

Vocabulary: Problem Words

These groups of nouns all sound the same, or almost the same, and are often confused. However, they are spelled differently and have different meanings.

1. (a) latter (noun) – second of two.
(b) later (adjective) – near the end of something, later, more advanced in time.
(c) later (comparative adjective) – after.
2. (a) waist (noun) – body area between ribs and hips.
(b) waste (verb) – use something carelessly, fail to use something.
3. (a) desert (noun) – arid and barren place.
(b) desert (verb) – to abandon a place or person.
(c) dessert (noun) – sweet dish concluding a meal.
4. (a) heir (noun) – legal inheritor of something; recipient of tradition.
(b) air (noun) – gases forming atmosphere.
5. (a) vain (adjective) – excessively proud; unsuccessful; empty of substance.
(b) vane (noun) – rotating blade as in weather vane.
(c) vein (noun) – vessel carrying blood to heart, any blood vessel; particular quality

Make two sentences using one of the vocabulary words above. Read it aloud to another student who must write the vocabulary word on the board. The others in the group must decide if the word is written correctly.

Fill in the blank with the correct word.

LATTER

LATER

1. Mary arrived _____ than the others at the party.
2. He told the waiter that he preferred the _____ of the two daily specials.
3. I must leave now, it's _____ than I thought.

WAIST

WASTE

4. This skirt is too tight around the _____ .
5. The _____ baskets are emptied at the end of each day.
6. He didn't _____ his leftover sandwich; he broke it into crumbs for the birds.

DESERT

DESSERT

7. Many families had to _____ their homes because of the hurricane.
8. My favourite _____ is pumpkin pie.
9. The climate in the _____ is hot and dry.

HEIR

AIR

10. The _____ in the city is more polluted than country _____ .
11. She named her son _____ to the estate in her will.
12. The _____ felt very humid before it started to rain.

VAIN

VANE

VEIN

13. The newspaper article was written in a humorous _____ .
14. The weather _____ on the top of the barn is pointing north.
15. She was too _____ about her hair to go swimming.
16. They took a blood sample from a _____ in her arm.