

VOCABULARY IN CONTEXT

When learning vocabulary at a more advanced level of English, it is important to be aware that words frequently have more than one meaning, and the meaning of a word is determined by the context in which it appears or can be determined in relation to other words.

The meaning of a word like 'hot' is understood in the context of a word like 'cold' because they are opposites (antonyms). These same words, however, would be similar in meaning (synonyms) in the context of 'warm' and 'cool', respectively.

When determining the meaning of words, which have either the same pronunciation or the same spelling, namely **homonyms**, context plays an important role.

HOMONYMS — HOMOGRAPHS AND HOMOPHONES

Homonym is generally used to describe a word, which has the same spelling and pronunciation as another, for example 'the second **row** of seats in the cinema' and '**row** the boat to shore'. The context tells us that **row** has two different meanings.

Homonyms are often differentiated according to whether the pair or set of words has the same spelling or pronunciation, but in all cases the meaning is determined from the context, as is their spelling and pronunciation.

If the words have the same **spelling**, but differ in pronunciation and meaning, they are called **homographs**.

For example:

The *Study English* program was recorded before a **live** audience.

- **live** in this context is pronounced /laɪv/, and is an adjective describing 'audience' and means 'is being recorded while the program is happening, and broadcast at a later time'

Where does she **live**?

live in this context is pronounced /lɪv/, and is the verb of the subject 'she'.

STUDY TIPS

When learning new vocabulary, it is beneficial to learn the meaning of words in the various contexts they appear. This makes it easier to remember the word and its meaning.

So, when reading and listening be aware how the words are being used in different contexts, and add examples of any new contexts to your vocabulary notebook.

If the words are **pronounced** the same, but differ in spelling and meaning, they are called **homophones**.

For example:

Your concert tickets are in the **mail**.
Only **male** students participated in the survey.

- **mail** and **male** are pronounced the same /meɪl/, but mean two different things, i.e. 'the service that delivers letters' and 'the opposite of female', respectively.

HOMOGRAPHS

Here is a list of the more common homographs.

Homograph	Pronunciation	Context
Spelling		
accent	/æk'sɒnt/ – verb /'æksɒnt/ – noun	When pronouncing the word 'accent', it's important to accent the second syllable. John spoke Chinese with a strong English accent .
approximate	/ə'prɒksəmeɪt/ – verb /ə'prɒksəmət/ – adjective	This shade of blue will approximate the colour of the fabric, but we can't match it exactly. An approximate cost of building the tunnel is \$10 billion.
associate	/ə'soʊʃieɪt/ – verb /ə'soʊʃiət/ – adjective	What do you associate this fashion label with – style or comfort? He is the associate editor of the newspaper.
bow	/baʊ/ – verb and noun /boʊ/ – noun	Please bow on entering the temple. After his brilliant performance, John gave a bow . She pinned a bow in her hair.
close	/kloʊz/ – verb /kloʊs/ – adjective	Close the window, please. It's getting cold. Her family lives close to the city.
conduct	/kən'dɒkt/ – verb /'kɒndɒkt/ – noun	The department will conduct an inquiry into the theft of the property. His conduct at the party was appalling.
conflict	/kən'flɒkt/ – verb /'kɒnflɒkt/ – noun	John's interests unfortunately conflict with the interests of the company. John's interests came into conflict with management.



STUDY ENGLISH

IELTS PREPARATION

Homograph Spelling	Pronunciation	Context
content	/ˈkɒntɛnt/ – noun /kənˈtɛnt/ – adjective	The content of that package was suspect. She was content with the decision they reached.
contest	/kənˈtɛst/ – verb /ˈkɒntɛst/ – noun	Did your brother contest your father's will? Did you enter the writing contest in the Learning Centre?
contract	/kənˈtrækt/ – verb /ˈkɒntrækt/ – noun	Did John contract malaria in Africa? Jane signed a contract with her new employer.
contrast	/kənˈtrast/ – verb /ˈkɒntrast/ – noun	The instructions said to contrast the present situation with the past. Jane's assessment of the situation was in stark contrast to the truth.
converse	/kənˈvɜːs/ – verb /ˈkɒnvɜːs/ – noun	The teacher requested they converse in English. They thought the new bridge would ease the traffic, but the converse was in fact true.
convert	/kənˈvɜːt/ – verb /ˈkɒnvɜːt/ – noun	Will you convert my Australian dollars into yen please? After attending the political rally, he became a convert to the new party.
delegate	/ˈdɛləʒeɪt/ – verb /ˈdɛləʒət/ – noun	If he is to survive in his job, he will need to delegate some of his work. The school only sent one delegate to the conference.
deliberate	/dɛˈlɪbəreɪt/ – verb /dɛˈlɪbərət/ – adjective	The barrister feels the jury will not deliberate for long. The jurors felt the attack was deliberate .
elaborate	/əˈlæbəreɪt/ – verb /əˈlæbərət/ – adjective	The interviewer asked me to elaborate on my answer. That was an elaborate scheme he devised for recycling waste.
export	/əkˈspɔːt/ – verb /ˈɒkspɔːt/ – noun	The state will export 40% of its steel to Asia. The steel is packaged for export to Asia.
extract	/əkˈstrækt/ – verb /ˈɒkstrækt/ – noun	Use the juicer to extract the juice from the fruit, please. That extract is taken from the <i>Study English – IELTS Preparation Series One</i> book.



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IELTS PREPARATION

Homograph	Pronunciation	Context
Spelling		
graduate	/ˈgrædʒueɪt/ – verb /ˈgrædʒuət/ – noun	He will graduate with a Diploma in Business from Insearch, UTS in early spring. He is a business graduate from Insearch, UTS.
import	/ɪmˈpɔːt/ – verb /ɪmˈpɔːt/ – noun	China will import coal and uranium from Australia. The import of coal and uranium earns millions of dollars for the Australian economy.
invalid	/ɪnˈvælɪd/ – noun /ɪnˈvæləd/ – adjective	It was unfortunate that she became an invalid after the accident. John’s visa was invalid for travel in China.
lead	/liːd/ – verb /lɪd/ – noun	Jane will lead the group for the trek in Nepal. Pb is the chemical symbol for lead .
live	/lɪv/ – verb /laɪv/ – adjective	They want to live by the sea. There will be live coverage from Wimbledon.
permit	/pəˈmɪt/ – verb /pəˈmɪt/ – noun	Check with the neighbours whether they’ll permit you to hold the party late into the night. Your parking permit expires next month.
present	/prɪˈzɛnt/ – verb /prɪˈzɛnt/ – noun, adjective	The Director of Studies will present the awards at the graduation ceremony. All the children received a present from their father when he returned from the business trip.
produce	/prəˈdʒʊs/ – verb /prəˈdʒʊs/ – noun	They will produce many valuable goods for export. Local produce is sold at the market.
progress	/prəˈgrɛs/ – verb /prəˈgrɛs/ – noun	Students using <i>Study English</i> can progress at their own speed. The students made steady progress in their five-week English program.
project	/prəˈdʒɛkt/ – verb /prəˈdʒɛkt/ – noun	The machine will project the image onto the screen. Students are required to do a research project for their final assignment.
record	/rɪˈkɔːd/ – verb /rɪˈkɔːd/ – noun	Teachers record students’ marks on the database. A record of students’ marks is always kept on file.



Homograph Spelling	Pronunciation	Context
refill	/ri'fɪl/ – verb /'rifɪl/ – noun	Can I refill your glass? Would you like a refill ?
reject	/rə'ɪdʒekt/ – verb /'ri:ɪdʒekt/ – noun	The quality control department will reject the computers because of faulty wiring. That computer will be a reject because of the faulty wiring.
separate	/'sɛpəreɪt/ – verb /'sɛprət/ – adjective	Teachers will need to separate the top-achieving students. There will be a separate writing class to accommodate the general training students.
survey	/sʌ'veɪ/ – verb /'sʌveɪ/ – noun	The geologists will survey the land to assess future possibilities. The marketing department conducted a survey on their latest product to assess customer satisfaction.
suspect	/sə'spɪkt/ – verb /'sʌspɪkt/ – noun	The mother did not suspect her daughter of truancy. The 18-year-old was a suspect in the crime.
wind	/waɪnd/ – verb /wɪnd/ – noun	The two main streets in the resort town wind their way to the ocean. The weather bureau is forecasting a strong southerly wind this afternoon.

HOMOPHONES

Here is a list of the more common homophones.

Homophone Spelling	Pronunciation	Context
aid aide	/eɪd/	Humanitarian aid was provided to the victims of the tsunami disaster. When the crisis erupted, the president summoned her aide .
air heir	/ɛə/	The summer rain cooled the air substantially. The heir to the company's fortune has not been decided.
allowed aloud	/ə'laʊd/	The use of a dictionary is not allowed during the IELTS test. The questions were read aloud for all to hear.



Homophone Spelling	Pronunciation	Context
ascent assent	/ə'sɪnt/	They began their ascent of Mount Everest as dawn broke. The managing director gave his assent to the proposed construction of the tunnel.
bare bear	/bɛə/	After the fire, the countryside was completely bare . Aunt Mary's birthday card greeting will bear the Queen's seal because she turned 100. That particular species of bear is mainly found in the North Pole.
base bass	/beɪs/	The bushwalk starts at the base of the mountains. The quartet was brilliant except for the bass player who was suffering from the flu.
bean been	/bin/	The black bean is widely used to prepare Indian dishes. They've been to the four corners of the Earth.
beat beet	/bit/	Every week I take all my Persian rugs out onto the balcony and beat them till they're clean. Beet is a root plant from which sugar is made.
berth birth	/bɜːθ/	A berth was made vacant in the harbour for the luxury cruise liner. They celebrated the birth of their second child.
bite byte	/baɪt/	If provoked some dogs will bite . Computer buffs will know that a byte is a unit of storage.
blew blue	/blu/	The strong wind blew all night. After the storm cleared the sky turned blue .
break brake	/breɪk/	Did anything break during the hailstorm? Put the brake on so the car doesn't roll.
buy by bye	/baɪ/	You need to buy a new jacket. His shoes are by the door. Bye! I'll see you tomorrow.
canvas canvass	/'kænvəs/	They used canvas to make the tent so it'll be strong. They will canvass the area tomorrow for support.



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Homophone Spelling	Pronunciation	Context
carrot carat	/'kærət/	Carrot , an orange root vegetable, is used in many of the spicy dishes. On her engagement she received an 18- carat gold ring.
ceiling sealing	/'silɪŋ/	The room was quite old – the paint was peeling off the walls and ceiling . Sealing the package was part of the procedure.
cell sell	/sɛl/	The prisoner was taken to his cell . They were advised to sell their stocks.
cent scent sent	/sɛnt/	Luckily, John didn't have to pay a cent for the overdue DVDs. The room was filled with the scent of roses. The parcel was sent by courier.
cereal serial	/'sɛəriəl/	The children usually have a bowl of cereal for breakfast. Her popular novel will be shown as a serial next season on ABC television.
check cheque	/'tʃɛk/	It's important to check whether you've locked the door when leaving. He wrote a cheque for \$500.
cite site sight	/'saɪt/	Don't forget to cite your sources at the end of your essay. The tour will include the most popular site , the Great Wall of China. His sight has been slowly deteriorating.
coarse course	/'kɔ:s/	Coarse salt is often used for preserving foods. He will need to take an accounting course to complete his business degree.
complement compliment	/'kɔ:pləmənt/	The players complement each other, so they stand a good chance of winning the championship. She paid him a great compliment by acknowledging his contribution.
council counsel	/'kaʊnsəl/	The local council voted in favour of the development of the massive shopping centre complex. The student accepted the adviser's counsel .
dependant dependent	/'dɛpɛndənt/	The dependant , to whom they were referring, was Smith's child. The success of their economy is dependent on exports.



Homophone Spelling	Pronunciation	Context
dew due	/dju/	The lawns were covered with morning dew . Our assignment is due Monday morning.
die dye	/daɪ/	The man will die if help doesn't come soon. In the final stage, it is necessary to dye the fabric green.
elicit illicit	/ə'liːsət/	The radio announcer deliberately made a disparaging remark to elicit a response from his listeners. The illicit drugs were found during the police raid.
fair fare	/fɛə/	Students felt the final test was fair . There was some discussion about increasing the fare for student bus tickets.
feat feet	/fiːt/	The engineering of the Sydney Opera House is an amazing feat . His feet were sore after running the marathon.
flour flower	/'flaʊə/	The recipe calls for two cups of flour . The species of cactus has a delicate yellow flower .
for fore four	/fɔː/	There are some books waiting for you at reception. The department restructure came to the fore again at last week's meeting. There are four students who will resit the test.
gate gait	/geɪt/	The gate opens at exactly 6:00 am. The doctor became concerned because of her peculiar gait . She could hardly walk.
grease Greece	/grɪs/	The mechanic's clothes were covered in grease . I'm planning on going to Greece for my next holiday.
grate great	/greɪt/	Could you grate some ginger onto the fish please? The great masterpieces always attract the biggest crowds.
groan grown	/groʊn/	We knew Jane was alive when she began to groan from under the rubble. The rosemary plant has grown into a huge bush.



Homophone Spelling	Pronunciation	Context
hall haul	/hɔːl/	The classroom is located down the hall and to the right. We had to haul the recording equipment from one end of the building to the other.
hangar hanger	/'hæŋə/	The old Boeing 747 was dispatched to the hangar for storage. There is a hanger on the rack for your coat.
heal heel	/hiːl/	Jane was advised that it would take at least three months for her arm to heal after the fall. The heel of her shoe got caught between the grooves of the escalator.
hear here	/hɪə/	She was too upset to hear what I was saying. The photocopying machine is here on the left.
heroin heroine	/'hɪərəweɪn/	The article discussed the dangers surrounding the use of heroin - an illegal drug. Jane plays the heroine in the film.
higher hire	/'haɪə/	The higher the mountain, the greater the challenge becomes. You can hire a car at the airport.
him hymn	/hɪm/	John reprimanded him for behaving unprofessionally. The religious songs are found in the hymn book.
hole whole	/hoʊl/	To reach water they had to dig a deep hole in the ground. It will take the whole day to reach that little outback town.
hour our	/'aʊə/	I will need an hour of your time to complete the survey. Our university will be hosting the conference this year.
idle idol	/'aɪdl/	Since the factory closed down, the workers have been idle . After his great win at Wimbledon, he'll no doubt become the next tennis idol .
key quay	/ki/	They found a spare key for the storeroom. We decided the best place to meet would be on the quay , down by the harbour.



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Homophone Spelling	Pronunciation	Context
knew new	/nju/	He knew there would be significant changes to the programme. A new programme will be introduced in the next semester.
knot not	/nɒt/	The rope was tied in a knot . The boat was not tied to the wharf.
know no	/noʊ/	Did you know he was in town visiting friends? No , I didn't know he was visiting his friends.
knows nose	/noʊz/	She knows the code to the building. His nose was broken during the football match.
lessen lesson	/'lɛsən/	Installing a safety device will lessen the risk of injury. The lesson on the environment was interesting.
lightning lightening	/'laɪtnɪŋ/	They forecasted rain with thunder and lightning . Lightening the colour will provide you with the shade required.
loan lone	/loʊn/	John took out a loan to start up his business. A lone man was seen waiting at the bus stop in the early hours of the morning.
mail male	/meɪl/	The mail is delivered twice a day. The survey focussed on male students.
mat matt	/mæt/	There was a small mat just outside the front door of the house. All the photographs had a matt finish.
meat meet	/mit/	The main meal consisted of meat , potatoes, and a vegetable. We can meet at the information desk at noon.
miner minor	/'maɪnə/	The miner's health was inevitably affected working such long hours underground. Only minor changes were made to the film festival program.
missed mist	/mɪst/	She missed her bus this morning. The mountains are always shrouded in a bluish mist .
morning mourning	/'mɔːnɪŋ/	The test was scheduled for Saturday morning . The children were still mourning the death of their pet dog.



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IELTS PREPARATION

Homophone Spelling	Pronunciation	Context
muscle mussel	/ˈmʌsəl/	She strained her thigh muscle running the marathon. The mussel dish wasn't very tasty, even though I love shellfish.
naval navel	/ˈneɪvəl/	The naval officer escorted guests to the base. The teacher asked the student to point to the navel on the body chart.
need knead	/nid/	They will need to order their tickets for the flight. The baker will knead the dough for the bread.
oar or ore	/ɔː/	The oar was damaged so they couldn't row the boat. They had a choice of either going on an excursion or watching a movie. The country was rich in iron ore .
one won	/wʌn/	John passed the test by one mark. The national team won Thursday's football match.
pail pale	/peɪl/	The children picked a pail of strawberries. He arrived at school looking rather pale .
pain pane	/peɪn/	Susan was in a lot of pain after twisting her ankle. The pane of glass was completely shattered when hit by the ball.
pair pare pear	/pɛə/	He also packed another pair of trousers for the trip. Use this knife to pare the apple. They had a juicy pear for dessert.
peace piece	/piːs/	They were hopeful the negotiated treaty would bring peace . Margaret ordered a piece of pie with her coffee.
pedal peddle	/ˈpɛdl/	The pedal on the bike was repaired. Harry was looking for someone to peddle his illegal drugs.
pigeon pidgin	/ˈpɪdʒən/	The carrier pigeon was used to relay messages during World War I. There is a form of language called pidgin English.
pier peer	/pɛə/	They will build a theatre on the abandoned pier . The security guard tried to peer into the warehouse window.



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Homophone Spelling	Pronunciation	Context
plain plane	/pleɪn/	The décor of the house was plain and simple. The plane was ready for take off.
pole poll	/pəʊl/	He used a pole to get the kite out of the tree. The television station conducted a poll into the popularity of its evening programs.
practice practise	/'præktəs/	The listening practice tests are available in the library. You can practise the listening tests in the library.
prays preys praise	/preɪz/	She prays every morning in the village chapel. The eagle preys on small animals. The coach was full of praise for his players after their victory.
principal principle	/'prɪnsəpəl/	His principal concern was for the safety of the children. Students only needed to remember the first principle for the science test.
queue cue	/kju:/	How long did you wait in the queue ? The prompt gave the actor the cue to begin his speech.
rain rein reign	/reɪn/	The rain was a welcome sight after two years of severe drought. Pull on the right rein if you want the horse to turn right. The reign of their first CEO lasted 10 years.
raise rays	/reɪz/	The government needs to raise people's standard of living. Doctors warn about exposure to ultraviolet rays .
real reel	/ri:l/	The devastation of the tsunami was real . So you weren't dreaming. There was only one reel of film to view.
right rite write	/raɪt/	She guessed the right answer. A religious ceremony, which is performed within a particular society, is sometimes called a rite . You are required to write a 250 word essay.



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Homophone Spelling	Pronunciation	Context
road rode rowed	/rɒd/	Because of heavy rain, the road was quite slippery. The group rode their horses through the bush on the excursion. The team rowed brilliantly to win the regatta championship.
roll role	/rɒl/	The spectators watched the golf ball roll successfully into the 9 th hole, giving the competitor an advantage. Andrew was given the lead role in the new musical.
rye wry	/raɪ/	Rye is one of their staple crops. She gave her sister a wry smile knowing full well that Shirley was in deep trouble.
sail sale	/seɪl/	The tall ships will sail into the harbour early this afternoon. There was a huge sale in all shops through June and July.
scene seen	/siːn/	The scene of devastation caused by the hurricane was horrifying. They were nowhere to be seen after the destruction.
seas sees seize	/siːz/	Their adventure consisted of sailing the seven seas . He sees the issue of unemployment in a different light. Did Sanjay seize the opportunity to study at INSEARCH UTS?
sew so sow	/soʊ/	I will sew the button on your shirt. The meeting is on Thursday, so the proposal will need to be ready by then. Farmers in tropical Asia will sow three crops of rice in a year.
soar sore	/sɔːr/	We watched the eagle soar into the sky. My arm was sore after the fall.
sole soul	/soʊl/	Mary had sole responsibility for the children. Her heart and soul went into writing the book.
some sum	/sʊm/	Some of the biscuits were eaten. The sum total of the products is \$50.
son sun	/sʊn/	Their son is now living in China. The sun finally appeared after three days of heavy rain.



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IELTS PREPARATION

Homophone Spelling	Pronunciation	Context
stair stare	/stə/	Timothy sat waiting for Jill on the top stair , outside her front door. It is impolite to stare .
stationary stationery	/ˈsteɪənəri/ or /ˈsteɪənəri/	The cars were stationary for a long while after the accident on the highway. The stationery can be purchased from the newsagent.
stake steak	/steɪk/	John holds a 20% stake in the business. She ordered steak for her meal.
steal steel	/stil/	How did they manage to steal the equipment? They will be exporting steel with the new agreement.
suite sweet	/swit/	The presidential suite in the new Hilton hotel is spectacular. The cake was too sweet for my liking.
Sunday sundae	/ˈsʌndeɪ/	The picnic was scheduled for Sunday . The children enjoyed their chocolate sundae ice cream soda.
tail tale	/teɪl/	The possum has a bushy tail . She told a fascinating tale about the missing lantern.
taught taut	/tɔ:t/	Rita taught English in China for many years. The tight rope on which the trapeze artist performed was pulled taut .
tear tier	/tɪə/	The story brought a tear to my eye. An order was placed for a four- tier wedding cake.
there their they're	/ðeə/	There were only two places available on the program. Their program of study required a prerequisite of two accounting courses. They're accepted into the diploma program.
threw through	/θru:/	Steve threw the cricket ball at great speed. The crowd stampeded through the gates.
tire tyre	/ˈtaɪə/	I never seem to tire of the classics. It was sheer luck that someone was on hand to help replace the flat tyre .



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IELTS PREPARATION

Homophone Spelling	Pronunciation	Context
toe tow	/toʊ/	John stubbed his toe on the rock. The mechanic will tow the car to the garage.
to too two	/tu/	I will be driving to the coast rather than flying. The water is too cold to swim in. I have only two brothers.
vain vein	/veɪn/	The team worked in vain to save the accident victim. The doctor injected the penicillin into a vein in his left arm.
waist waste	/weɪst/	Her clothing was now tight around the waist . They disposed of their waste thoughtfully.
wait weight	/weɪt/	You will need to wait for the test results. The questionnaire asked for the height and weight of the participant.
wave waive	/weɪv/	It was a two metre wave that hit the fishermen. A decision was reached to waive a portion of the fees.
way weigh	/weɪ/	The intensive language program was a good way to improve my Japanese. The shop assistant will weigh your produce.
weak week	/wik/	It was to be expected he would be weak after the operation. There was only a week left before the start of the term.
weather whether	/'wðə/	Weather permitting I'll go on the bushwalk. I shall be going on the bushwalk whether you like it or not.
wet whet	/wɛt/	The ground is quite wet from all the rain we've had. All the dishes on the menu will whet your appetite.
which witch	/wɪtʃ/	Which road will give me access to the property? She dressed as a witch for the Halloween party.
wrote rote	/roʊt/	He wrote his novel while on leave in Italy. The children were taught to learn by rote .
your you're	/jʊr/	Your tickets will be available on Friday. You're welcome to pick up your tickets on Friday.