Commonly Confused Words
Part II

these terms as used in scientific fields and example sentences demonstrating proper usage. The verbs adapt and adopt are often confused. Particularly adopt is to choose or accept A process through which the molecules of a fluid become affixed to the surface of an object. The verbs compose, comprise, consist, constitute and form are all similar, but there are important between them. This difference is demonstrated by the following sentences. The nouns concept and idea are quite similar in meaning, and in ordinary usage, they are often interchangeable. However, there are significant differences

The prepositions among and between are used similarly and express nearly identical meanings, but there is one important difference between generally understood as expressing a more abstract meaning.
The verbs cooperate and collaborate are close in meaning, both being approximately synonymous with work together. However, there is an important
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Commonly Confused Words, Part - II

Do you struggle to point out the difference between words with similar meaning such as example and sample, in spite of and despite, and similar terms? Envision minute details like this impacting your academic work and publication possibility.

Are you uncertain which one is right? There are a lot of words in English that look or sound alike but have very different meanings.

Here’s a quick-reference list of pairs of words that regularly cause people problems.
1. *example* and *sample*

Mistakes that result from confusion of the nouns *example* and *sample* appear often in the works of Japanese authors. Below are the definitions of each of these, along with examples illustrating their usage.

*example*: One thing chosen from a group of like things to act as a representative of this group.

(1) Japan is an example of a country whose population is presently shrinking.

(2) This system of equations is an example of a model that exhibits chaotic behavior.

*sample*: One part extracted from a whole.

(3) The Mars Rover tested many soil and rock samples.

(4) We inferred our conclusions from three samples each consisting of 100 people chosen at random from the population of 23,241.

The following example demonstrates how these words can naturally be used together.

(5) The sample we tested provides a good example of the effect of contamination on these specialized materials.
II. *farther and further*

The words *farther* and *further* (which can be used as either adjectives or adverbs) are both comparative forms of the adjective/adverb *far*. While these terms are sometimes interchangeable, there are important differences that should be kept in mind.

Although both of these terms are used to express the meaning of ‘greater distance’, as a general rule, *farther* should be used with regard to physical distance, and *further* should be used with regard to non-physical distance. This difference is illustrated by the following.

(1) I walked 10 km farther than I needed to.
(2) The two groups’ positions on the key issues were further apart after the meeting than before.

In addition to the difference demonstrated by the above examples, there is a significant difference regarding breadth of usage. Specifically, while *further* can be used with the meanings of *more, other, in addition and additionally*, *farther* does not possess meanings of this type. Such usage of *further* is illustrated below.

(3) Further discussion of this point is given below.
(4) They requested further funding for their research.
(5) This is the first experiment of its kind to yield such clear results. Further, it was performed using a very simple technique.
If “further” in these sentences were replaced with *farther*, the resulting sentences would not make sense.
III. *homogeneous* and *homogenous*

The adjectives *homogeneous* and *homogenous* can be used as synonyms, but their primary meanings are not the same. *Homogeneous* expresses a meaning of sameness, and is generally used to describe conditions and systems characterized by invariant properties, uniform composition or regular structure. Homogenous can also be used in this manner, but its primary meaning is that which it possesses in the field of biology. In that context, it describes the condition of homogeny, i.e., a similarity or correspondence in structure exhibited by different species due to common ancestry. In ordinary usage, employing *homogenous* with the meaning of *homogeneous* is acceptable, but in academic works, these two words should only be used with their primary meanings.

Below, are two examples that contrast the proper usage of these adjectives.

**Homogenous**

(1) Although the wings of birds and insects are similar in position, form and function, they are not homogenous. Rather, they are homoplastic.

**Homogeneous**

(2) These materials are homogeneous on a macroscopic scale, but on a mesoscopic scale, they exhibit a complicated structure that varies randomly in space.
IV. *in spite of* and *despite*

The prepositions *in spite of* and *despite* are nearly identical in meaning, and in many cases they can be interchanged without altering the overall meaning. However, there is a subtle difference between the two, and hence when precision is necessary, they should be distinguished.

The primary meaning of both terms is ‘unaffected by’, but whereas *despite* includes the somewhat weak meaning of ‘lacking connection’, *in spite of* conveys a stronger meaning, including an implication of ‘in opposition to’. Thus, *despite* expresses a relatively passive meaning, and *in spite of* expresses a relatively active meaning. This difference is illustrated by the following.

1. Despite the risk, I would like to proceed with the plan.
2. In spite of his parents’ warning, the child continued to play with the toy.

There is one more point that should be noted with regard to the use of *despite*. Occasionally the expression *despite of*, which probably results from confusion with *in spite of*, this expression is always grammatically erroneous.
V. *incident* and *incidence*

Although the nouns *incident* and *incidence* are very similar with regard to spelling and pronunciation, their meanings are quite different. Below examples demonstrate the proper usage of each.

*incident*: An (undesirable) event.

(1) In that incident, the level of contamination was between 6 and 16 ppm.

(2) Most such incidents result in miscarriage.

*incidence*: Occurrence or outbreak (for example, of a disease); rate of occurrence.

(3) The incidence of both of these diseases increased in the U.S. between 1994 and 2007.

(4) The city has implemented measures to reduce the incidence of accidents at this intersection.
VI. *instead* and *rather*

The adverbs *instead* and *rather* can be used to express similar meanings, but in general they are not interchangeable. Below is the definition for the primary meaning of *instead* and the similar meaning of *rather*, along with example sentences illustrating typical usage.

*Instead*: in its place, in the place; as a substitute.
   1. The doctor told the patient to move his left hand, but he moved his right hand instead.
   2. Instead of oscillating, this function diverges monotonically.
   3. To reduce cost, we used brass instead of platinum.

*rather*: more properly, more correctly, more accurately; as a better or more proper alternative to.
   4. This result does not contradict the previous results. Rather, it demonstrates that there are situations to which the existing theories simply do not apply.
   5. Rather than give up now, we should redouble our efforts.
   6. This is not an established result. Rather, it is a tentative conclusion that is apparently inconsistent with at least one experimental result.
VII. *intra-* and *inter-*

The prefixes *intra-* and *inter-* are often confused. While their spellings, pronunciations and manners of usage are very similar, in fact they express nearly opposite meanings: *intra-* means ‘inside’ or ‘within’, while *inter-* means ‘between’ or ‘among’. The following are representative of their usage.

intercontinental: between continents
interdepartmental: between or among departments
interdisciplinary: involving multiple disciplines
interaction: reciprocal influence between
interplanetary: between or among planets

intracellular: inside a cell
intradepartmental: within a department
intravenous: within or into a vein
intrauterine: inside a uterus
intramural: within a school
VIII. precede and proceed

The verbs *precede* and *proceed* are quite similar in spelling and pronunciation, and for this reason, they are easily confused. However, both their origins and meanings are entirely different.

**precede**: go before; occur or exist prior to.

1. The publication of Leibnitz's work on calculus preceded that of Newton.
2. In the experiments, it was found that the structural transition precedes the magnetic transition.
3. What does it mean for cause to precede effect?

**proceed**: continue; act subsequently; move forward.

4. After treating the general linear case, we proceed to consider several nonlinear systems.
5. Please proceed with your argument.
6. We proceed by first reducing each of these equations to its simplest form.
7. In this case, the conventional approach is to proceed with chemotherapy after excision.
**IX. *raise* and *rise***

The verbs *raise* and *rise* are corresponding transitive and intransitive forms, respectively. However, we often find the former is misused as an intransitive verb. The following sentences illustrate the proper usage of each.

1. The level of the oceans is rising more rapidly than previously reported.
2. Awareness of the importance of frequent hand washing has risen in recent years.
3. The sun rises in the east.
4. We are considering raising the minimum passing score.
5. At each step, the position of the bar was raised by 3 cm.
6. If you wish to speak, please raise your hand.
X. *rare* and *scarce*

Although the adjectives *rare* and *scarce* express similar meanings, in general they are not interchangeable. Below we can see the primary meanings of each word, along with examples illustrating typical usage.

**rare**: existing in small numbers; seldom seen or encountered; unusual.

1. The red-headed trogan is a rare species of bird.
2. Solar flares of such great size are extremely rare events.
3. It is rare to find audio recordings of such high quality from that time.

**scarce**: existing in insufficient quantity.

4. The influenza vaccine is scarce in rural areas.
5. However, because water became extremely scarce, the population rapidly decreased.
6. Funding for this type of research has become scarce.

In each of the above sentences, exchanging one of these adjectives for the other would result in an extremely unnatural assertion.
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