

English Homonyms

Robert Buckenmeyer©

Rgb\c01\01;02\05;03\05;08\05;09\05;03\06;06\06;07\06;01\08

Homonym is a Greek word meaning one name, or same name; that is, a word which is spelled the same or differently, but sounds the same when pronounced. The English “language” (in quotation marks because this author does not consider English a language for two reasons: first, it is not phonetic, except where its words have denotative origins in Greek, Latin, French, Spanish, Portuguese or Italian, all of which are phonetic languages; secondly, English is not an inflected language, as all the Romance languages, that is, English has no verb, noun or adjective endings which tells the reader what function the word is performing in the sentence – actually, English has a few words which are passed from Latin showing some inflection, such as “him”, “whom”, both reflecting the object function and therefore, the objective case. English has so many homonyms BECAUSE English lacks both phonetics and inflection.

I herein provide some other anomalies of English, all taken from the homonyms, all of which makes English the most difficult “language” to speak, write or learn. Actually, I think that anyone who attempts to teach ESL, that is, English is the Second Language in California should be placed in solitary confinement and never be allowed to be free from such confinement until the ESL teacher can explain the following and answer the following questions (given the fact that this author is fluent in Latin and somewhat in Greek, I think such solitary confined persons should spend their time learning Greek and Latin so they might “have a leg up” on understanding and using English – which I characterize as a prostitute looking for her next trick); anyway, explain the following statements and answer the following questions:

1. The bandage was wound around the wound.
2. The farm sought to produce produce.
3. The dump was so full that the supervisor had to refuse the refuse.
4. We must polish the Polish furniture.
5. He could lead if he would get the “lead out”.
6. The soldier decided to desert his dessert in the desert.
7. A bass was painted on the head of the bass drum.
8. Since no time is like the present, I thought it was time to present the present.
9. As I shot, the dove dove into the under-brush.
10. I did not object to the object.
11. The insurance was invalid for the invalid.
12. A row arose from among the oarsmen about how to row.
13. I was too close to the door to close it.
14. The buck does funny things when the does are present.
15. A seamstress and a sewer fell down into the sewer opening.

16. A farmer taught his sow to sow.
17. The woman who had her hair in a bun, ate a bun with her coffee.
18. The wind was too strong to wind the sail.
19. The sailor went to sail but the wind would not fill the sail.
20. John shed a tear when he was standing on the third tier when his pants tear.
21. The dentist injected my jaw with a number of injections and my jaw got number.
22. The buyer saw a tear in the painting and shed a tear.
23. I made the subject student the subject to a number of tests.
24. How can I intimate this to my most intimate friend?
25. The boy who had a bow tie took a bow before the audience.
26. The man could not box his way out of a box.
27. The baby was about to sink in the sink.
28. The rose rose up from the flower bed.
29. He was in the ring when she gave him a ring to tell him about the ring.
30. She tried to wrench the wrench from his hand.
31. The pitcher stepped into the pitch as he wound up to pitch.
32. John found a tear in his shirt and shed a tear.
33. Jim built a shed and then shed his working overalls.
34. The flag flew from the patrol car as the officer stepped out to flag down a car.
35. Shirley started to pet the pet dog when he bit her.
36. Jack tried to pan the traffic as his wife sought to pan for gold.
37. The Goths carried their food in sacks as they sacked Rome.
38. Many people make up different class groups in the Philosophy class.
39. The trucker driving the moving truck tried to truck the furniture.
40. The crane landed on the top of the crane.
41. The hens who set on their eggs did not know set theory.
42. When the man put the screen in the window, he did not screen out the light.
43. The students who threw away their apricot pits dug a pit to put each pit in.
44. The duck dove down and the man had to duck to avoid being hit.
45. The shot he fired from the gun used steel shot rather than lead shot.
46. The ticks which Jerry had were not the ticks which are arachnids.
47. Jacky left a small tip for the waiter so he would get the tip about his service.
48. The pair picked the pears and then pared each pear picked.
49. Bill tried to close the closet door after he removed his clothes.

50. The farmer went out to plow his field with the plow he bought.
51. Janet took the meat with her when she went to meet her husband.
52. Joe killed the doe with his car on the way to bring the dough to his grandmother which had cost him dough.
53. Mary's bill was due but she could not do the payment because the only check she has was wet with dew.
54. Arnold might not be able to summon up all his might because of the mite in his hair.
55. It was not fair that the family had to pay a fare to enter the fair.
56. Jimmy had the flue and could not catch the bird which flew up the flue.
57. Jenny wanted to nail the nail which ruined her nail.
58. John could not play pool because he lost the pool which bet that he could not swim a mile in the pool.
59. The two men and ladies went to the same movie too.
60. The rite of passage was performed right when the boy did write the essay.
61. The prophet made a profit on his preaching.
62. The baker needs to knead the bread dough.
63. The principal at the high school must set forth principles for study by students.

Now, I provide some questions which provide stark evidence of the ambiguity, if not stupidity of English:

1. Why do Americans park in a driveway and drive on a parkway?
2. How can Americans walk in a park and sit on a sidewalk?
3. If there is no egg in eggplant, no ham in hamburger and neither apple nor pine in pineapple, then what sense do these names make?
4. If the English did not invent English muffins, the French did not invent French fries, why do we so name these food items?
5. If sweetmeats are candy and sweetbreads are not sweet, but are meat, why do we call them such names?
6. So, also since a naked mole rat is neither a mole nor a rat, but a Guinea pig, what justifies the name mole rat?
7. Given the fact that quicksand works very slowly, boxing rings are square and guinea pigs are neither from Guinea nor are they pigs, why do we call them these names?
8. If writers write, then why do not fingers fing, why do grocers not groce and why do hammers not ham?

9. If the plural of tooth is teeth, then why is not the plural of both beeth; if two geese are geese, why are not two mooses meech; indeed, then why are two indexes indices?
10. Does it not seem ridiculous that a person can make amends, but not one amend; that a historian can comb through the annals of history but not one annal?
11. So we have odds and ends, but why can we not have one odd and one end?
12. If teachers have taught, then why have not preachers praught?
13. If a vegetarian eats vegetables, what does a humanitarian eat?
14. How come Americans recite at a play but play at a recital?
15. How come businesses send cargo by ship but ship by truck?
16. How come noses run and feet smell?
17. How can a slim chance and a fat chance be the same while quite alike and quite a few are alike?
18. How can the weather be “hot as hell” one day and as “cold as hell” another day?
19. Have you ever noticed that Americans talk about certain things only when they are absent?
20. How can an American house burn up as it burns down?
21. How can an American fill in a form by filling it out?
22. How can an American’s alarm go off by going on?
23. How can the stars be out when they are visible, yet, when the lights are out they are invisible?
24. If we have seen a horseless carriage, where is a horseful carriage; indeed, if a woman has a strapless gown, why does she not have a strapful gown?
25. Where are all the spring chickens and has anyone ever met anyone who actually would hurt flies?
26. Now, how is it that I can wind up my watch to start it, but as I wind up this reflection, I end it?

STUDENTS: DO NOT REPEAT ANY OF THESE IN YOUR PAPERS!!!

Here now are three hundred and seventy-three (373) reasons to detest the English “language” as misleading, down right contradictory, hazardous to writing and prejudicial to learning itself:

A

Ate and eight-----ate as of food; eight as a number
Aid and aide-----aid as the verb to aid; aide as an assistant

Auricle and oracle.....the outer part of the ear and a soothsayer

B

Bay and bay-----bay as San Francisco; bay as window
 Be and bee-----be as a verb; bee as an insect
 Beam and beam.....beam as a smile; beam as in construction
 Bear and bare-----bear as an animal; bare as naked, empty
 Berth and birth-----berth as in a train; birth as from a womb
 Beech and beach-----beech as tree; beach, as sea shore
 Bond and bond-----bond as posted; and bond as a relationship
 Bread and bred-----bread as a pastry; bred as past of verb
 Bored and board-----bored, as tired; board as for furniture
 Box and box-----box as container; to box as a sport
 Bow, bow-----bow as a tie; bow as bend at waist
 Bun and bun-----bun as in the hair; bun as a pastry
 Bye, by and buy.....by as prep; buy as purchase; bye as a salutation

C

Can and can-----can, as in the verb; can as a container
 Cell and sell-----cell as in a bee hive; sell as a realtor a home
 Cent and scent.....cent, as money; scent as an odor
 Cents and since.....cents as money; since as an adverb
 Class and class-----class as a place in school; class as a group of people
 Close and clothes-----close as a door and clothes as something worn
 Cede and seed-----cede as to step back or concede; seed as to plant
 Crane and crane-----crane as a bird; crane as a vehicle

D

Days and daze-----days as in a week; daze as to be injured, confused
 Den and den-----den as a study room; den as a bear's lair
 Deer and dear-----deer as an animal; dear as a form of greeting
 Die and dye.....die, as physically; as a metal tool; as a dice; dye as color agent
 Do, due and due---do as verb form, to do; due as a noun; due as an adjective
 Doe and dough---doe as a female deer; dough as cake mix; dough as money
 Down, down and down...down, as direction; down as a hill; down as soft feathers

Drop and drop-----drop as from an eye dropper; drop as to fall
 Duck and duck-----duck as a bird; duck as to drop the head down

E

Eye and I-----eye as a bodily organ; I as first person
 pronoun

Ewe and you-----ewe as a lamb; you as the second person
 pronoun

F

Fall and fall-----fall as to drop; fall as to a season of the year

Fare, fair and fair---fare as food & payment; fair as complexion; fair as place

Feather and feather.....feather as a plume on a chicken; feather as a
 propeller

Flea and flee-----flea as an insect; flee as to leave the scene

Feat and feet-----feat as something accomplished; feet as a torso part

Fix and fix-----fix as a verb; fix as a situation in which one finds oneself

Flag and flag-----flag as a country's symbol; flag as to stop a car

Flu, flew and flue-----flu as a disease; flew as a bird; flue as in a chimney

Felt and felt-----felt as a cloth; felt as past of the verb feel

G

Gate and gait-----gate as a door; gait as the walking horse

H

Hall and haul.....hall as an entry and haul as to carry

Hale and hail.....hale as to greet and hail as sleet

Hay and hey.....hey as contraction for hello; hay as horse food

Hare, hair and heir----hare as a rabbit; hair as on one's head; heir as inherit

Head and head-----head as on a torso; head as the principal person

Heard and herd.....heard, as to listen; herd as a group of cows or horses

Heel and heel.....heel as a foot bone and heel as to lean over to one
 side

Hedge and hedge....hedge as a row of bushes and hedge as evasive or
 protective

Hi and high-----hi as short for hello; high as a vertical distance

Horse, hoarse-----horse as an animal; hoarse as a voice

Here and hear-----here as place where; hear as the verb to hear

Hole and whole-----hole as something absent or empty; whole as a unit

I

I and eye-----I as personal pronoun; eye as in the face
 Idol and idyll.....idol as an object of adoration; idyll as inactive.
 Its and it's--its as the possessive third personal pron; it's as a contraction

J

Jack and jack-----jack as a name; jack as to hunt or fish at night

K

Knead and need-----knead as with dough; need as a verb, to need
 Knot and not-----knot as in a rope; not as a negative

L

Lodge and lodge-----lodge as a residence; lodge as to live somewhere
 Lead and lead-----lead as verb, present tense; lead as a metal
 Led and lead-----led, past tense of lead; lead as a metal
 Lie, lie and lye-----lie, a noun; lie, past tense of lay; lye a poison
 Live and live-----live, present tense verb; live, a noun, alive

M

Maid and made--maid as a cleaning lady; made as the past tense of the verb
 Main and mane-----main as most important; mane as on a horse
 Male and mail-----male as a man; mail as sent by post-office
 Manor and manner.....manor as a residence; manner as a way of acting
 Mass and mass-----Mass as a ritual; mass as a solid
 Maul and maul-----maul as a hammer; maul as to physically hurt
 Mash and mash-----mash as food for chickens; mash as to squash
 May and may-----May as a month of the year; may as a helping verb
 Meet, mete and meat---meet as an action; mete as a measure; meat as eating
 Mine and mine-----mine as a pronoun; mine as a place in the earth
 Mite and might--mite as an arachnid; might as strength; might as helping vb.
 More and moor-----more as quantity; moor as to secure
 Morning and mourning---morning as early in the day; mourning as being sad

N

Nail, nail, nail----nail as for a hammer; nail as on a finger; nail as verb
 Need and knead-----knead as with dough; need as the verb: to need
 No and know-----no as opposite of yes; know as in knowledge
 Not and knot-----knot as in a rope; not as a negative
 Nose and knows-----nose as on the face; knows as third person sing. verb
 Nurse and nurse-----nurse as to breast feed a baby; nurse as in a hospital

Nursery and nursery---nursery where plants grow; nursery as a child's place

O

Off and of-----off (adv; adj; prep) and off as a verb; of (as a proposition)

Oracle and auricle.....a soothsayer and the outer part of the ear

P

Pan and pan-----pan as to scan; pan as a cooking instrument

Parish and perish-----parish as a church; perish as to die or burn up

Peace and piece-----peace as a state of being; piece as a part

Pear, pare, pair-----pear as a fruit; pare as to cut; pair as a couple

Pet and pet-----pet as a dog; pet as to caress a person

Pale and pail-----pale as completion; pail as a carrier of water

Plane and plain-----plane as to fly; plane as wood; plain a physical space

Pen and pen-----pen as an enclosure; pen as a writing tool

Pit and pit-----pit as a place; pit as the inside kernel in some fruit

Pitch and pitch-----pitch as to oil compound; pitch as a baseball

Plant, plant, plant—plant (flower); plant as place in earth; plant as one's feet

Plow and plow-----plow as a vehicle; plow as an action

Pool, pool, pool—pool a game; pool as bring together; pool as place to swim

Pray and prey-----pray as to God; prey as to a victim

Pre-Madonna and prima donna...pre-madonna, as before Madonna and a principal woman singer in an opera.

Principal and principle-----principal as of a school; principle as a cause

Prophet and profit-----Prophet as a religious announcer; profit as in money

Q

Quilt (verb) and quilt (noun)----- quilt as in sewing; quilt as a product

R

Red and read-----red as a color; read as past tense of verb

Real and reel-----real as in reality; reel as in fishing

Reed and read-----reed as near the water; read as a book

Rest and wrest-----rest as to sleep wrest as to pull or force

Row (verb) and row (noun)-----row, as a boat; row as in agriculture

Rose and rose-----rose as a flower; rose as past tense of verb rise

Ring and ring-----ring as for a finger; ring as a telephone

Right, rite, write, wright--right as direction; rite as of passage; as to write on paper; a workman, as in a wheelwright.

Ruler and ruler-----ruler as to measure with; ruler as a leader

S

Sack and sack-----sack as a cloth container; sack as to plunder
 Scale, scale scale--scale as on a balance; scale as to climb; scale as to scrape;
 scale as on fish
 School and school-----school as a place to study; school as a group of fish
 Screen and screen-----screen as on a window; screen as an action
 Set and set-----set theory in mathematics; set as a hen on eggs
 Shot and shot-----shot as from a gun; shot as ammunition
 Sign and sign-----sign as a stop sign; sign as to communicate via hands
 Since and cents.....since as an adverb and cents as money
 Scent and cent.....scent as an odor and cent as money
 So and sew-----So, as a conjunction; sew as clothes
 Stair and stare-----stair as up or down; stare as to look
 Stand and stand.....stand as a display; stand as upright
 Sail and sale-----sail as a boat; sale as to sell
 Seed and cede -----cede as to step back or concede; seed as to plant
 Sell and cell-----sell as to buy; cell as in a bee hive
 Scene and seen-----scene as a view; seen as past tense of to see
 See and sea-----see as the verb; sea as the ocean
 Shed and shed-----shed as to take off clothes; shed as a building
 Short and short-----short as physical; short as not enough
 Sense and cents-----sense as to feel; cents as money
 Shoot and shoot-----shoot as a spring growth; shoot as to kill
 Shrub and shrub-----shrub as a plant; shrub as a drink
 Shrug and shrug-----shrug as a woman's jacket; shrug as shake off
 Sink and sink-----sink as to wash in; sink as to go under water
 Slay and sleigh-----slay as to kill; sleigh as used in snow
 Steer and steer-----steer as an animal and steer as to direct
 Soul and sole-----soul as a source of life; sole as on a shoe
 Sun and son-----sun as in the sky; son as of a father and mother
 Sweet and suite.....sweet as in taste; suite as an office location

T

Tap as a small valve and tap as to strike with a sharp blow and tap as to
 make a hole
 Tail and tale-----tail as vestigial; tale as story
 Tear, tier and tear-----tear as in cry; tear as in rip; tier as in rank
 Tee and tea-----tee as in golf; tea as a drink

There and their--there as “dummy subj”; their as plur. third person pronoun
 Tip and tip-----tip as a gratuity; tip as a suggestion
 To, too and two---to as a preposition; too as an adverb; two as a number
 trump and trump.....trump as an instrument; trump as in cards

U

Utter and udder...utter as an adj. or intransitive verb and udder as mammary gland

Indeed, under “U” is the prize winner of English ambiguity, the word “up”!

Lovers of the English language should be embarrassed about “up,” a two letter word which has more meanings than any other two letter word about which I know! However, in its defense, Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary lists “up” as an adverb, a preposition, an adjective, a noun, a transitive and as an intransitive verb! So, “up” is five, that is right 5 of the eight (8) parts of English speech!

Now, one would think “UP” is easy to understand, since it seems to mean a vertical direction, “UP.” Of course, “UP” might also refer to the top of something, such as a list, however, if that is the case, then how can and why do we say the following:

UP the anti and lift oneself UP are the immediate transitive and intransitive verb examples, but then, the list goes on!

“I woke UP this morning” or at a meeting, “I brought the topic of the word “UP” UP. Furthermore, how and why do we say, “I spoke UP and how can officers of a club be “UP” for election, or why and how can we say “it is UP to the secretary to write UP the minutes of the meeting when she is choking UP the sandwich she was eating?

Furthermore, how do we call UP our friends, but pass UP the dessert after the dinner? Then, of course, we lighten UP both our room and our attitude even as we polish UP the silver, warm UP leftovers and finally clean UP the kitchen!

If we leave the house, we lock up the house and some of us fix up the old car.

At other times , we talk about people who stir UP trouble, line UP for tickets, work UP an appetite, and think UP excuses.

Then of course, to be dressed is one thing but to be dressed UP is special at the same time dog follows after us, we follow UP on our promise!

To say nothing of the fact that this UP is confusing since a drain must be opened UP, then, because it is stopped UP, we call a plumber to open uup the closed up drain. Then, wee open UP a store in the morning but we close it UP at night.

So, English speakers seem to be pretty mixed UP about UP! To be knowledgeable about the proper uses of UP, look the word UP in the dictionary. If one looks UP “UP” in the Merriam Webster’s dictionary, it takes UP almost 1/4th of the page and can add UP to over thirty definitions. If you are UP to it, you might try building UP a list of the many ways UP is used. It will take UP a lot of your time, but if you don't give UP, you may wind UP with a hundred or more.

But, relax, since when it threatens to rain and it is clouding UP, remember that the sun will come out when it clears UP, but, of course, given the fact that when it rains, it wets the backyard and often messes thing UP, even when it does rain, things do dry UP!

Notwithstanding the fact that looking at the Merriam Webster’s dictionary, I could go on and on, I will wrap this UP for my time is UP and it is time I shut UP!

Of course, you could try other adverbs such as “over,” “of” and “under,” but unless you are retired and have NOTHING else to do, don’t use UP your time.

V

Vain and vane-----vain as a state; vane as in weather

W

Waste and waist-----waste as garbage; waist as around the body

Wail and whale.....wail as to cry; whale as a mammal

Wait and weight-----wait as a delay; weight as a unit of measure

Walk and wok-----walk as exercise; wok as in cooking

Watch and watch.....watch as a time piece; watch as with the eyes
 Way and weigh-----way as a direction; weigh as weight
 Weld and weld-----weld as to join metal; weld as a yellow dye
 Whether and weather-----whether as an adverb; weather as wind
 Week and weak-----week as time; weak as not strong
 Where and wear-----where as adverb; wear as clothes
 Which and witch-----which as a relative pronoun; witch as a person
 Wind and wind-----wind as in weather; wind as to wind a watch
 Wine and whine-----wine as a drink; whine as a dog
 Wood and would-----wood as in a tree; would as helping verb
 Won and one-----won as a game; one as a number
 Wound and wound...wound, as on the hand; wound as a watch
 Wore and war.....wore as past tense of wear; war as opposite of peace
 Wrench and wrench.....wrench as to force; wrench as a tool
 Wrest and rest-----wrest as to force; rest as to sleep

X

Y

You and ewe-----you as second person pronoun; ewe as lamb
 You're and your-----you're as a contraction for "you are" and your as a pronoun

Z

NOTE: three four (4) time losers above:

Die, as to die physically; as one dice one throws; die as a metal cutting tool; dye as a color agent.

Scale, scale, scale, scale--scale as a balance to weigh; scale as to climb; scale as to scrape; scale as on fish write, as with a pencil, rite, as a religious action, right, as the opposite of wrong and wright, a workman as a wheelwright.

NOTE the fourteen(13) "three time losers" above:

Do, due and due
 Doe, dough and dough
 Fare, fair and fair
 Flu, flew and flue

Hare, hair and heir
 Nail, nail, nail
 Mite, might and might
 Meat, mete and meet
 Plant, plant and plant
 Pool, pool, pool
 tap, tap and tap
 To, too and two
 Tier, tear, tear
 Write, rite, right

By the way, all who have the perseverance to read these reflections, **MUST
 HELP CONTRIBUTE TO THE INSANITY OF THIS “LANGUAGE”
 CALLED ENGLISH***

Rgbc\01\02;03\05;01\08

*Notwithstanding the ambiguity and insanity of English, I warn all students
 who write the discussion papers required in my Philosophy classes that
NONE OF THESE homonyms **SHALL APPEAR** in their essay- I have dolls
 and I have pins!