

Similar Words With Subtle Differences

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Due to its diverse influences, the English language is full of seemingly illogical constructions and rules. However, correct usage of language should be an editor's forte and attempting to understand some of these rules helps in correct application of these rules, and consequently, error-free editing.

A well-known idiom says that great minds think alike. It's what we say when two people think of the same great idea at the same time. Note the usages of the words "alike" and "same"—they are similar but not the same. Let's look at some other words that are commonly confused.

I vs. me

"I" is the subject and "me" is the object.
If "me" can be replaced by "him/her" in the sentence, then it is correct.

Example: *Please remind him or me.*

Subject pronouns

I, you, he, she, it, we, they

Object pronouns

me, you, him, her, it, us, them

Alike vs. same

Being an adverb, "alike" is used to modify the verb that precedes it, while "same" is an adjective that modifies a noun.

Example: *Great minds think alike.*
and

The two scientists had the same idea about the Big Bang.

Allude vs. elude

Although when spoken these two words sound somewhat similar, their meanings are quite different. Allude is to suggest or indirectly call attention to something.

Example: *She had a way of alluding to Jean but never saying her name.*

Whereas elude means to escape from or avoid someone or something.

Example: *The thief eluded the authorities for months.*

Censure vs. censor

Censure and censor are frequently confused. Both words can function as verbs and nouns, but censure means "to express severe disapproval of."

Example: *The man was censured for his crimes.*

While censor means "to examine (a book or a film) and suppress parts that are unacceptable.

Example: *The letters she received were heavily censored.*

Cite this article

Enago Academy, Similar Words With Subtle Differences. Enago Academy. 2016/09/01. <https://www.enago.com/academy/similar-words-subtle-differences/>