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”