

Homophones & Commonly Confused Words

English

Level 2 Writing

The 12 pairs examiners flag most often · 4 parts · 40 marks

The rules in one place

Words	How to choose
their / there / they're	their = belonging to them (their car). there = a place, or "there is/are". they're = they are.
your / you're	your = belonging to you. you're = you are. Test: can you say "you are"?
its / it's	it's = it is / it has. its = belonging to it (no apostrophe – like his, hers).
to / too / two	too = also, or "more than enough" (too hot). two = 2. Otherwise to .
where / were / we're / wear	where = place. were = past of "are". we're = we are. wear = clothes.
affect / effect	affect is usually the verb (to influence). effect is usually the noun (the result). "The rain affected the match; the effect was a 2-hour delay."
practice / practise	In British English: practice = noun (a practice, football practice). practise = verb (I practise every day). Same pattern as advice/advise.
accept / except	accept = agree to / receive. except = apart from.
then / than	then = time / next. than = comparing (bigger than).
of / have (could have)	"could of" does not exist. It is could have (could've), should have, would have.
lose / loose	lose = misplace / not win. loose = not tight.
whether / weather	whether = if. weather = rain, sun, wind.

Part 1 – Choose the right word (16 marks)

Circle the correct word.

- The residents said (their / there / they're) happy with the new bins, but (their / there / they're) are still problems with collection times.
- (Your / You're) welcome to bring (your / you're) own equipment.
- The company has changed (its / it's) policy, and (its / it's) about time.

4. I would like (to / too / two) apply for the (to / too / two) vacancies you advertised; the hours are not (to / too / two) long for me.
5. The staff (where / were / we're) told (where / were / we're) to park, and (where / were / we're) all grateful.
6. The delay will (affect / effect) deliveries; the main (affect / effect) will be on Friday orders.
7. Choir (practice / practise) is on Tuesdays, so I (practice / practise) at home on Mondays.
8. Everyone (accept / except) Ravi agreed to (accept / except) the offer.
9. First check the stock, (then / than) order more if there is less (then / than) a week's supply.

Part 2 – Correct the sentence (10 marks)

Each sentence has **one** wrong word. Cross it out and write the correct word on the line.

10. I should of checked the rota before booking my holiday.
11. If we loose this contract, three jobs are at risk.
12. Please let me know weather you can attend the meeting.
13. The training had a big affect on how the team handles complaints.
14. Its been a difficult month for the whole department.
15. The new uniform is to tight around the shoulders.
16. The nurses were very kind and there advice was clear.
17. I need to practice my presentation before Thursday.
18. Your going to need a password to log in.
19. The centre is cheaper then the one in town.

Part 3 – Write your own (6 marks)

Write one sentence for each pair that uses **both** words correctly.

20. affect / effect

21. its / it's

22. accept / except

Part 4 – Spot them in a paragraph (8 marks)

This paragraph from a formal letter contains **eight** wrong words. Underline each one and write the correction above it.

I am writing to complain about the affect the roadworks are having on my business. Customers cannot find anywhere to park, so there going elsewhere, and my takings are lower then they have been for to years. I would of contacted you sooner, but I was told the work would be finished by June. Its now September. I except that the work is necessary, but I would like to know weather the council will offer any compensation to businesses who's income has been affected.

Exam tip: in the last five minutes of the Writing exam, scan your work for just three things: **their/there/they're**, **your/you're** and **its/it's**. These three pairs account for most of the homophone errors examiners report.

Homophones & Commonly Confused Words – Answers

Level 2 Writing

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Part 1

1. they're; there
2. You're; your
3. its; it's
4. to; two; too
5. were; where; we're
6. affect; effect
7. practice; practise
8. except; accept
9. then; than

Part 2

10. should **have**
11. **lose**
12. **whether**
13. **effect**
14. **It's**
15. **too** tight
16. **their** advice
17. **practise** (verb)
18. **You're**
19. cheaper **than**

Part 3 – example sentences

20. The strike will affect trains all week, and the effect on commuters will be severe.
21. It's clear the company values its staff.
22. I accept your apology, but everyone except you arrived on time.

Award 2 marks per sentence: 1 for each word used correctly. A sentence that uses one word correctly and the other wrongly scores 1.

Part 4 – corrected paragraph

I am writing to complain about the **effect** the roadworks are having on my business. Customers cannot find anywhere to park, so **they're** going elsewhere, and my takings are lower **than** they have been for **two** years. I would **have** contacted you sooner, but I was told the work would be finished by June. **It's** now September. I **accept** that the work is necessary, but I would like to know **whether** the council will offer any compensation to businesses **whose** income has been affected.

There are nine corrections shown; "who's → whose" is a bonus (who's = who is; whose = belonging to). Any eight scores full marks.

Where students lose marks on homophones

- Relying on spell-check habits – the computer will not flag "their" when you meant "there", because both are real words.
- Writing quickly and never re-reading. Homophone errors are almost always slips, not gaps in knowledge – proofreading fixes most of them.
- Treating "could of" as correct because it sounds like "could've". Write "could have" every time.