

## GOOD USAGE

The customary use of words or groups of words is called **usage**. Good usage is the use of acceptable language according to the rules of standard English. Good usage requires the following:

1. Right use of a word
2. Correct grammar
3. Clear language form
4. Effective form of expression
5. Acceptable style

### **A. Knowing the Right Word**

Study the following list of words and expressions which are commonly misused.

1. A—an  
*A* is used before words beginning with a consonant sound. (He was a very tall man.)  
*An* is used before words beginning with a vowel sound. (James is an artist.)
2. Accept—except  
*Accept* means to receive. (He will accept your apology.)  
*Except* means to leave out. (The story is good, if you except some errors.)
3. Affect—effect  
*Affect* means to influence or to change. (The wind may affect the crops.)  
*Effect* means to bring to pass. (His method will effect great reforms.)
4. Aggravate—irritate  
*Aggravate* means to make worse. (He aggravated the situation by his remarks.)  
*Irritate* means to excite or to upset. (Rudeness will irritate anyone.)
5. “Ain’t  
*Ain’t* is not an acceptable contraction for any word in our language.
6. All ready—already  
*All ready* means that all are prepared. (We are all ready for the race.)  
*Already* means previously. (He had already completed the assigned tasks.)
7. All right—alright  
*All right* means entirely correct. (The problems are all right.)  
*Alright* is not a word. Avoid its use.
8. All together—altogether  
*All together* means in a group. (We are all together at last.)  
*Altogether* means wholly or thoroughly. (Father was altogether right.)
9. Almost—most  
*Almost* is an adverb meaning nearly. (Almost all students can do this.)  
*Most* is an adjective, modifying a noun. (Most American children are happy.)

10. Among—between  
**Among** refers to three or more persons or things. (Pan roamed among the trees.)  
**Between** refers to only two persons or things. (Choose between good and evil.)
11. Anyplace—everyplace—no place—someplace  
Use the word **where** instead of **place**. (Children are everywhere in the park.)
12. “Anywheres”  
**Anywheres** is not a word. Drop the s to form an acceptable word.
13. As—as if—like  
**As** and **as if** are subordinate conjunctions which introduce dependent clauses. (He spoke as if he knew the country well.)  
**Like** is a preposition. (They all look like angels when they are asleep.)
14. As—so  
**As** should be used in making a positive comparison. (This is as good as yours.)  
**So** should be used in making a negative comparison. (My son is not so tall.)
15. At—to  
**At** should be used to imply presence in. (I stayed at home Monday.)  
**To** should be used with motion verbs. (I went to the store yesterday.)
16. Awfully  
**Awfully** is misused colloquially for the adverbs **very** and **exceedingly**.
17. Bad—badly  
**Bad** is always used to describe a noun or pronoun. (I feel bad.)  
**Badly** always used as an adverb. (He cooks the food badly.)
18. Beside—besides  
**Beside** means next to or close to. (He stood beside the statue.)  
**Besides** means in addition to. (We expected none besides the members.)
19. Bring—take  
**Bring** is used to indicate motion toward the speaker. (Bring the order to me.)  
**Take** is used to indicate motion away from the speaker. (Take this inventory to the office.)
20. Bunch  
**Bunch** refers to things, not people. (George brought each a bunch of grapes.)
21. Burst  
**Burst** is used in both present and past tenses. (He burst all of the balloons.)  
**Bursted** and **busted** are not words.
22. Calculate  
**Calculate** means to compute, not to think. (You must calculate the cost.)

23. Can—may  
*Can* expresses ability. (I can do this hard job.)  
*May* expresses permission. (You may have three of the roses.)
24. “Completed”  
*Completed* is not a word. Use *complexioned*. (The child is dark complexioned.)
25. Could of—could have  
*Could of* is not acceptable. (I could have sent the paper.)
26. Cute  
*Cute* is colloquial and is overused. Use a more effective word. (She wore an attractive dress.)
27. Different from—different than  
*Different from* is acceptable: *different than* is not acceptable. (The books that I have are different from yours.)
28. “Disremember”  
*Disremember* should not be used for *forget*. (I forgot such things.)
29. “Enthused”  
*Enthused* is not a word. Use *enthusiastic*. (Sue is enthusiastic about golf.)
30. Etc.  
*Etc.* means *and other things*. Never use *and etc.* (Bring your paper, pen, etc.)
31. Expect—suppose  
*Expect* means to look forward to. (I expect a large crowd at the picnic.)  
*Suppose* means inclined to believe. (I suppose that he is able to work.)
32. Farther—further  
*Farther* concerns spatial distance. (He moved farther and farther away.)  
*Further* concerns distance in time or degree. (I have no further comments.)
33. Fewer—less  
*Fewer* indicated a smaller number. (I have fewer students than she.)  
*Less* refers to a decrease in amount. (There is less noise here.)
34. From—off  
*From* indicates that something has been obtained. (Did the manager accept the list of suggestions from you?)  
*Off* indicates that something has been taken away. (Take the pan off the burner.)
35. Funny—strange  
*Funny* means humorous. (I heard a funny story this morning.)  
*Strange* means unusual. (A strange dog came to our kennel.)

36. Good—well  
**Good** is always used as an adjective. (This is a good story.)  
**Well** is used as an adverb (This is well done.), except when speaking of health or appearance. It then is used as an adjective. (He looks well today.)
37. In—into  
**In** refers to a location within something. (The car is in the garage.)  
**Into** indicates motion toward the inside. (I came into the room.)
38. In back of—behind  
**In back of** should never be used. (Dan stood behind the curtain.)
39. Its—it's  
**Its** shows possession. (The class gave its consent.)  
**It's** is a contraction of **it is**. (Maybe it's under the table.)
40. Learn—teach  
**Learn** means to receive knowledge. (I learn many things each day.)  
**Teach** means to impart knowledge. (Teach me the newer method.)
41. Leave—let  
**Leave** means to go away. (We leave on the weekend.)  
**Let** means to allow. (Please let me borrow your notes.)
42. Liabile—likely  
**Liabile** expresses obligation. (He will be liable for all injuries.)  
**Likely** show probability. (It is likely that we shall meet again.)
43. Lose—loose  
**Lose** means to misplace. (Do not lose the money that you have.)  
**Loose** means free or unattached. (Frank wore a loose coat.)
44. Lots of  
**Lots of** should be replaced by **many** or **much**. (Samuel has many friends.)
45. Off of  
**Off of** should not be used. Use **from** or **off**. (She leaped from the boat.)
46. Party—person  
**Party** refers to a group of people, never to one. (The boating party left.)  
**Person** refers to a single individual. (I see only one person.)
47. Real—really  
**Real** means true or genuine. (I have a real Australian boomerang.)  
**Really** is an adverb meaning very much. (He really interested in science.)
48. Seldom ever  
**Seldom** and **ever** should not be used together. Use **rarely**. (He rarely talks.)

49. Slow—slowly  
*Slow* is usually used as an adjective. (Your clock is slow.)  
*Slowly* is used as an adverb. (Walk slowly to the corner.)
50. Sure—surely  
*Sure* is always used as an adjective. (Are you sure?)  
*Surely* is used when an adverb is needed. (He surely is slim.)
51. Try to—try and  
*Try to* should be used instead of *try and*. (Please try to finish the dress.)
52. Would of  
*Would of* should not be used. Use *would have*. (I would have given the prize.)

### PRACTICE

Underline the correct word in each of these sentences.

1. John could not help but be (affected, effected) by this sudden popularity.
2. The man walked (in, into) the room and sat down.
3. (Lots of, Many) people visit Michigan each year.
4. Must we walk much (further, farther) to reach the river?
5. How (can, may) we decide which television is the best?
6. Customs today are (different from, different than) those of the colonial era.
7. Mae Ann was the (cutest, most adorable) child that I have ever seen.
8. When the pipe (burst, bursted), the basement was completely flooded.
9. Please (accept, except) this token of our love and appreciation.
10. Mayor Hill rose and silently saluted the (bunch, crowd) of anxious citizens.
11. (In back of, Behind) the wall stood three disgruntled men.
12. No one seemed (enthused, enthusiastic) about the organization of a club.
13. Martin acted (like, as) a dictator who had become power drunk.
14. I will (try and, try to) visit the classroom each week.
15. Will it be (all right, alright) for us to go in the same bus?
16. Mother was (awfully, very) disappointed when we could not visit her.
17. The continuous noise (aggravated, irritated) the old lady.
18. There were (less, fewer) people present than we had expected.
19. I am sorry that these apples are not (as, so) ripe as those.
20. Melton gave us a (funny, strange) look when he heard our remark.
21. He told us that he saw (a, an) enormous mountain lion.
22. Do you feel (bad, badly) today?
23. He has always filled the orders (well, good).
24. The officer warned us to drive (slow, slowly) when the roads are icy.