

Commonly Confused Words

Part 4



Knowing whether to use *it's* or *its* can be hard! Let's discuss some words that people are often unsure about.

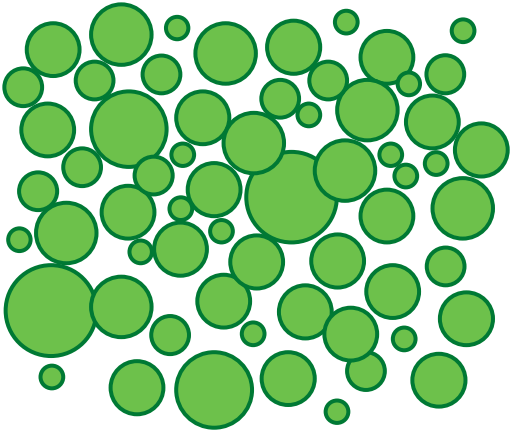
- A lot/alot
- A long/along
- Could of/could have
- It's/Its
- She and I/Her and I
- Than/then
- That/which
- Their/they're/there
- Woman/women
- Your/you're

Do have a look at Commonly Confused Words Parts 1, 2, and 3 if you haven't already.

[Download parts 1, 2, and 3](#)

A lot/alot

A lot



Use 'a lot' when you mean 'many', 'much', or 'a great deal'. You can use 'a lot' for actions, people, or things.

We swam a lot on our holiday.

A lot of people gathered to hear the talk.

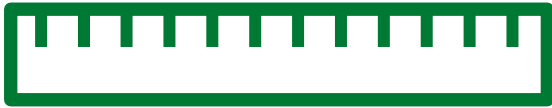
Alot



Don't use 'alot' — it's the wrong spelling of 'a lot'.

A long/along

A long



Use 'a long' only when you're talking about length.

The painter needed a long ladder to reach the top of the wall.

We'll be able to use the machine for a long time if we repair it well.

Along



Use 'along' when you mean 'from one part to another'.

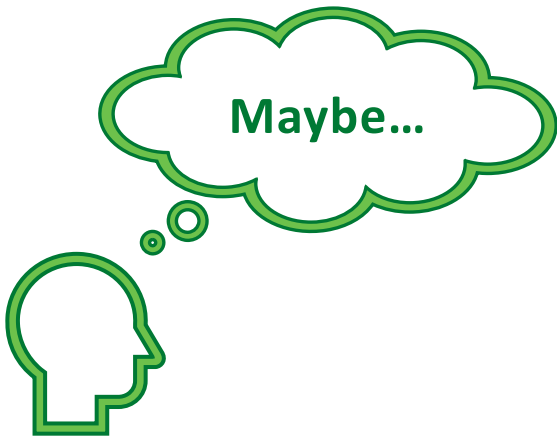
They walked along the road until they came to the bridge.

You can also use 'along' when you mean 'beside'.

The houses along the lake have a stunning view.

Could have/could of

Could have



Could of



Use 'could have' when you mean 'might have'. You can use 'could have' to talk about something in the past that was possible, but that you know didn't happen.

She could have become an engineer, but she chose to be a scientist instead.

You can also use 'could have' when you wonder if something happened.

He's not usually late. I wonder if he could have got stuck in traffic?

Don't use 'could of' — it's a mistaken form of 'could have'.

It's/Its

It's

It + is = it's

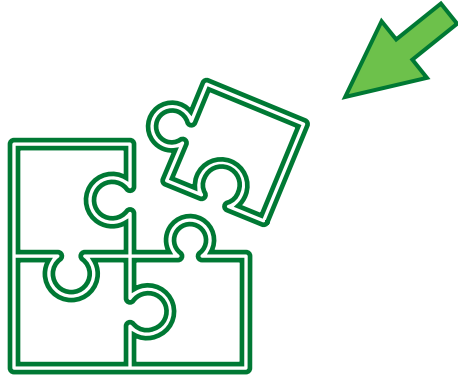
Use *it's* when you mean 'it is' or 'it has'. *It's* is a shortened form of two words.

If you're not sure whether *it's* is correct, try replacing the word with 'it is' or 'it has'. If your sentence makes no sense with 'it is' or 'it has', you probably need *its* instead.

Excel can take a while to learn, but it's a very useful tool!

It's been a very successful conference.

Its



Use *its* when you refer to something that's related to another thing, or if it belongs to that thing.

Its is a word that shows ownership, like 'his', 'her', and 'their'.

The jigsaw will be complete when we add its last piece.

The company is proud of its success.

She and I/Her and I

She and I/He and I



Her and I/Him and I



Use 'I', 'he', and 'she' to refer to someone when they're the person doing something.

She and I wrote that report together.

He and I had a long meeting.

Don't use 'her and I' or 'him and I'. Sometimes people think that if another person is involved, saying 'I' is always correct, like 'she and I'. But that's not true.

Check by thinking about what you would say if only you were involved. If you would say 'me', then 'her and me' and 'him and me' is correct.

The company gave her and me new phones.

That parcel is for him and me.

Than/then

Than



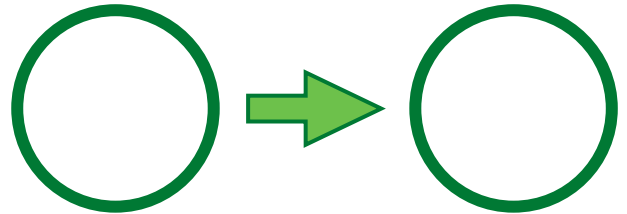
Use 'than' when you're comparing two things. Used this way, 'than' is a word that connects two things or actions.

I'd rather work late than start early.

Also use 'than' when you're talking about an amount.

More than 200 people applied for the job.

Then



Use 'then' when you mean 'after that' or 'next'.

Talk to your customers first, then modify your product.

Also use 'then' when you mean 'at that time'.

I remember when The Beatles were popular.
I was at school then.

That/which

That



Use 'that' for essential information — information your reader needs to understand the sentence.

Don't use commas before or after that information.

We must replace the truck that keeps breaking down.

We need to do more of the work that makes a good profit.

Which



Use 'which' for extra information — information your reader doesn't need in order to understand your main point.

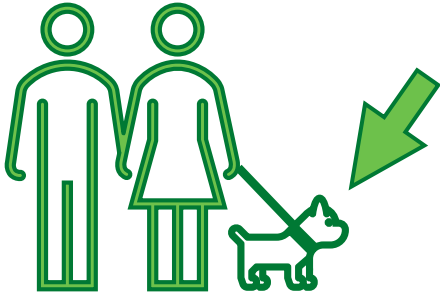
Use commas before and after that information.

We must replace the truck, which is 20 years old.

The project, which has dragged on for 2 years, is well over budget.

Their/they're/there

Their



They're

They + are = they're

Use 'their' when you refer to something that is related to someone or belongs to someone. 'Their' is a word that shows ownership, like 'her', 'his', and 'my'.

They love their dog a lot.

We have great caterers.
Their food is delicious, and
their prices are reasonable.

Use *they're* when you mean 'they are'. *They're* is a shortened form of two words.

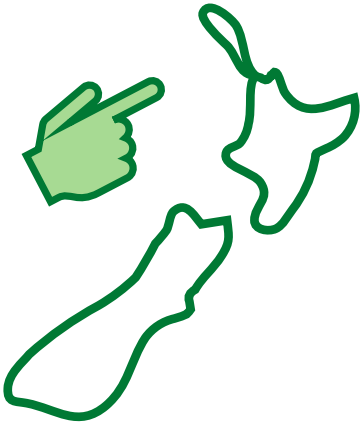
If you're not sure if *they're* is correct, try replacing the word with 'they are'. If your sentence makes no sense with 'they are', you probably need 'their' or 'there' instead.

I love working with them!
They're polite, quick, and
efficient.

Try these oranges. They're
incredibly sweet.

Their/they're/there (continued)

There



Use 'there' when you refer to a place away from you.

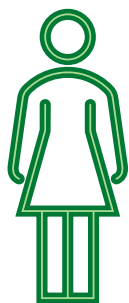
He'll be going there tomorrow.

'There' can also introduce something you're talking about.

There is a long white cloud in the sky.

Woman/women

Woman



Women



Use 'woman' when you mean one adult female.

Let's hire a woman for that role, so we have good gender balance.

A woman rang twice for you this morning.

Use 'women' when you mean two or more women.

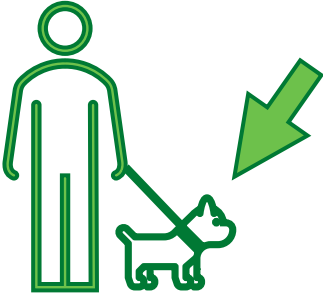
We now have five women in our team, but we used to only have one.

Also use 'women' when you are talking generally.

Surveys show that most women prefer this brand.

Your/you're

Your



Use 'your' when you refer to something that is related to the person you're talking to, or if it belongs to that person.

Too much salt can increase your blood pressure.

Where will you walk your dog today?

You're

You + are = you're

Use *you're* when you mean 'you are'. *You're* is a shortened form of two words.

If you're not sure if *you're* is correct, try writing 'you are'. If the sentence makes no sense with 'you are', you probably need 'your' instead.

You're so good at explaining things clearly!

Please come to the meeting if you're free.