

Homographs: words that are spelled the same

Homographs are words that have the same spelling but have different pronunciation and meaning. In the examples here, the pronunciation is shown at the end of each example.

bow

The actors came back on stage and took a bow. /bəʊ/

He learned to hunt with a bow and arrow.

UK /bəʊ/ US /boʊ/

close

Close your eyes and count to ten.

UK /kləʊz/ US /kloʊz/

Please keep close to the path, it's easy to get lost.

UK /kləʊs/ US /kloʊs/

content

Soft drinks have a high sugar content.

UK /'kɒn.tent/ US /'kɔːn.tent/

I was content just to stay at home and read. /kən'tent/

contract

Your muscles will contract if you get cold.

/kən'trækt/

The new export contract is worth £16 million.

UK /'kɒn.trækt/ US /'kɑːn.trækt/

desert

He was planning to desert his family and go abroad. UK /dɪ'zɜːt/ US /dɪ'zɜːrt/

It hasn't rained in this part of the desert for years. /'dez.ət/

lead

Just follow the signs and they will lead you to the exit. /liːd/

Gold is heavier than lead. /led/

minute

Can I speak to you for a minute, Mr Trent? /'mɪnɪt/

We've got a small house with a minute garden.

UK /maɪ'njuːt/ US /maɪ'nuːt/

object

This small stone object is over 5000 years old.

UK /'ɒb.dʒɪkt/ US /'ɑːb.dʒɪkt/

I strongly object to these cuts in public spending. /əb'dʒekt/

project

The housing project will create 5000 new homes.

UK /'prɒdʒ.ekt/ US /'praɪ.dʒekt/

He's trying to project a more confident image. /prə'dʒekt/

refuse

I won't do it – I absolutely refuse! /rɪ'fjuːz/

Put empty bottles here and other refuse in the bin. /'ref.juːs/

row

I had a blazing row with my girlfriend last night. /rəʊ/

I looked quickly along the row of books.

UK /rəʊ/ US /roʊ/

tear

She noticed a tear in the corner of his eye.

UK /tɪə/ US /tɪr/

To open the packet, tear along the dotted line. UK /teə/ US /ter/

used

There used to be a farm here, years ago. /juːst/

Explosives were used to enter the building /juːzɪd/

wind

Wind speeds reached 102mph last night.

/wɪnd/

You have to wind the handle to the left.

/waɪnd/

wound

He wound the rope around his arm.

/waʊnd/

In the fight, one young man received a knife wound. /wuːnd/

Homophones – words that sound the same

Homophones are words that sound the same but have a different meaning and spelling. For example:

*My **son** is a doctor*

*The **sun** is really hot today.*

The common homophones on this page are grouped according to the sound that is spelled differently. Words marked *UK* only sound similar in British English. If words are in dark type (e.g. **grate** – **great**) they are common causes of mistakes for learners.

i:

bean – been
 be – bee
 feat – feet
 flea – flee
 heel – he'll – heal
 leak – leek
 meat – meet
 peace – piece
 peak – peek
 peal – peel
 reed – read
 sea – see
 seam – seem
 seen – scene
 steal – steel
 suite – sweet
 weak – week
 weave – we've

UK ɔ: US ɔ:ɪ

board – bored
 caught – court *UK*
 coarse – course
 hoarse – horse
 sauce – source *UK*
 saw – soar *UK*
 sort – sought *UK*
 warn – worn

eɪ

bale – bail
 brake – break
grate – great

male – mail
 pain – pane
 pair – pear
 pray – prey
 rain – reign – rein
 sale – sail
 slay – sleigh
 stake – steak
 Sunday – sundae
 tale – tail
 wail – whale
 wait – weight
 waste – waist
 way – weigh

UK aʊ US oʊ

groan – grown
hole – whole
know – no
 loan – lone
 road – rode – rowed
 role – roll
 row – roe
 sew – so
 sole – soul

ə

altar – alter
 currant – current
 gorilla – guerrilla
 idol – idle
 manner – manor
 miner – minor

aɪ

aisle – I'll – isle
 aye – eye – I
 buy – by – bye
 dye – die
 hi – high
 hire – higher
 rye – wry
 sight – site
right – write
 tyre – tire

UK eə US ɛr

air – heir
 fair – fare
 bare – bear
 pair – pear
 stair – stare
there – they're – their
 ware – wear – where

u:

blew – blue
 flew – flu – flue
 threw – through
to – too – two