Commonly Confused Words

Their, there, they’re:

Their shows possession. Ex: Their dog just had puppies.

There refers to a location. Ex: The car is over there by the gatehouse.

They’re is a contraction for they are. Ex: They’re from Ohio.

Then, than:

Then refers to time. Ex: We went to get ice cream, and then we went to the movies.

Than shows comparison. Ex: Denise is taller than Alex.

To, too, two:

To is a preposition which begins a prepositional phrase or an infinitive. Ex: We began to see the light. OR We walked to the next street.

Too is an adverb which shows excess and can mean also. Ex: Her behavior was too much to handle. OR We love her friend, too.

Two is a number, also known as 2. Ex: Sue ate two pieces of pizza before her ice cream.

It’s, its:

Its without the apostrophe shows possession. Ex: The car careened forward; its headlights were off.

It’s with an apostrophe is the contraction of “it is” or “it has.” Ex: It’s cold outside.

Lie, Lay (Past Tense: Lay, Laid):

Lie is to rest or recline. Ex: You lie on the bed.

Lay is the past tense of resting or reclining. Ex: Last night, I lay on the bed.

Lay is to place or put something. It always needs an object. Ex: You lay the book on the bed.

Laid is the past tense of placing or putting something. Ex: Yesterday, I laid the book on the bed.
Whose, who’s:

*Whose* is the possessive form of who. Ex: He is a man whose hair defines his character: slick.

*Who’s* is a contraction for “who is” or “who has.” Ex: Who’s going to dinner?

Affect, effect:

*Affect* means to influence. Ex: The medicine affected her balance.

*Effect* means as a result. Ex: The devastating destruction was an effect of the f-5 tornado.

Accept, except:

To *accept* something is to receive, admit, or regard as true. Ex: She was accepted to Harvard.

*Except* means to exclude and can be replaced by other than. Ex: Everyone played catch except Bo.

Passed, past:

*Past* refers to time. Ex: Grandpa Joe sat around remembering the past ten years of his life.

*Passed* is the past tense of the verb “pass.” Ex: The quarterback passed the ball to his wide receiver.

Your, you’re:

*Your* is the possessive form of you. Ex: Your mom was really angry with me.

*You’re* is the contraction for the two words “you are.” Ex: You’re going to get a new car?