

6.3 Homonymy

key words: homonyms, spelling, dictionaries, meaning

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.3.2g Consult reference materials, including beginning dictionaries, as needed to check and correct spellings. <http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/L/3/2/g>

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.3.4d Use glossaries or beginning dictionaries, both print and digital, to determine or clarify the precise meaning of key words and phrases. <http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/L/3/4/d>

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.3.5c Distinguish shades of meaning among related words that describe states of mind or degrees of certainty (e.g., *knew, believed, suspected, heard, wondered*).
<http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/L/3/5/c>

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.4.1g Correctly use frequently confused words (e.g., *to, too, two; there, their*).
<http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/L/4/1/g>

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.4.3c Differentiate between contexts that call for formal English (e.g., presenting ideas) and situations where informal discourse is appropriate (e.g., small-group discussion).
<http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/L/4/3/c>

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.4.4c Consult reference materials (e.g., dictionaries, glossaries, thesauruses), both print and digital, to find the pronunciation and determine or clarify the precise meaning of key words and phrases. <http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/L/4/4/c>

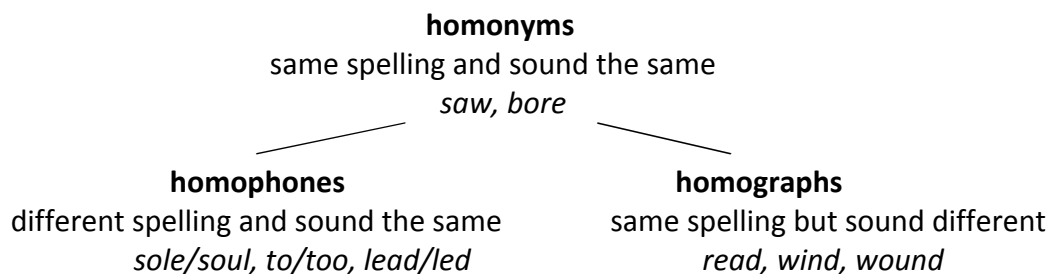
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.5.4c Consult reference materials (e.g., dictionaries, glossaries, thesauruses), both print and digital, to find the pronunciation and determine or clarify the precise meaning of key words and phrases. <http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/L/5/4/c>

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.5.5c Use the relationship between particular words (e.g., synonyms, antonyms, homographs) to better understand each of the words. <http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/L/5/5/c>

Words that sound the same but have different (unrelated) meanings are called **homonyms** (from the Greek roots *homeos*, meaning ‘same’ and *onoma*, meaning ‘name’).

So there are words like *saw* which can mean either have to do with vision (the past tense form of ‘see’) or with using a blade of some kind to cut something. So *I saw the board* is ambiguous; did you see it or is it being cut?

Homophones do not necessarily share the same spelling; they are words like *sole* and *soul*, *they’re*, *there* and *their*, *to*, *too*, and *two* that sound the same, and **homographs** have different meanings, the same spelling, but different pronunciations (He has a *wound* on his leg/She *wound* up the string).



Very seldom are homonyms ambiguous in context since the context usually makes it clear which word is intended. But they are easy to misspell, using one form when you intend the other. Even really competent spellers can slip up on these sound-alike words.

Determine whether the following sentences have spelling errors, and if so, underline the error, write the correct spelling, and write whether it is an example of a homophone or homograph.

I cannot except your generous gift.

You have a prominent role in the play.

He wrote a thank you note on nice stationary.

We drove passed the cyclist quickly.

The school principle made an announcement about the test.

The capitol of Washington is Olympia.

The dog ran around the tree and it's leash got tangled.

Looking in the mirror a lot makes you seem vane.