Commonly Misused Words

A LOT/ALOT/ALLOT

- A Lot is two words, not one.
- The only allot that is one word means to distribute by lot or arbitrary shares.

Correct: I like reading books a lot.
Incorrect: I like this game alot.

Correct: I am going to allot the property.
Incorrect: I like this movie allot.

ACCEPT/EXCEPT

Accept---a verb meaning to take or receive
Except---usually a preposition which means excluding

Correct: Everyone was there except for you and me.
Incorrect: Please except my answer.

Correct: I accept your apology.
Incorrect: Will you please except me as a member of the club?

An easy way to remember this is?
There is an "x" in except. "x" usually means to take out (x out) or exclude.

ACCESS/EXCESS

Access---the right to enter or use
Excess---more than enough; beyond what is proper or right

Correct: I have complete backstage access.
Incorrect: I have access brownies.

Correct: I have excess drinks.
Incorrect: I have excess to the room.

An easy way to remember this is?
Excess is extreme.

AFFECT/EFFECT
**Affect**---usually a verb meaning to influence

**Effect**---usually a noun meaning result or aid

People usually know the meaning, but they confuse the spellings.

**An easy way to remember this is?**
Something must **affect** something to have an **effect** on it. Remember **A** comes before **E** in the alphabet.

**Special effects are things. Things are nouns.**

**ALL RIGHT/ALRIGHT**
All right is always written as two words. Alright is nonstandard English.
Correct: The movie was all right.
Incorrect: The movie was alright.

**ALTOGETHER/ALL TOGETHER**
Altogether---completely
All together---in a group

**An easy way to remember this is?**
If you can take all out and it still makes sense, you should use all together.
Example---We sing all together.
We sing together.

**ITS/IT’S**
Its---possessive form of it
It’s---a contraction of it is
**Usually writers put an apostrophe thinking that it makes its possessive, but it does not.**

Correct: It’s Monday morning.
Incorrect: It’s ball is in the corner.

Correct: Its ball is in the corner.
Incorrect: Its Monday morning.

**An easy way to remember this is?**
If you can insert "it is" in place of "it’s" you are using the right form.

**LAY/LIE**
Lay--- to put down, always takes an object, past tense is laid
Lie---to recline, doesn't take an object, past tense is lay
Present Tense:
Correct: I am going to lay the book on the table.
Incorrect: I am going to lay in the sun.

Correct: I am going to lie in the sun.
Incorrect: I am going to lie the book on the table.
Usage errors occur because the present tense of lay and the past tense of lie are both lay.

Past Tense:
Correct: Yesterday I laid the book on the table.
Correct: This morning I lay in the sun.

THAN/THEN
Than---used in comparisons
Then---indication of point in time; also, next
Correct: I like red better than blue.
Incorrect: I will than go to the store.

Correct: First I will go to the store. Then I will go to the beach.
Incorrect: She is nicer then he.
An easy way to remember this is?
Than---comparisons
Then---next

THEIR/THERE/THEY’RE
Their---belonging to them
There---in or at that place
They’re---contraction formed from they are

Correct: There is no explanation for your behavior.
They’re coming!
Their behavior was inappropriate.

Incorrect: Their is the field. I hope there coming. Susan and Dan are bringing they’re bats.

An easy way to remember this is?
If you can’t replace they’re with the phrase "they are", you are using the wrong word.
For the word there, remember they are places---here is in there.
WHO’S/WHOSE
Who’s---a contraction of who is
whose----a possessive pronoun
Correct: Who’s going to the movie?
Incorrect: Who’s pencil is this?
Correct: Whose book is this?
Incorrect: Whose going on the trip?

An easy way to remember this is?
If you can use "who is" in place of who’s you are using the right word