



One Word or Two?

Many words and phrases used in everyday speech can be confusing in writing when it comes to determining whether to use one word or two. The following list defines words that are often misspelled and/or misused due to this type of confusion.

a lot — adjective or adverb meaning “many” (semi-casual, best to avoid in academic writing)
alot — common misspelling of “a lot”

all ready — used as an adjective to express complete readiness
already — used as an adverb expressing time
Ex: *She was **all ready** to go, but everyone had **already** left without her.*

all right — used as an adverb
alright — an informal variant of “all right”
Ex: *Will he be **all right** on his own?*

all together — used as an adverb meaning “in a group”
altogether — used as an adverb meaning “wholly, thoroughly”
Ex: *The students were **all together** in the cafeteria.
Her comment was **altogether** rude.*

any one — refers to a specific person or thing in a group
anyone — a pronoun meaning “any person at all”
Ex: ***Any one** of those papers is a good example.
Anyone can succeed at something.*

any way — an adverb meaning “any course, direction, or manner”
anyway — an adverb meaning “in any case,” “at any rate,” or “nevertheless”
Ex: ***Any way** they chose offered danger.
He objected, but she went **anyway**.*

a while — a noun phrase that follows a preposition meaning “a period of time”
awhile — an adverb meaning “for a time” that cannot follow a preposition
Ex: *They will wait for **a while** in the kitchen.
They will sit and talk **awhile**.*

cannot — a verb form negating “can”
can not — a form of “cannot” that is typically only acceptable to use when the word “not” is part of another phrase in the sentence, such as “not only”
Ex: *Scarlett **cannot** go to school with this fever.
Fred **can not** only play the piano, he can also play the violin.*

every day — an adverb meaning “each day”
everyday — an adjective meaning “common”
Ex: *She walked her dog **every day**.
He wore his **everyday** coat to work.*

every one — means “each”

everyone — a pronoun meaning “every person”

Ex: *Mother expected Joseph to do **every one** of the chores on the list.*

***Everyone** is invited to the party.*

in spite — preposition meaning “in defiance of”

inspite — common misspelling of “in spite”

Ex: ***In spite** of the devastation of the plague, the people survived.*

may be — a conditional verb form

maybe — an adverb meaning “perhaps”

Ex: *This **may be** Jill’s last chance.*

***Maybe** they should wait until the rain stops.*

one self — common misspelling of “oneself”

oneself — reflexive pronoun meaning “one’s self” (“one’s self” is also an acceptable spelling)

through out — common misspelling of “throughout”

throughout — an adverb or preposition meaning “during the whole time” or “in every part”