

# Commonly Confused Words

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Part 5



Do you lay or lie on a couch? Paddle, pedal, or peddle a boat?

Welcome to another guide on ten sets of words that people are often unsure about.

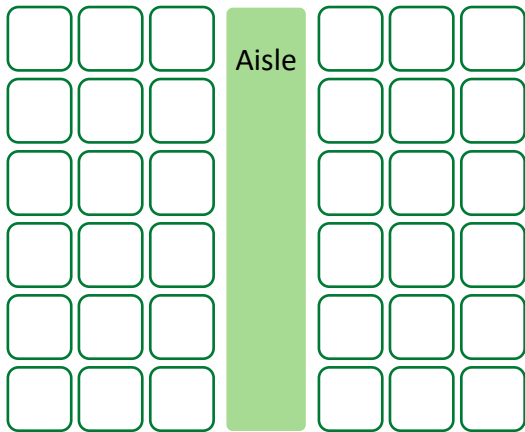
- Aisle/isle
- Alternate/alternative
- Coarse/course
- Farther/further
- Lay/lie
- Pedal/peddle/paddle
- Peak/peek
- Policy/procedure
- Tortuous/Torturous
- Vale/veil

Check out [Commonly Confused Words Parts 1–4](#) too, if you haven't already.

[Download parts 1–4](#)

# Aisle/Isle

## Aisle

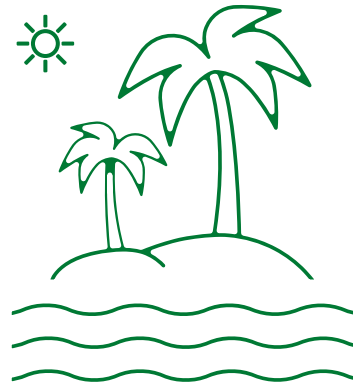


Use 'aisle' when you mean 'walkway between seats or shelves'. 'Aisle' is pronounced /'aɪl/, the short form of 'I will'.

The supermarket stocks pasta and pasta sauce in the same aisle.

Passengers on planes need to keep the aisle clear for other people, and in case of emergencies.

## Isle



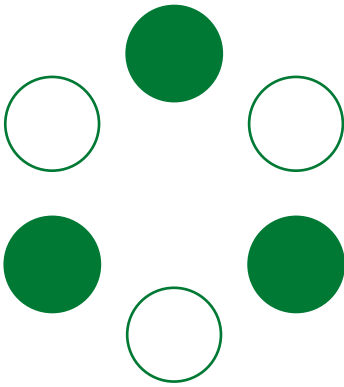
Use 'isle' when you mean 'island'. 'Isle' is also pronounced like /'ɪl/, the short form of 'I will'.

The British Isles is a group of islands that includes Great Britain and Ireland.

New Zealand English tends to use 'island' rather than 'isle', like in Stewart Island / Rakiura and Great Barrier Island / Aotea Island.

# Alternate/alternative

## Alternate



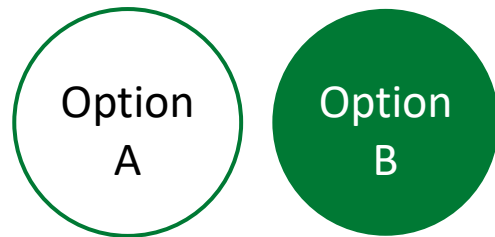
Use 'alternate' when you mean 'keep changing between two or more things'.

Most team members alternate between working from home and working in the office.

The city is considering banning cars on alternate days, to reduce carbon emissions.

'Alternate' can also mean 'alternative'.

## Alternative



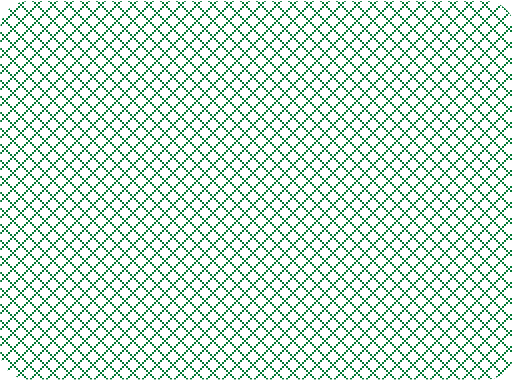
Use 'alternative' when you mean 'option'.

People are increasingly turning to transport alternatives, like bikes and e-scooters, to do their bit for the environment.

When someone has two equally difficult alternatives, we say they're 'between a rock and a hard place'.

# Coarse/course

## Coarse



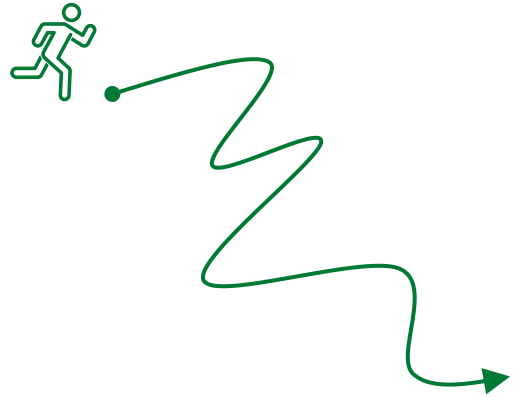
Use 'coarse' when you mean 'rough' or 'not smooth'.

The painter used coarse sandpaper to prepare the surface before painting it.

You could also use 'coarse' when you mean 'rude or offensive'.

Our company has an unwritten policy against coarse language and behaviour.

## Course



Use 'course' when you mean 'planned direction' or 'route'.

The cross-country run will follow a challenging course.

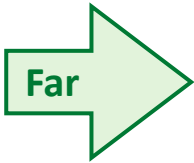
'Course' can also mean 'a package of lessons'.

Her training included short courses in business administration and law.

And use 'course' when you say, 'Of course!'

# Farther/further

## Farther



Use 'farther' when you mean 'a longer distance'. 'Farther' contains the word 'far'.

I have to travel farther to work because the office moved.

Oh no, we should have got off at the last stop! Is it much farther to the next one?

## Further



Use 'further' when you mean 'more'.

Good news — the client would like to discuss our proposal further!

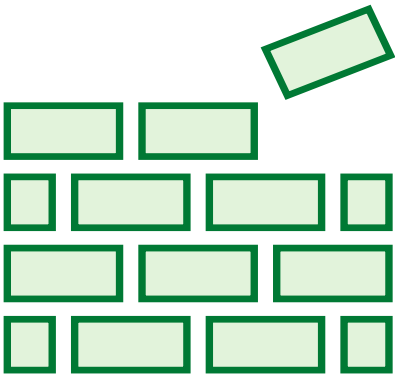
Also use 'further' when you mean 'advance'.

We need more funding to further our research.

You can use 'further' for distance too.

# Lay/lie

## Lay



Use 'lay' when you mean 'put something down, usually horizontally'. 'Lay' has to involve an action and an object. That object could be physical (like carpet), or abstract (like plans). The past tense of 'lay' is 'laid'.

To structure a document well, lay your thoughts out on paper first, then organise them in a way that helps your readers.

You also use 'lay' when you mean 'give birth to eggs'.

Kiwi lay surprisingly large eggs for their size.

## Lie



Use 'lie' when you mean 'in a horizontal position'. 'Lie' describes a state, and can be used for people or things. Used this way, the past tense of 'lie' is 'lay'.

The cat knocked the glass over — now it lies empty on its side.

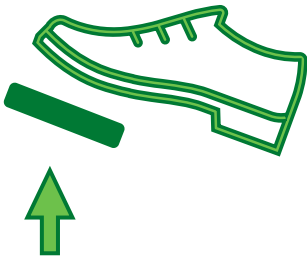
The cat had knocked the glass over — when I arrived it lay empty on its side.

'Lie' can also mean 'tell an untruth'. Used this way, the past tense of 'lie' is 'lied'.

I admit it — I lied.

# Pedal/peddle/paddle

## Pedal



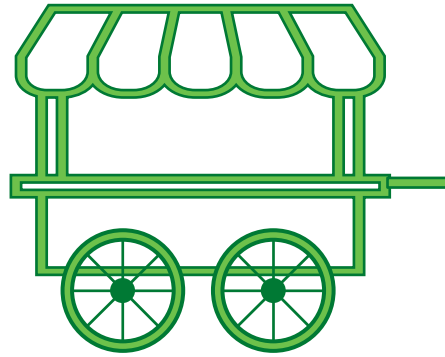
Use 'pedal' when you mean 'foot-operated lever'.

Bicycles, vehicles, and pianos, have pedals.

'Pedal' can also be used for the action of 'moving a pedal'.

I saw you pedalling hard in that head wind.

## Peddle



Use 'peddle' when you mean 'go to different places to sell'. The word comes from the noun 'pedlars', who were travelling vendors.

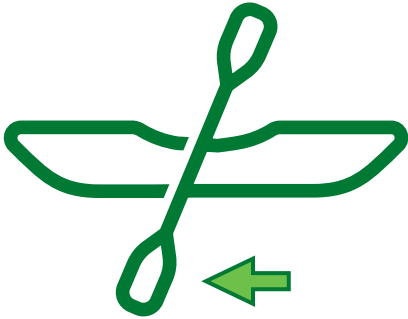
They might have an impressive shop now, but they started by peddling their wares by the roadside.

The burglars were caught when they tried to peddle their stolen goods.



# Pedal/peddle/paddle (continued)

## Paddle



Use 'paddle' when you mean 'a pole with a blade'. 'Paddle' can also refer to the action of 'using a paddle'.

He lost his paddle, so he tried to paddle with a plank instead.

'Paddle' can also mean 'walk in shallow water in bare feet'.

They had a great time paddling along the shore.

# Peak/peek

Peak



Peek



Use 'peak' when you mean 'the highest point' or 'maximum'.

The peak of Aoraki / Mount Cook stands at more than 3,700m.

Peak demand for electricity is around dinner time.

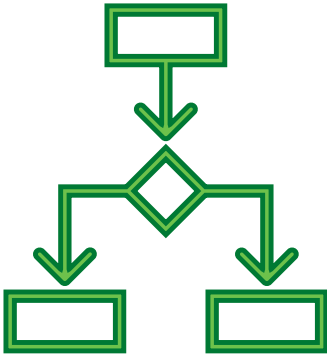
Use 'peek' when you mean 'glance quickly'.

I can't write that confidential report because someone keeps peeking over my shoulder.

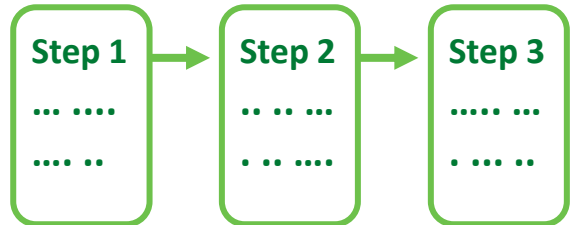
We'll give staff a sneak peek at the press release before we send it to the media.

# Policy/procedure

## Policy



## Procedure



Use 'policy' when you mean 'approach for making decisions'.

That political party has a great policy on reducing poverty.

'Policy' can also refer to 'an insurance agreement'.

How will this policy cover me if I fall sick?

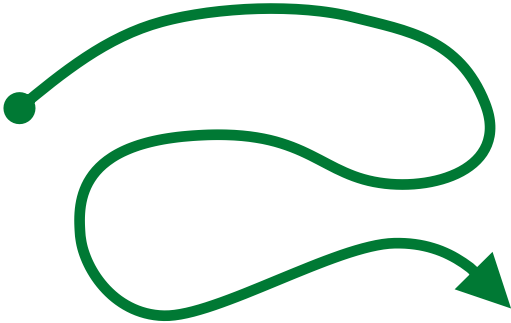
Use 'procedure' when you mean 'set of actions'.

The organisation has excellent procedures for maintaining equipment.

She had to have several medical procedures before the doctors worked out what was wrong.

# Tortuous/torturous

Tortuous



Torturous



Use 'tortuous' when you mean 'bendy' or 'twisty'.

The roadworks forced her to take a tortuous route to work.

After 5 years of long and tortuous negotiations, we have a deal!

Use 'torturous' when you mean 'agonising' or 'painful'.

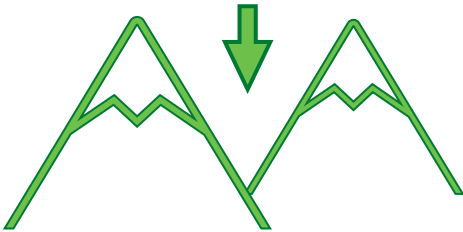
'Torturous' has two 'R's, just like the related word 'torture'.

He never discussed his torturous experience as a prisoner of war.

The severe drought created torturous conditions throughout the country.

# Vale/veil

## Vale

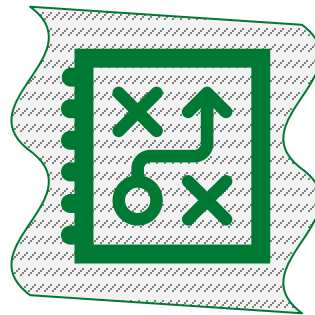


Use 'vale' when you mean 'valley'. 'Vale' is rarely used these days, except in poetry.

Vales sometimes have streams or rivers running through them.

'The vale of tears' refers to difficulties in life.

## Veil



Use 'veil' when you mean 'partially hidden'.

The Opposition made a veiled comment criticising the Government's plan.

'Veil' can also refer to a piece of cloth that some women wear to cover their face or hair.

Women in some countries must wear a veil in public.