; feign <*affect* indifference, though deeply hurt>

3. af•fect (noun) [pronunciation: stress on first syllable, unlike verb forms of this word]

the conscious subjective aspect of an emotion considered apart from bodily changes <he displayed a distressing lack of *affect*>

Effect

2. ef•fect (transitive verb)

1: to cause to come into being <the citizens were able to *effect* a change in government policy>
2a: to bring about often by surmounting obstacles; accomplish <*effect* a settlement of a dispute>
b: to put into operation <the duty of the legislature to *effect* the will of the citizens>

Usage: The confusion of the verbs *affect* and *effect* not only is quite common but has a long history. The verb *effect* was used in place of *affect* (1, above) as early as 1494 and in place of *affect* (2, above) as early as 1652. If you think you want to use the verb *effect* but are not certain, check the definitions here. The noun *affect* is sometimes mistakenly used for the noun *effect*. Except when your topic is psychology, you will seldom need the noun *affect*.

You can try an exercise on using *affect* and *effect* correctly at http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/grammar/g_spelprobEX2.html.

The following information must remain intact on every handout printed for distribution.

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