Troublesome Words



There are many easily confused words in the English language.

Here's a few of the nasty little blighters.

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| their, they're or there | Their means belonging to them.  **I passed four residents coming out of their apartment.**  They're is short for they are. **They announced they’re going to have another meeting….**  There means “in, at or to that place” **Corfu looks like a nice place – I want to go there someday.**  There can also mean can also be used to talk about the fact or existence of something**.**  **There are some serious questions involved in this issue.**  https://blog.oxforddictionaries.com/2012/04/24/there-their-or-theyre/ |
| than or then | Than means:  1. Introducing the second element in a comparison.  **He was much smaller than his son.**  **Our council tax is much higher than in larger towns.**  2. Used in expressions introducing an exception or contrast.  **He claims not to own anything other than his home.**  **They observe rather than act.**  3. Used in expressions indicating one thing happening immediately after another.  **No sooner was he seated than Lily sidled closer to him.**  Then means  1. At that time; at the time in question.  **I was living in Cairo then.**  **Phoebe by then was exhausted.**  **He accepted a peerage from the then Prime Minister, Edward Heath.**  **2.** After that; next; afterwards.  **There was silence for a moment and then the place erupted with cries of delight and amazement.**  3. Also; in addition.  ***Work is mad at the moment, and then there are exams to think about as well.***  4. In that case; therefore.  **If you do what I tell you, then there's nothing to worry about.**  https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/then |
| affect or effect | Affect means to make a difference to or change.  **The dampness began to affect my health.**  **Your attitude will affect how successful you are.**  Effect means a result; to bring about a result.  **The lethal effects of hard drugs.**  **We could see low-lying islands in the Pacific totally disappear as a result of the**  **effect of greenhouse gases.**  https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/usage/commonly-confused-words |
| Miss, Ms or Mrs | Mrs means a married woman, **Mr and Mrs Patel.**  Miss means an unmarried woman or girl, **Miss Smith.**  Ms has been adopted ‘especially in formal and business contexts as an alternative to Mrs and Miss principally as a means to avoid having to specify a woman’s marital status (regarded as irrelevant, intrusive, or potentially discriminatory)’.  https://en.oxforddictionaries.com |
| complement or compliment | Complement means  1. A thing that contributes extra features to something else in such a way as to improve or emphasize its quality.  **Local ales provide the perfect complement to fine food.**  2. A number or quantity of something, especially that required to make a group complete.  **At the moment we have a full complement of staff.**  Compliment means praise or admiration.  **She paid me an enormous compliment.**  https://en.oxforddictionaries.com |
| practice or practise | Practice (noun) means  1. The actual application or use of an idea, belief, or method, as opposed to theories relating to it.  **The practice of teaching.**  2. The carrying out or exercise of a profession, especially that of a doctor or lawyer.  **He abandoned medical practice for the Church.**  3. The business or premises of a doctor or lawyer.  **Dr Apps has a practice in Neasham Road.**  Practise (verb) means  1. Perform (an activity) or exercise (a skill) repeatedly or regularly in order to acquire, improve or maintain proficiency in it.  **I need to practise my French.**  **They were practising for the Olympics.**  2. Actively pursue or be engaged in (a particular profession or occupation)  **He began to practise law.**  **He practised as a barrister.**  https://en.oxforddictionaries.com |
| principal or principle | Principal  1. First in order of importance; main.  **The country's principal cities.**  2. The head of a school, college, or other educational institution or the most senior person in an organisation.  **I was appointed principal of the new school.**  Principle or principles  1. A rule or belief governing one's behaviour.  **Struggling to be true to their own principles.**  2. A fundamental truth or proposition that serves as the foundation for a system of belief or behaviour or for a chain of reasoning.  **The basic principles of justice.**  https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/principle |
| break or brake | Break means  Separate into pieces as a result of a blow, shock, or strain.  Sustain an injury involving the fracture of a bone.  **The rope broke with a loud snap.**  **She had broken her leg in two places.**  Brake means a device for slowing or stopping a moving vehicle, typically by applying pressure to the wheels.  **He slammed on his brakes.**  https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/usage/commonly-confused-words |
| stationary or stationery | Stationary means not moving or not intended to be moved.  **A car collided with a stationary vehicle.**  Stationery means writing and other office materials.  **A range of stationery.**  https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/usage/commonly-confused-words |
| ABOUT THIS GUIDE  I worked as a teacher for eighteen years and I am now a study skills tutor working with university students. I am certainly not an expert on language and I struggle, along with the students, to get it right. Please contact me at davidlincoln560@gmail.com if you see any errors.  David Lincoln | |