Frequently Confused Words

Overview: Word choice can seriously affect the meaning of your sentence. Several words are spelled or pronounced similarly and can be easily confused with each other. Keep the following list in mind as you write.

Affect and effect
Affect is a verb that means to influence
- This report will affect the board’s decision.
Effect is a noun that means result or influence
- This report will have an effect on the board’s decision.

Advise and advice
Advise is a verb that means to give counsel; offer an opinion or suggestion as worth following
- I advise you to sell your stock.
Advice is a noun that means an opinion or recommendation offered as a guide
- My advice is to sell your stock.

Accept and except
Accept is a verb meaning to take or agree
- I accept this offer.
Except is a preposition meaning other than; with the exclusion of
- Everyone received a bonus except Jim.

Cite, site and sight
Cite is a verb meaning to quote or mention in support
- Cite your sources immediately after the quote.
Site is a noun meaning location or position
- The site of the new office is next door to the old one.
Sight is a noun meaning the power or act of seeing
- We have no other proposal in sight.

It’s and its
It's is a contraction of it is
- It's time for the meeting.
Its is the possessive adjective form of it
- The company answers to its shareholders.

Then and than
Then is an adverb that means next or consequently
- First I conducted a survey, and then I wrote the report.
Than is a conjunction that indicates a difference or a comparison
- Labor is cheaper in developing countries than in the U.S.

Their, there and they’re
Their is the possessive pronoun form of them
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• The proposal was accepted.
  There is a pronoun meaning at/to that place
• Are you going to the meeting? I'll see you there.
  They're is a short form of they are
• They're making the presentation now.

**To, two and too**
To is a preposition as well as the first part of an infinitive verb
• We are going to [preposition] the manager to complain. [infinitive verb]
  Two is the number 2
• I want two people working on a solution.
  Too is an adverb meaning also or to an excessive degree
• We asked the director’s opinion too. He thought we were thinking too small.

**We’re, where and were**
We’re is the contraction of we are
• We’re having a meeting.
  Where is an adverb that questions location
• Where is the meeting?
  Were is the past tense form of the verb to be
• They were in a meeting.

**Your and you’re**
Your is the possessive pronoun form of you
• Straighten your tie before the clients arrive.
  You’re is the contraction of you are
• You’re the new team leader.