

Common Word Choice Mistakes – As Outlined in the Brief Penguin Handbook

Affect and Effect:

Affect (A F F E C T)

- A verb that means to influence.
 - Matt's breaking up with Leah did not affect her like he thought it would.

Effect (E F F E C T)

- A noun that means a result.
 - The coffee seemed to have no effect on Liz's sluggish mood.

A lot and Allot:

A lot (A space L O T)

- It is used to indicate much of something.
 - Nick bought a lot of stuff at the mall today.

Allot (A L L O T)

- A verb that means to designate.
 - Mr. Anderson is going to allot us three hours of class time to write the test.

Anyway, Anyways:

Anyway (A N Y W A Y)

- An adverb that can be used to change the subject or to emphasize.
 - Even though he specifically asked her not to, she sped on the way home anyway.

Anyways (A N Y W A Y S)

- A slang term that is often used in place of anyway, but is not standard English.

Assure, Ensure, and Insure:

Assure (A S S U R E)

- A verb that means to promise.
 - I assure you, he will not be at the party tonight.

Ensure (E N S U R E)

- A verb that means to make certain.
 - She wanted to ensure that I knew where I was going.

Insure (I N S U R E)

- A verb that means to make certain in legal or financial terms.
 - He was paying a considerably larger amount than before to insure his new car.

Its and It's:

Its (without an apostrophe)

- The possessive form of "it," implying ownership.
 - The dog liked to chase its own tail.

It's (with an apostrophe)

- A contraction for "it is" and should not be used in academic writing.
 - It's getting late; I should probably go home now.

Regardless, Irregardless:

Regardless (R E G A R D L E S S)

- An adverb used to emphasize a lack of concern.
 - Regardless of the impact it would have on the economy, he decided to increase the taxes by fourteen percent.

Irregardless (I R R E G A R D L E S S)

- This is not a correct word and should not be used.

Their, There, and They're:

Their (T H E I R)

- It means "belonging to them" and is the possessive form of they.

There (T H E R E)

- It means "in, at, or to that place."

They're (T H E Y ' R E)

- The contraction for "they are." Contractions are often not preferred in formal writing.
 - Melissa and Tom have always loved Australia; they're going to go there on their honeymoon.

Then and Than:

Then (T H E N)

- Indicates time or is used when explaining things chronologically.
 - Christine and William went out for dinner and then to the movies.

Than (T H A N)

- A term that is used when making comparisons.
 - Jon like the band's new album better than their last.

To, Too, and Two:

To (T O)

- Commonly used as "in the direction of."

Too (T O O)

- Used to explain when something is more than is desired, allowed, or possible.

Two (T W O)

- The spelling of the number 2.
 - Cam drove his two children to Montreal, even though they were too late to attend the party.

Reference

Faigley, L., Graves, R. & Graves, H. (2008). Glossary of grammatical terms and usage. In *The brief Penguin handbook* (Canadian ed.) (pp. 567-573). Toronto: Pearson Longman.