

## Common mistakes in e-mail English – part 1

There are certain words in English which may seem similar in meaning or which sound alike, but which in fact are not interchangeable. Some of the most frequent pairs of such words are *borrow* and *lend*, *affect* and *effect*, and *journey* and *travel*. In order to avoid making mistakes in your everyday e-mail communication, you first need to know what exactly these words mean and how they are used in a sentence.

### *borrow vs lend*

The key to understanding the difference between these two words is to look at the direction of giving something to a person. If we borrow something, we *borrow it from* someone. On the other hand, if we lend something, we *lend it to* someone.

Example: This is not my magazine. I *borrowed it from* a colleague.

Where is the magazine I *lent you* last month?

A. Complete the following sentences with the correct form of either *borrow* or *lend*.

1. Do you have an Italian dictionary you could \_\_\_\_\_ me?
2. They have \_\_\_\_\_ money from their business partner and now they cannot pay it back.
3. A neighbour \_\_\_\_\_ me some money and I must pay him back this week.
4. Jamie won't \_\_\_\_\_ his notes to anyone. He's such an unfriendly person.
5. Can I \_\_\_\_\_ your umbrella? I need to go to our other office and it's raining heavily.

Key: 1. lend, 2. borrowed, 3. lent, 4. lend, 5. borrow

### *affect vs effect*

The basic grammatical difference between the two is that *affect* is a verb meaning: to have an influence on someone or something, or to cause them to change, whereas *effect* is a noun meaning: the result of a particular influence.

Example: He complained that the noise outside *affected* his presentation.

Her smile had a strange *effect* on her husband.

B. Complete the following sentences with the correct form of either *affect* or *effect*.

1. The cost of living was \_\_\_\_\_ by natural disasters.
2. What was the \_\_\_\_\_ of her decision to resign as a production manager?
3. The latest news will \_\_\_\_\_ the outcome of the presidential elections.
4. The \_\_\_\_\_ of all those changes was a loss of confidence in the chairman.
5. Some chemicals were banned because of their damaging \_\_\_\_\_ on the environment.

Key: 1. affected, 2. effect, 3. affect, 4. effect, 5. effect

### *journey vs travel*

*Journey* is used for one particular movement from one place to another in a vehicle, while *travel* refers to the activity of travelling, moving from one place to another or visiting different places or countries. Note that *travel* is an uncountable noun. In the examples below both words are used as nouns, however they are also verbs with identical spelling as nouns.

Example: Many people read in the train on their daily *journey* to and from work.

Passes are available for one month's unlimited *travel* within Europe.

C. Complete the following sentences with the correct form of either *journey* or *travel*.

1. The price includes \_\_\_\_\_ and accommodation but meals are extra.
2. How was your \_\_\_\_\_? – It was a complete disaster! The train broke down.
3. I heard on the \_\_\_\_\_ news that there's been an accident.
4. Air \_\_\_\_\_ is getting more expensive.
5. The \_\_\_\_\_ was long and tiring. It took us five hours to get there.

Key: 1. travel, 2. journey, 3. travel, 4. travel, 5. journey

D. Choose the correct word in the e-mail below.

Dear John,

I'm sending you some details of our last meeting that you couldn't attend.

Due to the problems we had last year, sales have been (1) affected/effectuated and therefore our company has decided to change the current (2) advertisement/advertising agency in order to improve its image and reputation. However, the company had to (3) borrow/lend more money from the bank and there are likely to be some cutbacks in the company itself. We hope there won't be any negative (4) affects/effects in your department, but be prepared. Most certainly, prices of our products will (5) raise/rise and that will (6) affect/effect you and your team, but hopefully not to a great extent.

We are (7) interested/interesting in getting Vivian to work for us since she had a (8) job/ work at our company branch in Copenhagen and she has a degree in (9) economy/Economics, which is definitely an advantage. (10) Remember/Remind me to show you her CV as soon as you arrive.

I hope you have a good (11) journey/travel home and I look forward to seeing you back in the office.

Regards,  
Matt

Key: 1. affected, 2. advertising, 3. borrow, 4. effects, 5. rise, 6. affect, 7. interested, 8. job, 9. Economics, 10. remind, 11. journey