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**HANDBOOK OF COMMONLY
MISUSED & ABUSED WORDS**

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166

**WORDS YOU COULD
BE MISUSING**

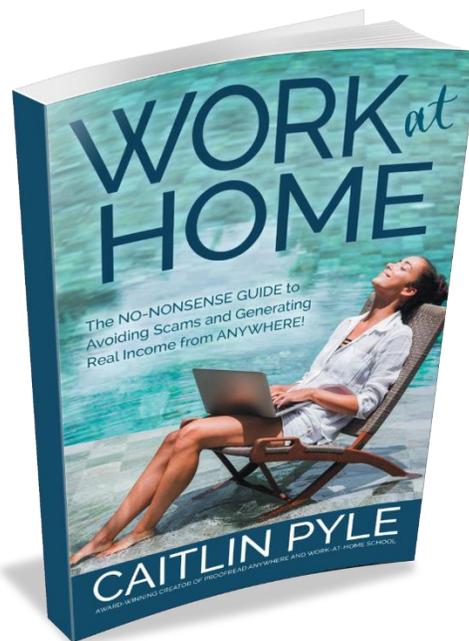


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INTRODUCTION

We've all had that moment. Your eyes are weak. You're tired. You've been proofreading for hours, and you come across something that just doesn't look right.

You have three options:

- 1) You can go to our Facebook group, post a question and wait for a response, hoping it will be a quick one.
- 2) You can search the Internet, looking for that thing with feathers, the castle in the sky, the perfect website with your answer right there at the top -- and then pray you'll remember the source in case you need it later.
- 3) You can look right here!

That's right, folks! All those pesky homophones, misspellings, and typos you torture yourself with are now in this handy guide, ready for you whenever your brain malfunctions. You can now easily find the correct word without spending wasted minutes searching online.

The words are alphabetical and, better yet, they come with practical and humorous examples to get you on your way. The correct wording appears in a different color so you never have to wonder if you got it right.

NUMBERS

'90s

Although we've seen numerous ways of writing years, this is **THE ONLY** way to write it numerically when it's abbreviated. Not 90's, not '90's, and not 90s.

30(b)(6)

Often written as 30b6 or 30B6, this must have the (b) and (6) in parentheses. *By the way, a 30(b)(6) is a deposition in which a party can depose an organization or company through several witnesses rather than an individual deposition.*

401(k)

This one turns up a lot! While you may see it as 401k or 401K, the correct way to write it is with the parentheses.

LIST OF WORDS

A

accept/except

Most often this is a typo. When you *accept* something, you are receiving it. *Except* usually means unless or excluding but can sometimes mean to leave out. If you focus on the ex in *except* and think of *exclude*, it should help you keep them straight.

EXAMPLE: I would accept the fact that you *accept* my apology, *except* for the fact that you stuck out your tongue when you said it.

adjuster/adjustor

It's become popular, for whatever reason, to use "adjustor." It's incorrect. The suffixes -er, -or, and -ist are considered agent markers because they create words that stand for a person that does something. But in English usage, the -er ending is preferred.

advice/advise

"Of all the email *advice* I've gotten regarding my warts, using duct tape and sandpaper was the weirdest."

advise/advice

To *advise* someone is to give them *advice*. I'd advise you to know the difference.

a lot/alot

ALWAYS two words. People miss this a *lot*. Don't be one of them.

air bag/airbag

Airbag is always one word when in reference to its use in automobiles. If it's used to mean something else, it *could* be one word -- but that's not very common, so use the two-word version when it's not related to cars.

albeit

This is a conjunction that means "although" or "even though" and is often preceded by a comma.

EXAMPLE: He appeared in court in his underwear, *albeit* briefly.

allude/elude

To *allude* to something means to speak of it or reference it in an indirect way.

Elude means to escape or avoid something, sometimes by being clever.

altogether/all together Both of these can be correct depending on the usage. *Altogether* means as a whole or completely, no holds barred, as in, “It’s best to avoid tight pants altogether.”

All together means all at the same time, and if you can separate the two words in your phrase, then all together is what you want.

EXAMPLE: The bees buzzed *all together*. The bees all buzzed together.

analysis/analyses *Analysis* is singular; *analyses* is plural.

anymore/any more *Anymore* means no longer. *Any more* means a negative quantity.

EXAMPLE: “I don’t need *any more* money” vs. “I don’t have money *anymore*.”

anytime/any time *Anytime* means whenever. “Send me a transcript anytime.”

Any time means any amount of time. “Do you have any time to proofread this 8000-page transcript?”

“Of course I do!”

anyway/any way

Anyway is used to add support to a previous statement or to mean in any case. *Any way* means in any manner or by any means.

apart/a part

Apart can function as an adverb or a preposition. As an adverb, it means separated by some distance or time. As a preposition, it is paired with the word “from” and means besides.

A part, on the other hand, simply means a piece or section of something.

EXAMPLE: *Apart* from earning money, I have no interest in working and would just like *a part* of the billion-dollar lottery.

ascent/assent

These homophones are often confused. *Ascent* means to climb or move upward.

EXAMPLE: The *ascent* to the top of the chocolate hill was worth it.

Assent means to give the go-ahead or approval.

EXAMPLE: She gave her *assent* to her board of directors for the new fairy garden.

If you have trouble keeping the two apart, (did you see what I did there?), remember that the opposite of ascent is descent, both with the “sc.”

attain/obtain

These two words are very similar. Both are verbs, and both end in “-tain;” however, one has to do with effort, and one has to do with possession.

To *attain* something is to put effort into achieving or accomplishing a goal. To *obtain* something, you would have something physical in your hands to show for it.

EXAMPLE: “She worked hard to *attain* her goal of becoming a superstar like Mary Katherine Gallagher. In order to go further, she had to obtain a plaid skirt and white stockings.”

awhile/a while

A *while* is a noun phrase used to represent a period of time.

The singular word, *awhile*, means for a short time.

Generally, if it is preceded by a preposition like “for” or “in,” use the two-word version.

all ready/already

Already means so soon or before now, while *all ready* means ready in every way.

EXAMPLE: Are you leaving *already*? We were *all ready* to play a rousing game of charades!

altar/alter

Alter: to modify, change or adjust.

Altar: an elevated or raised place used primarily in religious ceremonies.

Here's an interesting word: ZEUGMA. It means the use of a word in more than one sense.

B

basis/bases

Basis provides the foundation for something or a reason for doing something. *Base* means founded on or the part on which something is supported. It is also the plural of basis.

EXAMPLE: She worked on a part-time *basis* until so many court reporters wanted her that she had to turn work away.

Her determination to work is *based* on her intense need to go shopping.

boarder/border

A *boarder* is either someone who rides a snowboard or someone who pays rent to live and eat in someone else's home. A *border* is a kind of boundary on an outer edge, like on a rug or around a country.

back seat/backseat

This is a toughie, since Merriam-Webster says backseat, as a noun, is one word. However, most other references say that *back seat* should be two words, with the word “back” modifying the noun “seat.”

Backseat as one word should be used as an adjective, as in backseat driver. Same goes for front seat. It is two words. As a tip, if you can use “a seat in the back” in place of “back seat,” then use two words.

baited/bated

You will usually come across *baited* when a transcript is referring to someone using criticism to harass or try to create anger in someone else. *Bated* means to diminish or reduce the strength of something.

EXAMPLE: He *baited* me to lie on the stand. We waited with *bated* breath for the verdict.

bear/bare

Bare refers to being naked or exposing something. *Bear* can mean to have and can also mean a large furry animal.

EXAMPLE: If you can bear to read this example, I will give you the bare truth: bears usually run around in their bare hides.

build/billed

You will most likely come across this as a typo. But, just in case, *billed* is a verb and is the past tense of bill. *Build* is also a verb meaning to construct, order, develop, or strengthen.

breach/breech

Breach is to disregard or fail to do what the law requires. *Breech* is basically your back end (butt) and often refers to a baby that is not turned the right way in utero. However, it can also refer to a part of a gun at the back end of a barrel.

break down/breakdown The first is a transitive verb that means to make something fall apart, collapse, or make ineffective. “The talks will *break down* if we don’t provide chocolate.”

Breakdown is a noun that refers to the failure of something to continue. “I’ve never known a proofreader to have a *breakdown*. Another great reason to hire them!”

break/brake

Break can mean several different things, including: to terminate something, shatter a record, separate or fracture a bone, violate the law or breach security. *Brake* is something that causes friction to slow or stop a device.

breath/breadth

Breath is a noun and is the air you take in or expel from your lungs. *Breadth* is the wide range or full width of something.

breathe

This is a verb meaning the act of drawing air into your lungs and expelling it out of your lungs.

C

calendar/calender

While the word *calender* is real (meaning to roll between plates in order to smooth something out), the word you are most likely reading should be *calendar* with an “-ar” ending.

canceled/cancelled

Most British spellings double an “l” consonant when followed by a single vowel. Americans? Not so much. *Canceled* is correct.

capital/capitol

Capitol, with an o, refers to a building unless it is capitalized.

In that case, it refers specifically to the Capitol Building in Washington, D.C. *Capital* can refer to a city, wealth, or an uppercase letter.

career/carrier

Again, this is probably just a matter of checking for the correct spelling. *Career* can easily be seen as *carrier* and vice versa, so watch for this one carefully.

causal/casual

Both *causal* and *casual* are adjectives but can be easily typed incorrectly since only the “s” and “u” are swapped. Just keep a lookout when this word pops up!

cease/seize

To *cease* is to stop or end something. To *seize* is to take hold of something, sometimes by force.

EXAMPLE: It will never *cease* to amaze me how long it took to *seize* the opportunity of freelancing.

cede/seed/concede

Cede is to surrender possession of something. *Seed* will probably just show up as a misspelling. *Concede* is to yield, admit that something is true, or surrender.

cell phone/cellphone

The correct version? Cell phone. Just like home phone or work phone.

sensor/sensor/censure

A *censor* can be a person who *censors* something or removes it for being offensive. This sounds exactly like *sensor*, which is a unit or device that can detect such things as light, sound, motion, etc.

A *censure* is pronounced (sen-sher) and is a criticism or judgment.

chose/choose

Chose is simply the past tense of *choose*. Make sure your verb tenses match and you'll be fine.

cite/site/sight

Cite means to reference or make mention of. *Site* is a piece of land where something will be located, or the place or scene where an event occurred.

Sight is the way to see something or an object that has been seen.

complaint/compliant

This one is **TRICKY!** Since the two letters that could screw up the entire meaning are right in the middle of the word, be careful not to let your eyes gloss right over the “whole” word.

compliment/complement “You complete me.” Other than being a famous line from a movie, it’s also the basic definition of a *complement*. “You look fabulous.” Now **THAT’S** a *compliment*.

comprise/compose

If I say that a proofreader's personality is composed of brains and grit, I would be describing the substance of a proofreader.

CAUTION! Never use “*comprised of*.” You can say, “The team comprises eight players,” but if you want to use “of,” use “*composed*” instead.

contact/contract

A *contract* is a legally binding agreement between businesses or parties. A *contact* can be a noun or a verb. It can mean to touch or communicate with another but can also mean two or more things that are within touching distance or within communicating distance of each other.

conscious/conscience

A *conscience* is an inner mindfulness based on morals that makes us aware of our actions. To be *conscious* is to be awake and able to think. You must be *conscious* to do excellent proofreading!

council/counsel

Council: an assembly of people brought together to make rules or provide guidance.

Counsel: simply means to give advice.

criteria/criterion

Criterion used to be the singular form while *criteria* was the plural. In modern usage, however, *criteria* is becoming the singular and *criterion* is disappearing.

cue/queue

A signal to prompt an action or get a performer to start is a *cue*.

Queue is simply a line of people or, in computer lingo, a list of jobs waiting to process.

D

deep-seated

/deep-seeded

Although we'd like to use deep-seeded, the correct and **ONLY** form is deep-seated. It stems from the "seat of emotions." And, yes, it is always hyphenated.

depravation/deprivation

You may come across the need to use *depravation* when speaking of someone who is corrupt; however, it's more likely *deprivation*, which means to be deprived of something that you really need, like a candy bar.

device/devise

A *device* is a tool, like a pencil sharpener. It's a noun. *Devise* is a verb and means to come up with a plan or idea after considerable thought. Here's the tricky part, though. Every once in a while, *devise* is used as a noun in law, and it means something that is deeded in a will -- so watch for this one carefully.

diagnoses/diagnosis

Diagnoses is simply the plural form of *diagnosis*. Only one letter separates this noun from its plural, so use those eagle eyes!

discreet/discrete

Discreet is to use modesty, prudence, or good judgment.

Discrete indicates a separate part or entity.

distributor/distributer

The most likely form you want is *distributor*, which means a supplier of goods. A *distributer* is a car part.

do/due

Due to is often misspelled as *do to*. Also, it should be *due process*, not *do process*.

We make *do* with what we have.

E

every/ever

This is just one of those errors that your eye may not catch. Watch out!

every time/everytime

In the English language, *everytime* is not considered an acceptable compound word. Use *every time*.

every day/everyday

Everyday is an adjective to describe things that happen *every day*.

Incorrect: I go to work everyday.

Correct: Every day I am glad to go to work.

every one/everyone

Everyone simply means everyone as a whole. *Every one* means each person that is being referenced.

every thing/everything

Just like the others, the compound word refers to the collective and the two separate words refer to individual entities.

exuberant/exorbitant

Exuberant means in exceptionally high spirits.

Exorbitant means unreasonably expensive.

except/expect

Yet another set of words that can easily be confused. Don't be afraid to look twice!

F

fare/fair

Fair is impartial, unbiased, principled; *fare* is the sum that is charged for a ride.

fathom/phantom

The most likely definition you will encounter will be that of *fathom*, meaning an understanding. It can also mean a unit of length to measure water. Just don't confuse it with *phantom*, which means ghost.

faze/phase

Phase is a short period of time in a sequence of events.

Faze is to aggravate or disturb the composure of something.

filed/field/filled

Watch out for these easily misspelled words!

follow up/follow-up

One's a verb (*Follow up* with your doctor!) and one's a noun (See me in a week for your *follow-up*!).

formerly/formally

Formerly: at a previous time.

Formally: with official form, custom or rule.

forth/fourth

Make sure you don't miss the extra letter when referring to the number.

front seat/backseat

Although it drives me crazy when I see it, even Merriam-Webster considers *backseat* (one word) as a noun while front seat is still considered two separate words. See backseat for more info.

G

gambit/gamut

Gambit: a device, action, or opening remark, typically one entailing a degree of risk that is calculated to gain an advantage. *Gamut*: the complete range or scope of something.

H

heel/heal

Again, just a matter of watching for the correct spelling.

hole/whole

It's easy to miss the "w" when you've been reading for a while.

I

illicit/elicit

Illicit: conflicting with accepted morality.

Elicit: to bring out or evoke (especially with emotions).

imminent/eminent

Most likely you want *imminent*, which means that it is about to occur.

Eminent refers to someone who stands above another in terms of position or quality.

indicted/indicated

To *indict* someone is a legal process that formally accuses or charges someone with a crime. The only difference between the two is that little “a.”

insofar/in so far

Almost always followed by *as*, *insofar* is always one word.

EXAMPLE: *Insofar* as we know, he is guilty.

insure/ensure

Always use *insure* when referring to insurance policies. When you want to make something certain, use *ensure*.

intact/in tact

Intact is **ALWAYS** one word.

into/in to

Into is a preposition that basically has to do with movement or direction. When *in* is used as a separate word, it indicates position.

EXAMPLE: Her chocolate was *in* her pocket. She would get *into* trouble if it melted.

invoke/evoke

You can *invoke* (bring forth) a law to plead your case. You may *evoke* (bring forth) some emotions from the judge.

it's/its

Just make sure the contraction (it is) has the apostrophe. *It's* easy to miss!

J

judgment/judgement

Judgment without the “e” is the preferred spelling. *Judgement* is the British spelling.

K

kernel/colonel

This one is just weird, but *colonel* is pronounced *kernel*. Just go with colonel unless the reference is to corn.

L

layout/lay out

A *layout* is either a noun or an adjective and usually refers to a plan or an arrangement of some kind.

Lay out is a verb phrase and means to make a plan or explain something.

EXAMPLE: Let me *lay out* the basis for my argument. You will see by the *layout* of the room that Colonel Mustard must have done it with a rope.

lead/led

This is a confusing one. *Lead* (pronounced led) is found in pencils.

Lead (pronounced leed) is a verb meaning to guide someone towards something. *Led* is the past tense of *lead*. Have I led you astray?

less/lest

Less is an adjective and means smaller in amount, lower in quality or fewer in number. *Lest* is an adverb that means that or for fear that.

EXAMPLE: Don't take *less* money for quality work *lest* you ruin the standard for others.

lessen/lesson

Take a *lesson* from me and *lessen* your workload by becoming more efficient.

let's/lets

Again, watch for the contraction *let's* (let us).

Lets is a verb that means to allow something to take place.

lien/lean

A *lien* is a legal term that gives the right to keep possession of property that someone else owns until a debt is paid. You can *lean* on someone to pay their debt.

lightening/lightning

Watch for the "e" in this one. It's the difference between making something lighter or an electrical discharge.

loose/lose

This one can get missed quite easily. Be careful!

lo and behold

This is always *lo* and behold, never low and behold.

M

manager/manger

ALL.THE.TIME. Seriously. And it doesn't come up on spell check because manger isn't spelled incorrectly.

maybe/may be

Make sure that you mean *possibly true* when using *may be* and *by chance* if you are using *maybe*.

me/my/any

You may see this one before “questions” sometimes: “I don't have *my* more questions for you.” or “Have you understood *any* questions today?” This may sound right, but it's VERY likely in context the word “any” was misstroked for “my.”

moneys/monies

Funky-looking as it is, *monies* is the correct spelling of the plural of *money*.

N

nevertheless

One word always.

nonetheless

One word always.

notwithstanding

One word always.

O

onboard/on board

A lot of people prefer “aboard” rather than the two words *on board*. As far as the one-word version, think of *onboard* as an adjective.

EXAMPLE: The onboard guests didn’t realize they were *on board* the Titanic.

onto/on to

The preposition *onto* should not be confused with the adverb *on* followed by the preposition *to*.

EXAMPLE: She climbed *onto* the bed so she could be more comfortable as she moved *on to* her next transcript.

overdo/overdue

It’s easy for these to be mistyped by your court reporter. Watch for this!

P

p.m./a.m.

Check the title pages and start/end times, plus times that are listed in parentheses to make sure the correct ones are used.

palate/pallet/palette

Pallet is a small, hard bed.

Palate is the upper surface of your mouth, and *palette* is what an artist uses to mix colors.

passed/past

Make sure that *past* is used to refer to time that has gone by.

Passed is the past tense of the verb “to pass.”

peace of mind/piece

It’s peace of mind unless you’re giving someone a piece of your mind!

pedal/peddle/petal

A bicycle has *pedals*; a flower has *petals*; and a merchant *peddles* his crafts.

per se

Just watch for this, as it may often show up as “per say” or “persey.”

perimeter/parameter

Parameter indicates a limit, whereas *perimeter* is the outline of a physical space.

perimeter/parameter

I can *perimeter* your interest in taking a *perimeter* at a new online course that will take you to the *perimeter* of your career.

plural/pleural

Pleural is a medical term, so make sure you watch for this -- especially when working on a medical transcript.

precede/proceed

“Before you preceded to...” **NOPE!**
“Before you proceeded to...” is correct.

prescribe/proscribe

VERY TRICKY! Both are legal/medical terms that can easily appear in a transcript.

Proscribe means to forbid by law. Prescribe, in the context of transcripts, usually has to do with prescribing drugs or treatment of some sort.

prima fascia/prima facie

The correct term is *prima facie*, which means accepted as correct until proven otherwise. Any time you see a legal or Latin term you are unfamiliar with, Google it!

principal/principle

Remember: The principal of your school is your *pal*. It also has many financial connotations. The other form of the word, *principle*, is a basic generalization that is accepted as true or a moral belief or rule.

prospective/perspective Your *perspective* is simply your way of looking at things.

Prospective will be something that makes reference to the future and is likely to happen.

R

rationale/rational

Use your reasoning (*rationale*) to be reasonable (*rational*).

realty/reality

A single letter can alter the meaning. Keep those eagle eyes fresh!

revolve/resolve

Again, this is just going to be a matter of making sure your eyes are seeing the correct version.

S

scarred/scared

It's easy to miss this one if you're tired. Give your eyes a rest -- then don't be *scared* to dive back in.

scribner's/ scrivener's error

A *scrivener* is a writer or a professional copywriter, so a *scrivener's error* has to do with a writing error. Believe it or not, it's used frequently in legal writing to indicate an unintentional clerical error that can be rectified by the court acting *sua sponte*, on its own.

Scribner's error is just a misspelling.

seat belt/seatbelt

Stick with the two-word version. Some sites might say that one word is okay, but it's best to be consistent.

seen/scene

Both correct. Both spelled right. Just watch be careful that you don't miss the "c."

segue/segway

Spell check may not catch this one, since a brand name motorized vehicle, called a Segway, is now on the market. But if you're needing the word that means to transition from one idea to another, the correct spelling is *segue* and is pronounced the same way.

sell/sale

If you catch these words being incorrectly interchanged, it's probably just an error because of typing so fast.

sense/cents

Same thing here. Just watch that the reporter didn't inadvertently use the wrong spelling of the word.

setup/set up

The one-word version is a noun, whereas the two-word version is a verb.

severed/served

It could do a lot of damage to get these two mixed up.

Consider the following sentence: "He served her ribs." Now switch the two words around. See what I mean?!

sic/sick

Sic can mean to attack. "I will *sic* my dog on you." However, you will see it most often in a transcript to mean *intentionally so written*.

so be it/sobeit

Sobeit as one word means provided that or as long as. To separate the words as three makes it a clause that means an acceptance (let it be so) or a resignation (and so it is).

stake/steak

A *stake* can be a share in something or a wooden or metal post. *Steak* is a slice of meat.

stationary/stationery

Don't be *stationary* (standing still) if you want to get ahead. Get out your *stationery* and make some contacts. A good trick for knowing the difference is to remember that a letter and stationery both have an "e" in them.

status/statute/statue

These words are easily confused. Do a word search in your transcript to make sure you get them all correct.

straightforward

Always one word.

supposed to/suppose to The past tense of suppose is supposed which happens to be the same spelling as the adjective *supposed*. But the correct version with the word *to* is *supposed*.

#whosaysEnglishiseasy

EXAMPLE: Correct: I am *supposed to* get a good night's sleep. Incorrect: I am *suppose to* finish that transcript by Monday.

T

than/then

Then can be an adjective or an adverb and is used to indicate something at that time.

Than is a conjunction that is used to compare things.

there/their/they're

All correct in *their own way*, *they're* easily confused when *there* are fast fingers typing.

through/threw

Homophones that are usually easy to catch.

thorough/though

These two words look so similar that they are not as easy to catch. Watch out for this pair.

time frame/timeframe

I've seen it both ways -- and some court reporters have a preference for the one-word version -- but *time frame* is two separate words.

timeline/time line

Of all the words in this list, this one probably has the most controversy. The two-word version is for a series of events that are in a chronological order. The one-word version only refers to an actual physical representation of events. Think of the one-word version of being something that you would need to hang on the classroom wall.

to/too/two

It almost goes without saying you should watch for these, but sometimes the smallest mistakes are the easiest ones to miss.

toward/towards

Towards and *toward* are actually interchangeable. It would be best to ask your court reporter for his/her preference -- then be consistent!

tortious/tortuous/ torturous

Tortious has to do with civil wrongdoing, while *tortuous* means having many twists and turns. **ONE LETTER DIFFERENCE!** *Torturous*, I know.

#wordsarecrazy

traveled/travelled

Almost always, the American version of words like these use a single “L” and the British use the double “L”.

trial/trail

Once again, it’s best to do a word search in your document to make sure all your words are the same so you don’t miss any easy typos like this one.

V

vendor/vender

The correct word is *vendor*.

veracious/voracious

You are *voracious* if you want all the chocolate for yourself, you greedy pig. However, chances are you're going to come across *veracious* in a transcript. It means a witness who habitually speaks the truth.

viscous/vicious

Both of these are adjectives, but one refers to snarly, angry behavior, while the other refers to something as being sticky (viscous).

W

waive/wave

You can *waive* your rights (do without), but you can't *wave* your rights.

where/wear/were

Another set of words that are all spelled correctly but are easy to miss. Again, do a spell check throughout your document to make sure you didn't miss anything.

wherever/where ever

The word *wherever* means at what place. It's always one word.

wherewithal/ where with all

What's up with this weird word? *Wherewithal* means having the means to do something. It is always one word.

EXAMPLE: She doesn't have the *wherewithal* to get the job done since she didn't even take the class.

whether/weather

You probably know these definitions just fine, but sometimes they just get typed incorrectly.

who's/whose

Use *whose* to ask to whom something belongs.

EXAMPLE: *Whose* is this lovely spelling dictionary?

wholly/holy

Watch for the adverb *wholly* when the transcript refers to something that means entirely or fully. If it's a religious reference or part of an exclamation, use *holy*.

work out/workout

The one-word version is when the word is used as a noun or an adjective. The two-word version is a verbal phrase.

EXAMPLE: If this appeal doesn't *work out*, I'll need a *workout* to relieve my stress.

worker's comp/ workers' comp

Let's settle this once and for all: the correct form is *workers' comp*. **PERIOD.**

worse/
worst-case scenario

The vocal sound is “worse” case scenario, but the correct spelling is *worst-case scenario*.

EXAMPLE: The *worst-case scenario* is that I would have to move back in with my parents.

Y

you attorney vs.
your attorney

This one is easy to miss, but it happens
FREQUENTLY!

Z

ZIP Code

ALL.THE.TIME. No exceptions. ZIP Code is a trademark of the United States Postal Service (really!), and this is the proper spelling. Not zip code, ZIP code, or Zip code.

Yes, technically the trademark has expired, but there is no reason to change the spelling of a word the United States Postal Service invented, is there?