

What Is a Homophone?

As mentioned above, sets of words like “you’re” and “your” are called **homophones**. The root of that word, *homo-*, means “same,” and the root *phone-* means “sound.” Homophones are two words that sound the same, but have different meanings. So the words “two” and “to” are homophones, as are “ate” and “eight.”

There’s another word that begins with *homo-*, which native speakers often confuse with homophone: **homonym**. Again, the root *homo-* means “same,” but *-nym* means “name.” A homonym is a single word (with one spelling) that has more than one meaning. An example of a homonym is the word “bear.” You probably know about the animal called a “bear,” but the word “bear” can also be a verb that means to tolerate. For example, “I’m so nervous about watching this game, I can’t *bear* to watch the last minute!” But today we’ll just focus on homophones.

Homophones: *each* of two or more words having the same pronunciation but different meanings, origins, or spelling.

List of some homophones

1. ate, eight

ate (verb): This is the simple past tense of the verb “to eat.”

I ate an entire pizza and now I’m really full and tired.

eight (noun): The number after seven and before nine.

Charles will wake up at eight o’clock tomorrow morning.

2. bare, bear

bare (adjective): If something is bare, it means that it’s not covered or not decorated.

Tom likes to walk around his house in bare feet. He says it’s more comfortable than wearing shoes.

bear (noun): A large mammal.

When you go camping, you should be careful to not leave any food or anything with a scent in your tent because they can attract bears.

3. buy, by, bye

to buy (verb): A synonym of “to purchase.” It’s probably one of the first verbs you learned.

I forgot my money at home. Do you think you could buy me lunch and I’ll pay you back tomorrow?

by (preposition): This can be used in many different ways. It’s commonly used to mean “next to” or “near” when describing a location. It can also indicate who created something.

My favorite autobiography is “The Autobiography of Malcolm X.” It’s written by Malcolm X and Alex Haley.

bye (exclamation): This is a shortening of “goodbye.”

I’ve got to go now, so bye! See you on Sunday!

4. cell, sell

cell (noun): A cell is a small area or room, usually in a prison. A cell can also be one of the smallest divisions of a living organism.

*The prisoner spent 10 years in his **cell**.*

to sell (verb): To exchange a product or service for money. Like “buy,” it was probably one of the first verbs you learned.

*We would like to **sell** our car, but we don't think we'd get very much money for it.*

5. dew, do, due

dew (noun): Dew is the name for small drops of water that accumulate (gather) on plants and other objects outside during the night.

*When I went outside early in the morning, the **dew** on the grass made my shoes wet.*

to do (verb): [This common verb](#) is used to indicate an action. It can also be an auxiliary verb.

*What **do** you usually **do** on Friday nights?*

due (adjective): This is used to indicate the deadline (final day) that something can happen.

It's also used to indicate when a baby will probably be born.

*My friend is pregnant. Her baby is **due** in October.*

6. eye, I

eye (noun): The part of your body that you use to see.

*My **eyes** hurt when I read. I think I need a pair of glasses.*

I (pronoun): A first person singular subject pronoun.

I really hope you know what this word means.

7. fairy, ferry

fairy (noun): A mythical creature that can often do magic.

*There is a **fairy** named [Tinkerbell](#) in the story “Peter Pan.”*

ferry (noun): A ferry is a boat that moves passengers and vehicles across water. It's used for long distances or places where there are no bridges.

*The **ferry** in Costa Rica is really hot and incredibly badly organized. At least the trip only takes an hour.*

8. flour, flower

flour (noun): This is the main ingredient in bread. It's a powder made from ground grains.

*Tony wanted to make a cake, but he didn't have any **flour**, so he couldn't.*

flower (noun): The decorative, colorful part of a plant.

*If you want to give **flowers** to somebody you love, avoid white roses. They are often given when someone dies.*

9. for, four

for (preposition): This preposition is usually used to indicate a person who receives something, or to indicate a purpose.

*We wanted to buy a chocolate cake **for** Cheryl's birthday. The bakery didn't have any chocolate cakes **for** sale, though, so we got vanilla instead.*

four (noun): The number after three and before five.

*The Beatles, one of the most famous bands ever, had **four** members: George, John, Paul and Ringo.*

10. hear, here

to hear (verb): This is the action that you do with your ears. The sense is called "hearing."

*I can't **hear** the TV. Can you please turn up the volume?*

here (adverb): "Here" indicates the place where you are at any moment. It's the opposite of "there," basically.

*Can you set the boxes down over **here** please? Yes, right **here** next to the door.*

11. hour, our

hour (noun): A period of time that lasts 60 minutes.

*It takes about six **hours** to drive from San Francisco to Los Angeles.*

our (pronoun): This is the possessive pronoun form of "we."

*We should study for **our** exams.*

12. know, no

to know (verb): To have knowledge or understanding about something.

*Reggie **knows** how to speak French.*

no (determiner): This indicates a negation or something that's not true.

*There is **no** good reason to listen to Justin Bieber.*

13. knight, night

knight (noun): A man given a special honor (or rank) by a king or queen. Their title is usually "Sir."

One popular English legend talks about [King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table](#).

night (noun): The period of time when it's dark and most people sleep.

*I prefer to work at **night**, since it's quieter and not as hot. I can concentrate better.*

14. mail, male

(to) mail (verb or noun): As a noun, this is a collective noun for letters and packages. As a verb, this means to send something to somebody. Email also comes from this word.

*I haven't gotten the **mail** yet today, but I was expecting a letter from grandma. Can you please check the mailbox?*

male (adjective or noun): An adjective (or noun) indicating that something is masculine or has masculine reproductive organs.

*People always ask if our cat is pregnant. I tell them he can't be, since he's a **male**. He's just fat.*

15. marry, merry

to marry (verb): The action when two people have a wedding; also called “to get married.”

*My grandpa told me to be sure to **marry** a good woman.*

merry (adjective): A synonym for “happy,” but less common in modern English. Mostly used in phrases like “Merry Christmas!”

*I don't like to go shopping in December because the song “We Wish You a **Merry** Christmas” always gets stuck in my head.*

16. meat, meet

meat (noun): Edible flesh from an animal.

*Vegetarians don't eat **meat**.*

to meet (verb): When you are introduced to a person for the first time. It can also refer to later meetings.

*I'm excited to travel to England so I can **meet** some new people!*

17. pair, pear

pair (noun): A set of two things that go together.

*Most of these examples of homophone sets are **pairs** of words, but some are groups of three or four words.*

pear (noun): A [delicious fruit](#).

*I wanted to buy **pears** for my fruit salad, but they only had winter pears. I don't like winter pears very much because they're hard, so I got peaches instead.*

18. right, write

right (adjective): This can mean either a synonym of “correct” or the opposite of “left.”

*I should turn **right** when I get to 10th Street, **right**?*

to write (verb): The action of making words or marks to represent ideas.

*Jerry's dream is to **write** a novel, but he hasn't decided what the book should be about.*

19. sight, site

sight (noun): This is the sense that you use when you see or look.

*Blind people can't see. They have no **sight**.*

site (noun): This is a synonym for “place.” The most common modern use is in the word “website.”

*There's an awesome **site** for language learners. It's www.fluentu.com.*

20. son, sun

son (noun): A male child.

*Grandma and grandpa had four **sons** and three daughters.*

sun (noun): The star at the center of our solar system. It's that big yellow thing in the sky during the day.

*Don't look directly at the **sun**, or you'll damage your eyes. You may even lose your eyesight!*

21. their, there, they're

their (pronoun): The possessive pronoun for the subject "they."

*We should study for our English exam, and they should study for **their** German exam.*

there (adverb): Remember the word "here" above? This is basically the opposite of that.

"There" can refer to any place where you are not at.

*Who is that over **there**? Is that Jane? If so, I hope she comes over here, since I want to talk to her.*

they're (contraction): This is a contraction of the phrase "they are."

*The children all passed their exams, so **they're** very happy!*

22. to, too, two

to (preposition): This usually indicates a direction that something is moving.

*Every day Paul and Judy drive together **to** school.*

too (adverb): "Too" can usually either mean "also," or it can indicate that there is more of something than necessary (and it's usually a problem).

*I'm **too** full to finish this plate of food. I'll ask the waiter if we can have a container to take it home. And I'll ask for the bill, **too**.*

two (noun): The number after one and before three.

*Most homophone sets have **two** words, but some have three or four.*

23. one, won

one (noun): The number after zero and before two.

The musical group Three Dog Night said that [one was the loneliest number](#).

won (verb): "Won" is the simple past and past participle form of the verb "to win."

Grandpa won \$500 in his poker game!

24. wait, weight

to wait (verb): This means to stay in one place or to anticipate something.

*It was snowing a lot, so the bus came late. I had to **wait** in the cold for 20 minutes.*

weight (noun): This word indicates how heavy something is.

*Every year around Christmas, many people gain a lot of **weight** because they eat lots of food but don't exercise.*

25. wear, where

to wear (verb): To have clothing or accessories on your body.

*I hate **wearing** ties. They're uncomfortable, hot, and [hard to tie](#). Do you **wear** ties?*

where (interrogative): A question word used to ask for a location.

***Where** should we meet for dinner? Personally, I'd like to meet at the new Chinese restaurant in town.*