

WORD CHOICE—COMMON MISTAKES

Its / It's

Its = Possessive (The car and its owner...)

It's = It is (*It's* on the exam.)

Their / They're / There

Their = Possessive (*Their* books are on the table.)

They're = They are (*They're* leaving.)

There = Place/general use (*There* was a reason I put the book over *there*.)

Whose / Who's

Whose = Possessive (I spoke to the student *whose* mother called.)

Who's = Who is (*Who's* coming to dinner?)

Your / You're

Your = Possessive (*Your* books are on the counter.)

You're = You are (*You're* working hard.)

Affect / Effect

Affect = Usually a verb meaning "to influence" (TV *affects* children...)

Effect = Usually a noun meaning "result" (The *effect* of TV is...)

Effect = Can be a verb meaning "to bring about" (Parents can *effect* dramatic change...)

Impact / Affect

Impact = Is NOT a verb meaning "to influence" (Incorrect: I think the election will *impact* his perception of national politics.) Use "affect" instead.

Fewer / Less

Fewer = Refers to items that can be counted (I drink *fewer* cups of coffee than...)

Less = Refers to general amounts (I drink *less* coffee than...)

Than / Then

Than = Used in comparisons (More apples *than* oranges)

Then = Indicates a specific time (Can this wait until Friday? I'd rather do it *then*.)

Who / That

Who = Refers to people, including pronouns (The tutor *who* worked with me...)

That = Refers to things or a group/class of people (The team *that* won...)

Which / That

Which = Usually follows a comma and starts a new phrase that adds meaning (Los Angeles residents met to discuss graffiti, *which* they view as a nuisance.)

That = Usually doesn't require a comma (Hip-hop graffiti is a form of artistic expression *that* requires skill and creativity.)