

PROBLEM WORDS

Confusing Word Pairs

Choose the correct word for each space.

- 1 **misused** (badly, wrongly used)
disused (no longer used)

- (a) An airport _____ since its closure ten years before was used for car-racing.
(b) They complained that the new law had been _____ to suppress individual liberties.
(c) Be careful of this word. It is often _____.
(d) The goods were stored in a _____ cinema.

- 2 **unreadable** (too boring or too badly written to read)
illegible (physically impossible to read)

- (a) His hand-writing is so bad it's _____.
(b) The book is long, uninteresting and not very well-written. I find it _____.
(c) After years of being exposed to the sun and rain, the sign over the shop had become completely _____.
(d) I think her novels are _____. The style is awful and the plots are ridiculous.

- 3 **dependent** (depending)
dependant (person who depends on another for home, money, food)

- (a) The signing of the contract is _____ on whether you can guarantee delivery of the goods within three months.
(b) You are entitled to receive a government allowance for each _____ who is living with you.
(c) This residence document permits you, but no _____, to live and work in this country.
(d) The empire consisted of the kingdom and all its _____ colonies.

- 4 **story** (tale, plot)
storey (floor or level in building)

- (a) I live in a flat on the seventh _____.
(b) I'll tell you a _____.
(c) The basic _____ of the novel is rather weak but it's amusing and well-written.
(d) They're putting up a new 20-_____ hotel on this site.

- 5 **historic** (important in history)
historical (concerning history)

- (a) At the meeting of our local _____ society there will be a talk on 'France in the 19th Century'.
(b) Today we have gained our independence and our liberty. It is a _____ day for our country.
(c) She likes _____ novels, especially romances set in the 16th and 17th centuries.
(d) In 1945 there was a _____ meeting of world leaders which changed the course of world events.

- 6 **immigration** (coming into a country to settle)
emigration (leaving a country to settle elsewhere)

- (a) If we don't restrict _____ into this country, the pressure on our social services will be intolerable.
(b) When times were hard in Britain, there was very large _____ to Australia and Canada.

7 draft (rough preliminary version, to make a rough preliminary version)

draught (i: current of cold air in a room ii: beer, not in bottles, straight from the barrel)

- (a) Don't sit there. You'll be in a _____. The window doesn't close properly.
- (b) The Prime Minister discussed with his secretary the _____ of the speech he was going to make the following day.
- (c) Some people prefer _____ beer. They say bottles give beer a different taste.
- (d) Lawyers were instructed to _____ a law for the consideration of the cabinet.

8 dissatisfied (discontented, displeased, not satisfied with quality)
unsatisfied (unfulfilled, not satisfied with quantity)

- (a) He ate a meal large enough for three normal people but his appetite was still _____.
- (b) I'm very _____ with this computer. It keeps breaking down.
- (c) If you are _____ with the service, you should complain.
- (d) Demand for the new car is still _____ in spite of an increase in production.

9 suit (be suitable for)

suite [swi:t] (group of things belonging together, set)

- (a) Will seven o'clock _____ you or shall I come later?
- (b) She took a _____ of rooms at the Bristol Hotel.
- (c) For the living-room we can either buy a complete _____ of matching furniture or get different items separately.
- (d) Do you think a dark brown overcoat would _____ me?

10 licence (document giving official permission to do something, *noun*)
license (to give a licence, *verb*)

- (a) The annual _____ for a colour television set in Britain now costs over £60.
- (b) The authorities refused to _____ him to export arms.
- (c) He was _____d to sell alcohol, but after his court conviction, his _____ was cancelled.

11 prophecy (prediction, *noun*)
prophesy (predict, *verb*)

- (a) I _____ that he will pass his exam and get a good job.
- (b) I will make a _____. There will be a new government in less than a year.

12 device (new invention, means of doing something, *noun*)
devise (invent, *verb*)

- (a) Anyone who can _____ a means of recording television programmes without recording the advertisements will make a fortune.
- (b) He invented a _____ for warning pilots if there was bad weather ahead.
- (c) A _____ can be attached to a private telephone which keeps a record of all calls made and their cost.
- (d) He managed to _____ a system of bonus payments to encourage hard-working staff.

13 goal [gəʊl] (i: point won in football etc. ii: aim, ambition)
gaol [dʒeɪl] (prison, send to prison)

- (a) He scored the winning _____ of the match.
- (b) He spent eight years in _____ for armed robbery.
- (c) She finally achieved her _____ of becoming director of the firm.
- (d) The judge said he had no option but to _____ her.

14 enquiry/enquiries (request for information)
inquiry/inquiries (formal investigation)

- (a) You should make _____ at the office.
- (b) Official _____ are always held after plane crashes.
- (c) We have received a number of _____ about our new product since putting an advertisement in the newspaper.
- (d) It was never discovered where the missing money went, in spite of a searching _____ by the bank.

15 exhausting (very tiring)
exhaustive (very thorough, complete)

- (a) _____ tests were carried out to discover the cause of the plane's engine failure.
- (b) The older members of the group found the long journey quite _____.
- (c) He never stops talking. He's an _____ person to be with.
- (d) The police carried out an _____ investigation, but the missing woman was never found.

16 disinterested (impartial)
uninterested (not interested, bored, apathetic)

- (a) Only 22% of the people voted. The rest were totally _____.
- (b) The management and the union asked a completely _____ party to mediate between them.
- (c) I don't know why he didn't go to the exhibition. Perhaps he was too busy or just _____.
- (d) France's intervention in the dispute was not entirely _____. It gave her increased power and influence in the area.

17 council (district government)
counsel (i: kind of lawyer in court ii: to advise)

- (a) The job of a Vocational Guidance Officer is to _____ young people on their careers.
- (b) I have complained to the local _____ about the poor condition of the pavements.
- (c) The prosecuting _____ demanded the death penalty but the judge gave her a life sentence.
- (d) Some men from the _____ came to plant trees along the river.

18 councillor (member of a council)
counsellor (adviser)

- (a) She and her husband often argued, so they went to a marriage _____ for help.
- (b) He's always been interested in local government. Now he's been elected _____.

19 unknown (not known)
infamous (shameful, notorious)

- (a) The show was such a success that she went from being an _____ actress to a star overnight.
- (b) Joseph Jackson was an _____ mass-murderer of Victorian times.
- (c) His action in cheating poor, sick and elderly people of their savings was described by the judge as _____.
- (d) The firm was almost _____ ten years ago but now it is famous for its high-quality products.

20 certainly (definitely, really)
surely (expresses surprise, doubt, relief)

- (a) _____ you aren't going out like that, are you?
- (b) I am _____ not inviting Teresa to my party. I've never liked her.
- (c) Your coat must be here somewhere, _____!
- (d) He _____ impressed me. I thought he was very bright and talented.

21 dairy (i: place where milk is kept, butter, cheese etc. made; shop selling milk products ii: related to milk products)
diary (daily record of events)

- (a) He kept a _____ from the age of 15 to 21.
- (b) We're still waiting for milk deliveries from the _____.
- (c) No, we don't grow wheat or vegetables. It's a _____ farm. We have about 200 cows.
- (d) She has a regular column in the *Daily News* describing the various activities of the day. It's called 'Annabel's _____'.

22 compliment (to praise, piece of praise)
complement (go together or combine well, add to)

- (a) He lacks confidence and she is a strong person. They _____ each other very well.
- (b) He paid her a nice _____ on her new dress.
- (c) I'd like to _____ you on your performance. It was excellent.
- (d) Weight-lifting gives strength. Running increases stamina. The two exercises _____ each other.

49 Homophones

Homophones are words that sound the same but are spelt differently. What are the missing homophones in these pairs of sentences?

- 1 I'm going on a diet. I've put on a lot of weight.
Please wait a minute. I won't be long.
- 2 I put on the _____ and the car stopped just in time.
This kind of china _____ very easily. Be careful.
- 3 Would you like another _____ of cake with your tea?
Everyone wanted the war to end and _____ to begin.
- 4 Can you untie the _____ in this string?
I'm _____ very good at science. I'm better at languages.
- 5 I didn't tell her what was in the parcel. She _____ by feeling it.
She was a _____ at a wedding I went to recently.
- 6 'Anyone who _____ gun in class will be sent out.'
I don't know what to _____ on this menu. There are so many good things.
- 7 You aren't _____ to smoke anywhere in this building.
Sorry, I wasn't talking to anyone in particular. I was just thinking _____.
- 8 Are you _____ you want to go out in this horrible weather?
Yes, I'd like to go to the beach and walk along the sea _____.
- 9 That man always _____ at me when I go past his shop. I don't like it.
Don't let's take the lift. I want to walk up the _____.

- 10 I've never jumped _____ than that. It's my personal record.
Where can I _____ ski boots? I don't have any of my own.
- 11 There were only ten _____ of seats in the hall so quite a lot of people had to stand.
He gave me a single red _____ on Valentine's Day.
- 12 Don't park there. It's illegal and you might get _____.
Where is my wallet? I can't _____ it anywhere.
- 13 Get me a needle and I'll _____ this button on for you.
She didn't pay me back the money last time _____ I refused to lend her any next time she asked.
- 14 I've had this teddy _____ since I was three.
We haven't yet bought any carpets for our flat. We've got _____ floorboards.
- 15 They've _____ the thieves who broke into our car.
I've got to go to _____ in three weeks to be a witness.



Lots of silly jokes in English are based on words that sound the same but are spelt differently and have different meanings. Here's one of them:

Question: Why are people who work in a fish shop mean?

Answer: Their job makes them sell fish. (selfish)