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Introduction

If you read our original *Dirty Thirty* book, we hope you learned how to distinguish between similar words and—like other readers who contacted us—found the exercises and memory hoods useful.

Some readers suggested additional words they had trouble with and would like to see included in another book. *Another Dirty Thirty* is the result of that feedback. We think that you'll enjoy it and that it will help you choose the right word with confidence.

You'll find an explanation after each set of words (usually a pair, sometimes trios or even quartets). After the explanation, you'll have a short exercise to make sure you understand and to help lock the meanings in your memory. (You'll be able to check your knowledge immediately, because answers are upside-down at the bottom of each exercise.)

After every six exercises, you'll have a pair of cumulative exercises including all the words covered in those six. So in all, you'll have forty exercises—one on each specific group of confusable words, as well as ten cumulative exercises.

We hope that you enjoy learning about these words, that you have fun using them, and that they help you in your speaking and writing.

Aid-Aide

To *aid* (verb) is to help out or assist, and *aid* (noun) is the help given: “They hurried in to aid the flood victims, who deeply appreciated the aid provided.”

An *aide* is a helper, an assistant. The term is most-often applied to a junior officer whose duty is to accompany and assist a senior officer: “The general’s aide made sure that everything was in order.” But it can be applied to anyone whose role is to assist (to aid) someone else.

NOTE: Although it’s not as likely to cause confusion, it’s worth noting here that *AIDS* is the name given to a serious and widespread health problem (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome).

Our aide has prepared a little exercise to aid your retention.

Exercise: Aid-Aide

In each numbered item, circle or underline your choice.

1. The nurse's aid/aide came to the aid/aide of the overworked EMT.
2. The aid/aide she provided may have aided the recovery of the injured fire chief's aid/aide.
3. The student who was given the job of instructor's aid/aide was supposed to provide aid/aide to struggling freshmen.
4. The braided cord on his shoulder identified him as the personal aid/aide to the commander (his aid/aide de camp).
5. When the doctor and his aid/aide arrived, they were welcomed by the maid, who provided aid/aide to the admiral's aid/aide.
6. The aid's/aide's grateful family offered to pay the maid for her aid/aide to the aid/aide. (*Optional bonus:* But she graciously demured/demurred.)
7. The braid displayed by the aid/aide was an aid/aide to identifying him.
8. During the briefing, the aid/aide displayed the map of the area, which was a valuable aid/aide to understanding the situation.
9. After the parade, the aid/aide was dismayed by the lack of aid/aide provided by the physician's aid/aide.
10. The professor's aid/aide gave the students this spelling aid/aide: "The word for an assisting person ends with an *e*, like *he* and *she*. So if you're talking about a he or she, end the word with an *e* (aide). But if you're talking about help, *don't do* it—instead, end with a *d* (aid)."

1. aide, aid; 2. aid, aide; 3. aide, aid; 4. aide, aid; 5. aide, aid, aide;
6. aide's, aid, aide (demurred); 7. aide, aid; 8. aide, aid; 9. aide, aid, aide;
10. aide, aid.

Allude-Refer

We're in a slightly awkward position here, because our own opinion about these words doesn't precisely line up with the opinions of many other advisors. To be fair, let's start with the opinion of those others.

They say that *allude* should be used only to mean an indirect reference, as when a speaker doesn't choose to specifically name whatever's referred to. For example, if Joe says "I know your husband has had some difficulty with the authorities..." he's alluding to those difficulties. But if he says "I know your husband has been arrested three times on bad-check charges..." he's referring to them.

We could list at least a half-dozen respected references that tell us to use *allude* in that way only. So why do we demur? Why don't we go along with those authorities? Well, we do, sort of. That is, we advise (or at least suggest) that you follow that practice, but only because your readers and listeners may well have been taught that it's wrong to do otherwise, and may think ill of you if you don't.

The reason we don't support it whole-heartedly is simple—lots of intelligent and highly competent writers and speakers choose to ignore the rule. They use *allude* even when whatever's referred to is clearly identified.

So our bottom-line advice is to use *allude* only in indirect reference, and to use *refer* to mean direct reference. And we'll ask you follow that advice in doing the next set of exercises.

Exercise: Allude-Refer

1. No, she didn't mention you by name, but I feel sure she was alluding/referring to you.
2. The song "My Girl Sadie" alludes/refers to the singer's sweetheart, but the poem "That Certain Someone" simply alludes/refers to the object of affection.
3. Careful speakers often avoid naming names, and simply allude/refer to those they're criticizing.
4. It may be good practice to allude/refer to the person you're praising, and to allude/refer to the object of your criticism.
5. He used the phrase "that unpleasant incident at the Christmas party" in alluding/referring to the boss's misbehavior.
6. In the beginning of his nominating speech, he made several allusions/references to the candidate before directly alluding/referring to her by name.
7. She said "You-know-who called again today," alluding/referring to the young man her daughter liked.
8. She alluded/referred to the winner by name, and alluded/referred to the others by mentioning "the admirable competitors."
9. The preacher alluded/referred to the passage, citing chapter and verse.
10. I suspect several of the men felt he was alluding/referring to them when he spoke against sins of overindulgence.

1. alluding; 2. refers, alludes; 3. allude; 4. refer, allude; 5. alluding;
6. allusions, referring; 7. alluding; 8. referred, alluded; 9. referred;
10. alluding.

Amend-Emend

If asked to pronounce these words, you'd probably make a distinct difference in their first sounds—saying *A*-mend and *EE*-mend. But, in our ordinary conversation, a lot of that difference disappears. Most people begin both words with something like an *uh* sound (a *schwa*), so they'd sound a lot alike. To add to the confusion, they overlap in meaning: if you *amend* or *emend*, you're making a change.

What kind of change? Here the road divides. A purist would say that if you *emend* something, you're removing faults. (The word comes from Latin *emendare*, to take out flaws or problems.) That same purist would say that to *amend* simply means to add something. If we revise our grocery list by changing “kauphy” to “coffee,” we've *emended* the list. But if we add items, we *amend* it.

But to many people, the words mean pretty much the same thing. So who's right? As with so many questions about linguistic matters, there's no clear answer. Some people insist that the words have different meanings, while others ignore the distinction.

And where do we come down on the issue? Well, we respect both sides, but lean more toward the non-purists. One reason is history. Since the 15th century, *amend* has been used to mean “make improvements, or emend.” A second reason is that many people use the words interchangeably (though *emend* is much less common).

The last reason is etymology. We gave the origin of *emend* above, so what's the origin of *amend*? It's the same. From the Latin *ex* and *mendum*, meaning removing flaws. So the fact that they come from the same source adds some credence to the idea that they can mean pretty much the same.

OUR ADVICE: Believe what you wish about these words, but behave as if you believe the purists. Don't overuse *emend*, or you'll sound stuffy. And—most importantly—remember that you don't have to use either. Our language is rich with near-synonyms, so say “improve” or “edit” or plain “fix” whenever you like.

Now we'll ask you to put on your purist's hat to do an exercise.

Exercise: Amend-Emend

1. In doing this exercise, the purist would say we're amending/emending the sentences.
2. If I want to add another item (number 11, say), I'd be amending/emending the exercise.
3. The purist would probably say that the Bill of Rights was a way to amend/emend (add to) the Constitution, not necessarily to amend/emend (improve) it.
4. After I draft this exercise, I'll send it to "She-who-must-be-obeyed" for any amendments/emendations she'd care to make.
5. The purist wanting to make up with a friend would likely say "let's make amends/emends," rather than "let's make amends/emends."
6. This is a good list of things we'll need, but I'd like to amend/emend it with a few more items.
7. And I see that some of the items are repeated, so I'll amend/emend the list by striking them out.
8. The editor did a good job of amending/emending the text, correcting several of my typos.
9. And she amended/emended it by adding a few items I'd forgotten.
10. So, to sum up: to amend/emend is to correct or improve; to amend/emend is simply to add something.

1. emending; 2. amending; 3. amend, emend; 4. emendations;
5. amends, amends; 6. amend; 7. emend; 8. emending; 9. amended;
10. emend, amend.