



Mekong Wetlands Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Use Programme

Reference Notes for Editors

August 2005
MWBP Communications

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INTRODUCTION

These reference notes and word lists are intended to help Mekong Wetlands Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Use Programme (MWBP) editors ensure consistency of language use in MWBP documents and reports.

As new issues arise, additional notes will be added to this series. Before starting an editing assignment, please make sure you have the most recent version of this reference.

For punctuation and grammar, the MWBP refers to “*Grammatically Correct: The Writer's Essential Guide to Punctuation, Spelling, Style, Usage and Grammar*” (Hardcover) by Anne Stilman. Writer's Digest Books (August 1997) ISBN: 0898797764. If you do not have a copy, please contact the MWBP Communications Coordinator you are working with.

COMMUNICATING IN PLAIN ENGLISH

Plain English is “the writing and setting out of essential information in a way that gives a co-operative, motivated person a good chance of understanding the document at first reading, and in the same sense that the writer meant it to be understood.”

This means editing the language to a level that suits the readers and using appropriate structure and layout to help them navigate through the document. It does not mean always using simple words at the expense of the most accurate words or editing whole documents in kindergarten language.

The MWBP wants its documents and reports to communicate messages clearly. This means removing the jargon, empty words, and technical and legal terms that some people may not understand. Remember that the programme has five working languages and a range of internal and external audiences.

- Set your MSWord spellchecker to English (UK).
- Use clear, simple language which keeps to the point.
- Explain all acronyms and abbreviations.
- Try to stick to one main idea in a sentence.
- Keep sentences short. This does not mean making every sentence the same length. Be creative. Mix short sentences with longer ones.
- Use active verbs – they are livelier and more personal.
- Use bullet points.
- Underline sparingly. Underlining can confuse people with poor eyesight.
- Avoid using BLOCK CAPITALS. Groups of capital letters are harder to recognise than lower case letters. Use a larger point size or bold type instead.
- Do not use jargon.

Jargon

You should not use jargon, particularly in documents intended for the public. Jargon is the use of specialised words and terms concerned with a specific subject, culture or profession that are only understood by a particular group of people. It is appropriate, however, to use these words when the readers are known to understand the terms and phrases as it is a useful form of shorthand and facilitates communication.

Active Verbs

MWBP prefers the active over the passive voice. It is usually better to speak of action taken than of action received, however, the passive voice exists for a reason. It is not always possible to express an idea clearly in the active voice and in such situations, the passive voice is entirely appropriate (e.g. the description of a process, in formal or government communications).

The active voice makes language more engaging and is more likely to evoke a response.

Passive	Active
The report will be considered shortly.	We will consider the report shortly.
The business had to be closed by the company.	The company had to close the business.

Wasted Words

Many words and phrases do not add anything to a sentence and are often used to make sentences sound more impressive. Using everyday words is an important first step towards clear writing. See "Optional Word List: Plain English Alternatives" for substitutes to wasted words and phrases that clutter official writing.

Phrases to avoid

a total of	in the final analysis
all things being equal	in this connection
as a matter of fact	in view of the fact that
as far as I am concerned	it should be understood
at the end of the day	last but not least
at this moment in time	other things being equal
during the period from	regarding the (noun), it was
each and every one	the fact of the matter is
I am of the opinion that	the month(s) of
I would like to say	to all intents and purposes
in the end	to one's own mind

Plain English (before and after)

Before	After
High-quality learning environments are a necessary precondition for facilitation and enhancement of the ongoing learning process.	Children need good schools if they are to learn properly.
It is important that you shall read the notes, advice and information detailed opposite then complete the form overleaf (all sections) prior to its immediate return to the office by way of the envelope provided.	Please read the notes opposite before you fill in the form. Then send it back to us as soon as possible in the envelope provided.
Your enquiry about the use of the entrance area of our office for the purpose of displaying posters and leaflets about your project, gives rise to the question of the provenance and authoritativeness of the material to be displayed. Posters and leaflets issued by MWBP, other NGOs or authoritative bodies are usually displayed, but items of a disputatious or polemic kind, whilst not necessarily excluded, are considered individually.	Thank you for your letter asking permission to put up posters in the entrance area of our office. Before we can give you an answer we will need to see a copy of the posters to make sure they match the objectives of our programme.

SOME NOTES REGARDING BRITISH ENGLISH

The MSWord spellchecker set to English (U.K.) will accept the “ize” and “ise” word endings as both are considered acceptable spellings (e.g. recognize and recognise), however, to standardise use in MWBP documents and reports, ensure that only the “ise” endings are used¹.

Editors will need to use the Find/Replace feature to search for occurrences of “ize” and change them to “ise”.

MWBP documents and reports should use British forms of spelling.

British	American	Comments
-our		
colour harbour armour odour honour humour	color harbor armor odor honor humor	This rule also applies with inflections and derivatives – favourite/favorite, savoury/savory. Note that "glamorous", "humorous" are the same in both. "Pearl Harbor" is a proper name and should remain spelt the American way.
-re		
fibre theatre centre	fiber theater center	When “Center” is part of a proper name it retains its spelling, as would a specific theater in the United States. Theatrical and central are the same in both.
-gue		
analogue catalogue dialogue	analog catalog dialog	Tongue and vogue are the same in both.
Double "l"		
travelled signalling counsellor	traveled signaling counselor	Americans sometimes use the British spelling (compelled, rebelling and excelled). The British use a single "l" in enrolment, fulfilment and skilful, where as the Americans double up (enrollment, fulfillment and skillful). Vowels double the "l" in British but not in American, consonants double the "l" in American English, but keep it single in British.
-ce		
defence pretence offence	defense pretense offense	Advice (noun) and advise (verb) keep their British spellings in American usage, but there is no word "practise" in American English. "Practice" is the spelling for the noun and the verb.
-t endings in past tense		
dreamt spelt learnt	dreamed spelled learned	The -ed forms of these words are also seen in British English, but the -t form is rarely seen in American English.

¹ Are spellings like 'privatize' and 'organize' Americanisms? No, not really. British spelling has always recognised variant spellings using the suffix -ize/-ise. When American spelling was standardised during the 19th century, the consistent use of -ize was one of the conventions that became established. However, since then, the -ise spellings have become more popular in Britain. The Oxford English Dictionary favoured -ize, partly on the linguistic basis that the suffix derives from the Greek suffix -izo.

British	American	Comments
Greek derivations		
encyclopaedia foetus archaeology mediaeval	encyclopedia fetus archeology medieval	"Encyclopedia" is becoming universally acceptable. Americans do use the British aesthetics and amoeba, but esthetics and ameba are just as common.
Specific spellings		
backwards forwards afterwards	backward forward afterward	Both forms are interchangeable in both forms of English, as long as consistency is maintained.
aluminium cheque grey plough programme speciality sulphur tyre	aluminum check gray plow program ² specialty sulfur tire	Some American words sound the same as their British equivalents, but are spelt differently.

British and American Vocabulary

Here are a few common words which are different in British and American English, highlighting some of the variety which exists within English. It is not a complete list, nor does it address different vocabulary used in the many other places in the world using English as the language of development, commerce or government.

MWBP documents and reports should use a consistent vocabulary throughout.

British	American
flat	apartment
tin	can
mince	chopped beef
biscuit	cookie
maize	corn
lift	elevator
torch	flashlight
petrol	gas
motorway	highway
paraffin	kerosene
solicitor	lawyer
queue	line
post	mail
caravan	motor home
cinema	movie theater
nought	nothing
car park	parking lot
chemist	pharmacist
football	soccer
bin	trash can

² To program a computer (verb) or a computer program (noun) are the same in both US and British English, but British writers use "programme" for a TV show, a pamphlet or a course/method.

MWBP PREFERRED SPELLING LIST

A

above-mentioned, aforementioned
aluminium
aquaculture, aquaculturist

B

baseline
barefoot, bare-handed
beehive, beekeeper, beekeeping, beeswax
biannual (twice a year), biennial (every second year)
birth date, birth rate, birth weight, birthplace
boatbuilder, boatbuilding, boatmaker, boatyard
brood fish, brood hen, broodstock
buffalo, pl. buffaloes
bycatch, bypass, by-law, by-product

C

car (not automobile)
cash crop, cash flow
catalyse (not catalyze)
cattle breeder, cattle feed, cattle hide (but cowhide), cattle owner
check dam
cheque (not check)
child-bearing, childbirth, child care
clear-cutting, clear-cut, clear-fell, clear-felling
coal mining, cold chain, cold storage
cooperate, cooperation, cooperative
co-opt, coordinate, coordination
corn – maize, grain or cereal preferred, but corn on the cob and sweet corn
criss-cross
cropland

D

data always use as plural (singular is datum [as in datum line])
data bank, data file, data sheet but database
day labourer, daylight, daytime, day-to-day, but from day to day
decision-maker, decision-making
deep-frozen, deep-sea fishing
deforest, deforestation
demand-driven
developing countries (not Third World)
dialogue (not dialog)
dipnet
draught for traction (as in draught animals)
driftnet
dyke (not dike)

E

echo sounder, echo sounding
end use, end user, end product but end-point,
enquire, enquiry (not inquire, inquiry)
evapotranspiration

F

fall – autumn preferred for the season
farmgate (as in farmgate price)
farmhouse, farmyard, farmland, farmhand, farm worker
feedback, feedlot
fertiliser
fewer (use fewer for countable items, less for amounts, e.g. fewer horses, less rice)
fieldbook, fieldwork, field guide, field trial, field worker, field-test (v.), field test (n.)
finfish(es)
First World – avoid, use industrialised countries
first, second, etc. (not firstly, secondly, etc.)
first-rate, first-hand, second-hand, but at first hand
fish, pl. fish unless referring to more than one species of fish
fish culture, fish farm(ing), fish farmer, fishing gear, fish oil, fish pond, fish seed, fish stocks
fish-liver oil, fishmeal, fishnet
floodgate, floodplain, floodwall, floodwater, flood tide
flowchart
food-borne
food crops (not foodcrops)
foodgrain(s) (for human consumption)
feedgrain(s) (for animal consumption)
foodstuff(s), feedstuff(s) as above
foot-and-mouth disease (abbrev. FMD)
forest land
formula, pl. formulae (math, chemistry) but formulas (methods)
foreword [of a book] (not forword or forward)
fuelwood (not firewood)
full-scale, but at full scale, full time (n., adv.), full-time (adj.)

G

gene bank, gene flow, gene pool
gillnet
government (lower case when general; upper case when a specific government is named, e.g. the Government of Italy, the Italian Government but the government passed anti-inflationary legislation)
grain-fed
gram [abbrev. g] (not gramme)
grassroots
green belt, green revolution
grey (not gray)
ground cover
guestimate – avoid; guess or estimate preferred
guidebook, guidelines

H

half a dozen, half-dozen
handbook, hand-delivered
handicraft, handcraft, handline (fishing term)
hand-pollination, hand-pollinate
hardpan (soil term)
health care, health services (not health care services)
hillside, hilltop
home care, home-grown, home-made, homespun

homoeopathic, homoeopathy

I

inbred, inbreeding, inbuilt
in-country, in-depth, in-house, in-service
intern (not interne)

J

Jr (not preceded by a comma and not followed by a full stop, e.g. John Jones Jr)

K

kilocalorie (abbrev. kcal) preferred to calorie as a measure of food energy
kilogram [abbrev. kg] (not kilogramme)
know-how – avoid, expertise, knowledge, etc. preferred

L

labour force, labour-intensive, labourer
landfill, landholder, landowner, landownership, landlocked, landmark, land mass,
land mine
land-poor, land use, land-use planning
large scale, large-scale
lastly – avoid
learnt (not learned)
leaseholder
least-developed countries (abbrev. LDCs)
life cycle, life span, lifelong, lifestyle, lifetime, life-saving
litre (not liter) avoid abbreviating (unless combined with a prefix, e.g. ml for millilitre)
live weight
long-lasting
long term (n.), long-term (adj.)

M

M&E (abbrev.) monitoring and evaluation
mango, pl. mangoes
many-headed, many-sided
marketplace
medical terms (use lower case for names of diseases, syndromes, tests, etc., except for proper names contained therein (Hodgkin's disease, Wasserman test). Names of diseases deriving from infectious organisms should be lower case and roman (trichinosis, streptococcus)
medium term (n.), medium-term (adj.)
midsummer, midway, midweek
middle-sized – medium-sized preferred
millennium
mollusc
Mr, Mrs, Ms (not followed by a full stop)

N

nationwide
newsletter
nighttime
no one
north, northeast, northeastern, northern (capitalised when part of a proper name or political

grouping, e.g. North Atlantic, North Africa, Northern Hemisphere; lower case for direction or geographical grouping, e.g. northern Africa)
notebook

O

off-farm
office worker
offline, offshoot, offshore, offset, off-season, off-site
oil-palm, oilseed
ongoing (no hyphen)
online, onshore, on-site
organise, organisation

P

paddy rice, paddy-field
palm oil
pastureland
people's participation
peri-urban
Petri dish
piece rate (n.), piece-rate (adj.), piecework
plateau, pl. plateaus (not plateaux)
policy-maker, policy-making
presently – means soon; use at present or currently to mean now
preventive (not preventative)
price fixing
proactive, pro-rated, pro-rating
problematical – problematic preferred
programme (not program)
prototype
purse seine (n.), purse-seine (v.)

Q

quasi (avoid where possible; if necessary to use, hyphenate, e.g. quasi-official)

R

R&D (abbrev.) research and development
rainfall, rainfed, rainstorm, rainwater but rain forest
rangeland
record-keeping
recur, recurrence (not reoccur or reoccurrence)
reforestation (not reafforestation)
regime (no accent)
remote sensing
revoke but revocable
river bed, riverbank, riverside
runoff

S

sandbank, sandstorm, sand dune
schoolbooks, schoolchildren, schoolteacher, school-leaver, school-leaving
scoop net
sea bed, sea floor, sea freight, sea level, sea wall, seawater

sectoral (not sectorial)
seed lot, seed bank, seed bed, seed-borne
sharecropper, sharecropping
shelf-life
shelterbelt
shortfall
short-lived, short term (n.), short-term (adj.), short wave (n.), short-wave (adj.)
shutdown (n.), shut-down (adj.), shut down (v.)
side-effect, sideline
siphon (not syphon)
smallholder, smallholding
small scale (n.), small-scale (adj.)
spelled preferred to spelt
spreadsheet
staff (a collective noun, which takes plural verb for individuals, use staff members)
starting-point
state (lower case when referring generally to nations or divisions of a nation; upper case when a specific state is named, e.g. State of New York; but state-owned enterprise)
stockbreeder, stock owners
stopgap
supersede (not supercede)
system-wide

T

takeoff (n.), take off (v.), takeover (n.), take over (v.)
task force
teamwork
test run
Third World – use developing countries
timberland, timberline
time frame, time lag, time limit, time scale, time series, time-saving
tonne – tonne refers to metric tonne; avoid ton unless referring to shipping vessel
tons
top-down
topsoil
trawl-line, trawl-net
tyre (not tire)

U

ultrasonic, ultraviolet
underdeveloped countries – use developing countries
update, up-to-date, but bring up to date
upgrade, upland, uproot, uprooted, up-river
usable (not useable)
USA – abbreviation for United States, (not US, except for United States dollars, e.g. US\$10)

V

value added (n.), value-added (adj.)
vaporise, vapour-burner
vector-borne
video camera, video recorder, videotape, videocassette, video-display
Viet Nam but Vietnamese
view-finder, viewpoint

W

Water words closed up	Water words open
wastewater	water buffalo
waterbird, waterbody	water level
waterborne	water hole
watercourse, waterfall	water supply
waterfowl	water table
waterline	water flea
watermark, watermelon	well water
waterproof	drinking water
watertight, waterway	tap water
freshwater, saltwater	water power
groundwater	water soluble
waterweed	water tower

wage-earner

weekday, weekend

well-being

wetlands

while (not whilst)

wildlife

windbreak, wind-row

workday, workforce, workload, workplace, worksheet, workshop but work plan, work site

World War II – avoid; use Second World War

worldwide

Y

yearbook, year-end, year-long, year-round

Z

zeros (not zeroes)

Italicised Words

<i>Italicised</i>	Not Italicised
<i>et seq.</i>	ad hoc
<i>ex ante</i>	ad lib
<i>ex post, ex post facto</i>	cf. (abbrev.) compare
<i>ex situ</i>	cont. (abbrev.) continued
<i>in situ</i>	de facto
<i>in vitro, in vivo</i>	e.g. not followed by a comma, not used with etc.
<i>inter alia</i>	ibid.
<i>laissez-passer</i>	idem
<i>per annum</i>	i.e. not followed by a comma
<i>per se</i>	op cit.
<i>names of ships, but not the designations SS, HMS, etc.</i>	per capita
<i>vis-à-vis</i>	per diem
	prima facie
	pro forma
	status quo
	versus (abbrev. vs)
	vice versa
	wadi

Other words to italicise:

- Titles of publications, magazines etc.
- Scientific names (genus name capitalised and species name in lower case)
- Non-English words (An example is the twice yearly ceremony to honour the protective spirits of the local forest (*leang puu taa*) with offerings such as turtles, chickens, whiskey, tobacco, betel, etc.

Gender Words

Avoid	Use
businessman	business executive, manager
Chairman	Chair or Chairperson
fisherman, fishermen	fisher, fishers
fireman	firefighter
forefathers	ancestors
foreman	supervisor
freshmen	first-year student
herdsman, mailman	Herder, mail carrier
man-day	person-day or workday
mankind	humanity, humankind, etc.
man-made	human-induced, caused by humans, caused by human activities, etc.
man-made forest	use planted forest or plantation forest
manpower	workforce, human resources, labour, personnel, etc.
middleman, middlemen	intermediary, intermediaries, trader, traders
workman, workmen	worker, workers

Computer Terms

Computer terms use manufacturer's spelling for hardware and software, e.g. QuarkXpress. Many ordinary English words have a specific computer use, e.g. access, byte, add-in, database, debug, hard copy, hard-wire, online, offline, program (but, programming, programmer). When writing website addresses, omit the initial http:// and start with www.

bandwidth	Internet
desktop publishing (abbrev. DTP)	kilobyte (abbrev. KB)
disk (computers only, disc otherwise)	log-on (adj.), log on (v.)
gigabyte, (abbrev. GB)	megabyte (abbrev. MB)
e-mail	printout (n.), print out (v.)
home page	real time (n.), real-time (adj.)
input	website

Compound Words

agri	closed up: agribusiness, agrifood, agriculturist
agro	closed up: agroindustry, agroforestry
anti	closed unless followed by e: anti-erosion, antinutrient, antinutritional, antipollution
bio	closed up, except before some vowels: bio-available, bio-assay, but bioelectricity, bioenergy biological diversity
cross	usually hyphenated: cross-breed, cross-breeding, cross-check, cross-fertilisation, cross-pollination, cross-reference, cross-section
eco	closed up: e.g. ecoclimate
fold	closed up: e.g. twofold, twentyfold
fractions	always hyphenated: e.g. three-quarters
free	Hyphenated: e.g. disease-free, germ-free
hopper	closed up: e.g. grasshopper, leafhopper, planthopper, ricehopper
hydro	closed up: hydropower
ill	hyphenate compounds used as adjectives: e.g. ill-gotten, ill-natured, ill-omened
inter	closed up: interaction, intercountry, interdepartmental, intergovernmental, interregional, interrelated
intra	closed up except before a vowel
like	usually hyphenated: business-like, but note lifelike
macro	all closed up: macroeconomic
micro	closed up: microeconomics, but note micro-organism
mid	Usually hyphenated: mid-1980s, mid-year, mid-point, mid-term, but midday, midnight
mini	closed up: minibus, minicassette

mono	closed up except when followed by a vowel: mono-unsaturated
multi	closed up unless followed by i: multi-institutional
non	usually hyphenated, but note nonconformity
over	usually closed up, overfish
pan	if the second part of the compound is lower case, close up: pantheism; otherwise hyphenate: pan-American, pan-Germanism, pan-Hellenic, pan-Slavism
photo	closed up: photoelectric, photocopier, photocopy
poly	closed up: polyunsaturated (polyethylene not polythene)
post	usually closed up except where confusion might arise: post-harvest or when followed by t: post-translational
pre	closed up except where confusion might arise: pre-empt, pre-set, pre-test
proof	usually closed up except where confusion might arise: acid-proof, gas-proof
raising	hyphenated: cattle-raising
re	closed up except when followed by "e" or where necessary to distinguish meaning: recount/re-count, resort/re-sort, recover/re-cover, reform/re-form
self	all hyphenated: self-made
silvi	closed up unless followed by a vowel
skin	closed up: goatskin
socio	usually closed up, but note socio-economic
sub	closed up unless followed by b: sub-basin; note sub-Saharan
trans	closed up, transshipment, transnational (Exception trans-boundary)
under	generally closed up unless followed by r: under-represented
wide	close up worldwide, countrywide, nationwide; hyphenate economy-wide, island-wide, organisation-wide, system-wide, wide-ranging, wide-reaching, wide-scale (adj.), but on a wide scale
wood	closed up: brushwood, cordwood, fuelwood, hardwood, woodcutter, woodfuel, woodlot, woodwork; but wood ash, wood stove

OPTIONAL WORD LIST: PLAIN ENGLISH ALTERNATIVES

This list is a quick reference of alternative words you can use if a document you are editing is written in a way that may be difficult for the target reader to understand. It is **not** intended you replace all occurrences of 'original words' with alternatives.

Original word	Possible alternatives
A	
(an) absence of	no, none
abundance	enough, plenty, a lot (or say how many)
accede to	allow, agree to
accelerate	speed up
accentuate	stress
accommodation	where you live, home
accompanying	with
accomplish	do, finish
according to our records	our records show
accordingly	in line with this, so
acknowledge	thank you for
acquaint yourself with	find out about, read
acquiesce	agree
acquire	buy, get
additional	extra, more
adjacent	next to
adjustment	change, alteration
admissible	allowed, acceptable
advantageous	useful, helpful
advise	tell, say (unless you are giving advice)
affix	add, write, fasten, stick on, fix to
afford an opportunity	let, allow
afforded	given
aforesaid	this, earlier in this document
aggregate	total
aligned	lined up, in line
alleviate	ease, reduce
allocate	divide, share, add, give
along the lines of	like, as in
alternative	choice, other
alternatively	or, on the other hand
ameliorate	improve, help
amendment	change
anticipate	expect
apparent	clear, plain, obvious, seeming
applicant (the)	you
application	use
appreciable	large, great
apprise	inform, tell
appropriate	proper, right, suitable
appropriate to	suitable for
approximately	about, roughly
as a consequence of	because
as of the date of	from
as regards	about, on the subject of

ascertain	find out
assemble	build, gather, put together
assistance	help
at an early date	soon (or say when)
at its discretion	can, may (or edit out)
at the moment	now (or edit out)
at the present time	now (or edit out)
attempt	try
attend	come to, go to, be at
attributable to	due to, because of
authorise	allow, let
authority	right, power, may
axiomatic	obvious, goes without saying
B	
belated	late
beneficial	helpful, useful
bestow	give, award
breach	break
by means of	by
C	
calculate	work out, decide
cease	finish, stop, end
circumvent	get round, avoid, skirt, circle
clarification	explanation, help
combine	mix
combined	together
commence	start, begin
communicate	talk, write, telephone (be specific)
competent	able, can
compile	make, collect
complete	fill in, finish
completion	end
comply with	keep to, meet
component	part
comprise	be made up of, include
(it is) compulsory	(you) must
conceal	hide
concerning	about, on
conclusion	end
concur	agree
condition	rule
consequently	so
considerable	great, important
constitute	make up, form, be
construe	interpret
consult	talk to, meet, ask
consumption	amount used
contemplate	think about
contrary to	against, despite
correct	put right
correspond	write

costs the sum of	costs
counter	against
courteous	polite
cumulative	added up, added together
currently	now (or edit out)
customary	usual, normal
D	
deduct	take off, take away
deem to be	treat as
defer	put off, delay
deficiency	lack of
delete	cross out
demonstrate	show, prove
denote	show
depict	show
designate	point out, show, name
desire	wish, want
despatch or dispatch	send, post
despite the fact that	though, although
determine	decide, work out, set, end
detrimental	harmful, damaging
difficulties	problems
diminish	lessen, reduce
disburse	pay, pay out
discharge	carry out
disclose	tell, show
disconnect	cut off, unplug
discontinue	stop, end
discrete	separate
discuss	talk about
disseminate	spread
documentation	papers, documents
domiciled in	living in
dominant	main
due to the fact of	because, as
duration	time, life
during which time	while
dwelling	home
E	
economical	cheap, good value
eligible	allowed, qualified
elucidate	explain, make clear
emphasise	stress
empower	allow, let
enable	allow
enclosed	inside, with
(please find) enclosed	I enclose
encounter	meet
endeavour	try
enquire	ask
enquiry	question

ensure	make sure
entitlement	right
envisage	expect, imagine
equivalent	equal, the same
erroneous	wrong
establish	show, find out, set up
evaluate	test, check
evince	show, prove
ex officio	because of his or her position
exceptionally	only when, in this case
excessive	too many, too much
exclude	leave out
excluding	apart from, except
exclusively	only
exempt from	free from
expedite	hurry, speed up
expeditiously	as soon as possible, quickly
expenditure	spending
expire	run out
extant	current, in force
extremity	limit
F	
fabricate	make, make up
facilitate	help, make possible
factor	reason
failure to	if you do not
finalise	end, finish
following	after
for the duration of	during, while
for the purpose of	to, for
for the reason that	because
formulate	plan, devise
forthwith	now, at once
forward	send
frequently	often
furnish	give
further to	after, following
furthermore	then, also, and
G	
generate	produce, give, make
give consideration to	consider, think about
grant	give
H	
henceforth	from now on, from today
hereby	now, by this (or edit out)
herein	here (or edit out)
hereinafter	after this (or edit out)
hereof	of this
hereto	to this
heretofore	until now, previously

hereunder	below
herewith	with this (or edit out)
hitherto	until now
hold in abeyance	wait, postpone
hope and trust	hope, trust (but not both)
if and when	if, when (but not both)
illustrate	show, explain
immediately	at once, now
implement	carry out, do
imply	suggest, hint at
in a number of cases	some (or say how many)
in accordance with	as under, in line with, because of
in addition (to)	and, as well as, also
in advance	before
in case of	if
in conjunction with	and, with
in connection with	for, about
in consequence	because, as a result
in excess of	more than
in lieu of	instead of
in order that	so that
in receipt of	get, have, receive
in relation to	about
in respect of	about, for
in the absence of	without
in the course of	while, during
in the event of/that	if
in the majority of instances	most, mostly
in the near future	soon
in the neighbourhood of	about, around
in view of the fact that	as, because
inappropriate	wrong, unsuitable
inception	start, beginning
incorporating	which includes
incurred	have to pay, owe
indicate	show, suggest
inform	tell
initially	at first
initiate	begin, start
insert	put in
instances	cases
intend to	will
intimate	say, hint
irrespective of	despite, even if
is in accordance with	agrees with, follows
is of the opinion	thinks
issue	give, send
it is known that	I/we know that

J	
jeopardise	risk, threaten
L	
(a) large number of	many, most (or say how many)
(to) liaise with	to meet with, to discuss with, to work with (whichever is more descriptive)
locality	place, area
locate	find, put
M	
magnitude	size
(it is) mandatory	(you) must
manner	way
manufacture	make
marginal	small, slight
material	relevant
materialise	happen, occur
may in the future	may, might, could
merchandise	goods
mislaid	lose
modification	change
moreover	and, also, as well
N	
negligible	very small
nevertheless	but, however, even so
notify	tell, let us/you know
notwithstanding	even if, despite, still, yet
numerous	many (or say how many)
O	
objective	aim, goal
(it is) obligatory	(you) must
obtain	get, receive
occasioned by	caused by, because of
on behalf of	for
on numerous occasions	often
on receipt of	when we/you get
on request	if you ask
on the grounds that	because
on the occasion that	when, if
operate	work, run
optimum	best, ideal
option	choice
ordinarily	normally, usually
otherwise	or
outstanding	unpaid
owing to	because of

P	
(a) percentage of	some (or say what percentage)
partially	partly
participate	join in, take part
particulars	details, facts
per annum	a year
perform	do
permissible	allowed
permit	let, allow
personnel	people, staff
persons	people, anyone
peruse	read, read carefully, look at
place	put
possess	have, own
possessions	belongings
practically	almost, nearly
predominant	main
prescribe	set, fix
preserve	keep, protect
previous	earlier, before, last
principal	main
prior to	before
proceed	go ahead
procure	get, obtain, arrange
profusion of	plenty, too many (or say how many)
prohibit	ban, stop
(to) progress something	(replace with a more precise phrase saying what you are doing)
projected	estimated
prolonged	long
promptly	quickly, at once
promulgate	advertise, announce
proportion	part
provide	give
provided that	if, as long as
provisions	rules, terms
proximity	closeness, nearness
purchase	buy
pursuant to	under, because of, in line with
Q	
qualify for	can get, be able to get
R	
reconsider	think again about, look again at
reduce	cut
reduction	cut
referred to as	called
refer to	talks about, mentions
(have) regard to	take into account
regarding	about, on
regulation	rule

reimburse	repay, pay back
reiterate	repeat, restate
relating to	about
remain	stay
remainder	the rest, what is left
remittance	payment
remuneration	pay, wages, salary
render	make, give, send
report	tell
represent	show, stand for, be
request	ask, question
require	need, want, force
requirements	needs, rules
reside	live
residence	home, where you live
restriction	limit
retain	keep
review	look at (again)
revised	new, changed
S	
said/such/same	the, this, that
scrutinise	read (look at) carefully
select	choose
settle	pay
similarly	also, in the same way
solely	only
specified	given, written, set
state	say, tell us, write down
statutory	legal, by law
subject to	depending on, under, keeping to
submit	send, give
subsequent to/upon	after
subsequently	later
substantial	large, great, a lot of
substantially	more or less
sufficient	enough
supplement	go with, add to
supplementary	extra, more
supply	give, sell, delivery
T	
(the) tenant	you
terminate	stop, end
that being the case	if so
the question as to whether	whether
thereafter	then, afterwards
thereby	by that, because of that
therein	in that, there
thereof	of that
thereto	to that
thus	so, therefore
to date	so far, up to now

to the extent that	if, when
transfer	change, move
transmit	send
U	
ultimately	in the end, finally
unavailability	lack of
undernoted	the following
undersigned	I, we
undertake	agree, promise, do
uniform	same, similar
unilateral	one-sided, one-way
unoccupied	empty
until such time	until
utilisation	use
utilise	use
V	
variation	change
virtually	almost (or edit out)
visualise	see, predict
W	
ways and means	ways
we have pleasure in	we are glad to
whatsoever	whatever, what, any
whensoever	when
whereas	but
whether or not	whether
with a view to	to, so that
with effect from	from
with reference to	about
with regard to	about, for
with respect to	about, for
with the minimum of delay	quickly (or say when)
Y	
you are requested	please
your attention is drawn	please see, please note
Z	
zone	area, region

COMMONLY CONFUSED WORDS

adoptive with **adopted**: children are **adopted**, but parents are **adoptive**.

adverse, 'unfavourable, bad', with **averse**, which means 'strongly disliking or opposed to', as in *I am not averse to helping out*.

affect and **effect**: **affect** means 'make a difference to', whereas **effect** means 'a result' or 'bring about (a result)'.
ambiguous with **ambivalent**: **ambiguous** primarily means 'having more than one meaning, open to different interpretations', while **ambivalent** means 'having mixed feelings'.

amoral with **immoral**: **amoral** means 'not concerned with morality', while **immoral** means 'not conforming to accepted standards of morality'.

appraise with **apprise**: **appraise** means 'assess', while **apprise** means 'inform'.

augur, 'be a sign of (a likely outcome)', with **auger** (a tool used for boring).

censure with **ensor**: **censure** means 'express strong disapproval of', whereas **ensor** means 'suppress unacceptable parts of (a book, film, etc.)'.

climactic, 'forming a climax', with **climatic**, which means 'relating to climate'.

complacent, 'smug and self-satisfied', with **complaisant**, which means 'willing to please'.

complement, 'a thing that enhances something by contributing extra features', with **compliment**, which means 'an expression of praise' or 'politely congratulate'.

continuous and **continual**: **continuous** primarily means 'without interruption', and can refer to space as well as time, as in *the cliffs form a continuous line along the coast*; **continual**, on the other hand, typically means 'happening frequently, with intervals between', as in *the bus service has been disrupted by continual breakdowns*.

council, an administrative or advisory body, with **counsel**, advice or guidance.

councillor with **counsellor**: a **councillor** is a member of a council, whereas a **counsellor** is someone who gives guidance on personal or psychological problems.

credible with **creditable**: **credible** means 'believable, convincing', whereas **creditable** means 'deserving acknowledgement and praise'.

definite ('certain, sure') with **definitive**, which means 'decisive and with authority'.

defuse, 'remove the fuse from (an explosive device)' or 'reduce the danger or tension in (a difficult situation)', with **diffuse**, which means 'spread over a wide area'.

desert (a waterless area) with **dessert** (the sweet course)!

discreet, 'careful not to attract attention or give offence', with **discrete**, which means 'separate, distinct'.

draft and **draught**. In British English **draft** means 'a preliminary version' or 'an order to pay a sum', whereas a **draught** is a current of air or an act of drinking; in North American English the spelling **draft** is used for all senses. The verb is usually spelled **draft**.

draw, which is primarily a verb, with **drawer** meaning 'sliding storage compartment'.

egoism and **egotism**: it is **egotism**, not **egoism**, that means 'excessive conceit or self-absorption'; **egoism** is a less common and more technical word, for an ethical theory that treats self-interest as the foundation of morality.

envelop with **envelope**: **envelop** without an e at the end means 'wrap up, cover, or surround completely', whereas an **envelope** with an e is a paper container used to enclose a letter or document.

exceptionable ('open to objection; causing disapproval or offence') with **exceptional** ('not typical' or 'unusually good').

fawn with **faun**: a **fawn** is a young deer, and a light brown colour; a **faun** is a Roman deity that is part man, part goat.

flaunt with **flout**; **flaunt** means 'display ostentatiously', while **flout** means 'openly disregard (a rule)'.

flounder with **founder**: **flounder** generally means 'have trouble doing or understanding something, be confused', while **founder** means 'fail or come to nothing'.

forego and **forgo**: **forego** means 'precede', but is also a less common spelling for **forgo**, 'go without'.

hoard with **horde**: a **hoard** is a store of something valuable; **horde** is a disparaging term for a large group of people.

imply and **infer**. **Imply** is used with a speaker as its subject, as in *he implied that the General was a traitor*, and indicates that the speaker is suggesting something though not making an explicit statement. **Infer** is used in sentences such as *we inferred from his words that the General was a traitor*, and indicates that something in the speaker's words enabled the listeners to deduce that the man was a traitor.

the possessive **its** (as in *turn the camera on its side*) with the contraction **it's** (short for either **it is** or **it has**, as in *it's my fault*, *it's been a hot day*).

loath ('reluctant; unwilling') with **loathe**, 'dislike greatly'.

loose with **lose**: as a verb **loose** means 'unfasten or set free', while **lose** means 'cease to have' or 'become unable to find'.

luxuriant, 'rich and profuse in growth', with **luxurious**, which means 'characterised by luxury; very comfortable and extravagant'.

marital, 'of marriage', with **martial**, 'of war'!

militate, which is used in the form **militate against** to mean 'be an important factor in preventing', with **mitigate**, which means 'make (something bad) less severe'.

naturism (nudism) and **naturist** (a nudist) with **naturalism** and **naturalist**: **naturalism** is an artistic or literary approach or style; a **naturalist** is an expert in natural history, or an exponent of naturalism.

officious, 'asserting authority or interfering in an annoyingly domineering way', with **official**, which means 'relating to an authority or public body' and 'having the approval or authorisation of such a body'.

ordinance, 'an authoritative order', with **ordnance**, which means 'guns' or 'munitions'.

palate and **palette**: the **palate** is the roof of the mouth; a **palette**, on the other hand, is an artist's board for mixing colours.

perquisite and **prerequisite**: a **perquisite** is a special right or privilege enjoyed as a result of one's position; **prerequisite** is something that is required as a prior condition for something else; **prerequisite** can also be an adjective, meaning 'required as a prior condition'.

principal, 'first in order of importance; main', with **principle**, which is a noun meaning chiefly 'a basis of a system of thought or belief'.

proscribe with **prescribe**: **proscribe** is a rather formal word meaning 'condemn or forbid', whereas **prescribe** means either 'issue a medical prescription' or 'recommend with authority'.

regretful, 'feeling or showing regret', with **regrettable**, which means 'giving rise to regret; undesirable'.

stationary and **stationery**: **stationary** is an adjective with the sense 'not moving or changing', whereas **stationery** is a noun meaning 'paper and other writing materials'.

story and **storey**: a **story** is a tale or account, while a **storey** is a floor of a building. In North America the spelling **story** is sometimes used for **storey**.

tortuous, 'full of twists and turns' or 'excessively lengthy and complex', with **torturous**, which means 'characterised by pain or suffering'.

turbid and **turgid**: **turbid** is generally used in reference to a liquid and means 'cloudy or opaque'; **turgid** tends to mean 'tediously pompous' or, in reference to a river, 'swollen, overflowing'.

unexceptionable, 'that cannot be taken exception to, inoffensive', with **unexceptional**, 'not exceptional; ordinary'.

unsociable with **unsocial** and **antisocial**: **unsociable** means 'not enjoying the company of or engaging in activities with others'; **unsocial** usually means 'socially inconvenient' and typically refers to the hours of work of a job; **antisocial** means 'contrary to accepted social customs and therefore annoying'.

who's with **whose**; **who's** is a contraction of **who is** or **who has**, while **whose** is used in questions such as *whose is this?* and *whose turn is it?*

your with **you're**; **you're** is a contraction of **you are**, while **your** is a possessive determiner used in phrases such as *your turn*.