1. THERE, THEIR. & THEY'RE

"There" refers to a place, "their" is a possessive adjective, and "they're" is the contraction of "they are."

Example



are words that sound alike. They are

HOMONYMS

responsible for many of the most common grammar mistakes.

They're not happy that their drink order is still on the bar over ther

2. LITERALLY

of the most misused words in the English language.

Somehow, "literally" has become one

"Literally" means "actually, without exaggestation", but today the word is often used where the writer or speaker is exaggerating. Example

"When I saw Janet Jackson I literally died."

is that Janet



4. IT'S vs ITS

TO SPLICE A comma splice is where the writer connects two things that could be two independent

3. IT'S NOT NICE

sentences with a comma alone. It's considered a heinous grammar crime.

Example

The teacher asked a question about comma

splices, the student was truly baffled."

The student was truly baffled."

If you're not sure which spelling to use, try replacing it with "it is" or "it

If neither of those phrases make sense, then "its" is the word you're looking for.

Example

5. THE SPLIT

"Its", without an apostrophe, is the possessive of

the pronoun "it." "It's", with an apostrophe, is a



Adverbs are a beautiful thing, as long as they're in the right place, and the right place is usually right after the infinitive form of the verb.

INFINITIVE

Example Correct "To study diligently."



This is another example of the "sound alike follies".

"Your" is the possessive adjective.

6. YOUR vs YOU'RE

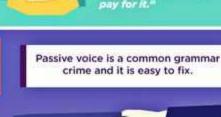
"you're" is the contraction version of "you are." Don't let the apostrophe lure you into thinking it's the

7. WHETHER vs IF

is interchangeable with "if". It isn't. "Whether" expresses a condition where there are two or more alternatives. "En expresses a condition where there are no alternatives.

Many writers seem to assume that "whether"

Example "I don't know whether I'll eat pizza tonight."



"I can eat pizza tonight if I have enough money to pay for it."

crime and it is easy to fix.

Example "A huge bag of chips was eaten by me."

8. PASSIVE VOICE

Passive voice occurs when the writer turns the object of the sentence into the subject, instantly weakening the impact of the action.

See the difference?

9. IMPROPER

USE OF THE APOSTROPHE

The apostrophe may be the most abused

punctuation mark in the English language.

2 To show possession such as "Jessie's apostrophe

means the apostrophe belongs to Jessie.

FFECT vs EFFECT

Chips

What a difference an "o" makes.

LOSE vs LOOSE

Loose "Loose" means the

without something. You

opposite of "tight" - or it may refer to something

which isn't bound together.

can "lose" your wallet, your job, or your mind.

This one can be tricky



something changing another thing.

When you're talking about the change itself, the noun, you'll use "effect."

Most people confuse them when they're talking about

"That music had a great effect on me." When you're talking about the act of changing, the verb,

you'll use "affect." "That music affected me greatly."

12. FEWER vs LESS

There's a simple rule for this one. If you can count it, use "fewer". If you can't, use "feet".

Example

"Jane has fewer CD's in her





13. WHO vs THAT

Who

For the most part, writers should use "who"

to refer to human beings and "that" to refer to inanimate objects.



That's right. We're rounding out the list with something that you're really not doing wrong at all. It's always nice to end on a positive note.

E·X·P.E·R·T

EDITOR