Homophones and minimal pairs

What is a homophone?

A homophone is a set of words that sound the exact same, but often have nothing in common.
They have the same pronunciation but different meanings, origins, or spelling.

Note: homophones can differ depending on someone's accent.

What is a minimal pair?

A minimal pair is a set of words that sound very similar, but is not pronounced completely the same. They differ by **one** sound only. That sound appears in the same position in each word and can be either a vowel or consonant.

Note: minimal pairs can differ depending on someone's accent.
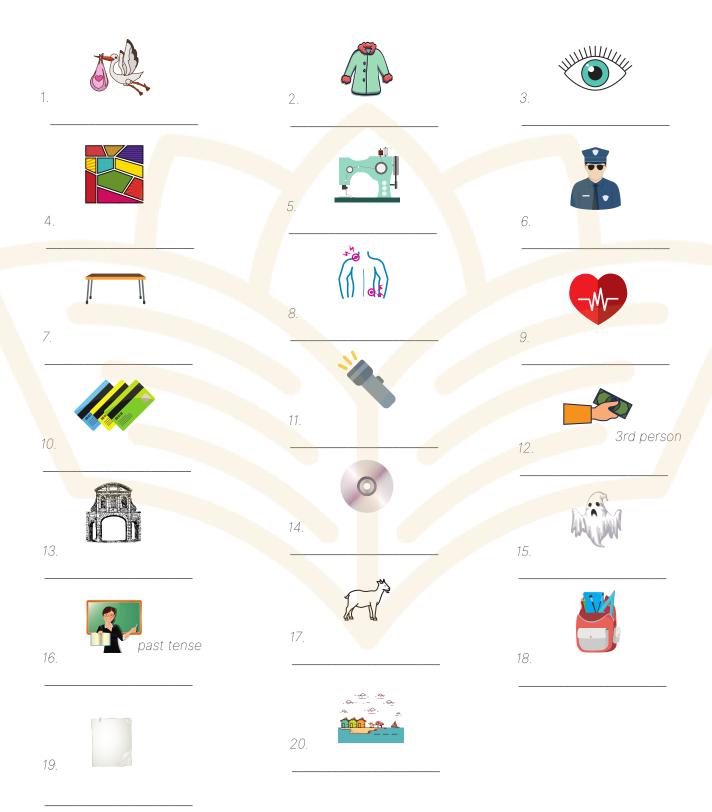
Commonly confused homophones

allowed	aloud
all together	altogether
rain	reign
bored	board
plain	plane
scent	sent
illicit	elicit
heard	herd
flower	flour
deer	dear

Commonly confused vowel sounds (minimal pairs)

short and long A	*am - aim*
	back - bake
short and long E	*sweat - sweet*
	red - read
short and long I	*will - while*
	sick - psych
short and long O	*odd - ode*
	cop - cope
short and long U	*full - fool*
	shut - shoot

Commonly confused consonants (minimal pairs)

B - P	*berry - very*
B - V	*belief - believe*
L - R	*glass - grass*
S - Z	*seal - zeal*
S - Sh - Ch	*seat - sheet - cheat*
J - Y	*jewel - yellow*
S - Th	*closing - clothing*
T - Th	*true - through*
D - T	*needed - waited*

In context, it normally becomes clear which of the two you or the speaker wants to communicate. However, if you don't know the homophone yet, it can be confusing.

Therefore, keep watching, reading and listening as much as possible. This is the best way to gain new vocabulary.

Homophones and minimal pairs

1. Describe the following pictures.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

8. _____

9. _____

10. _____

11. _____

12. *3rd person*
_____

13. _____

14. _____

15. _____

16. *past tense*
_____

17. _____

18. _____

19. _____

20. _____

Homophones and minimal pairs

2. Which of these words belong together?

arrive	torch
sew	see
guard	coast
pays	**alive**
taught	desk
disc	art
bag	back
ghost	page
arch	coat
goat	card

3. Say each pair out loud and decide whether they are a homophone or minimal pair.

	homophone.	. minimal pair.
e.g. 1. arrive - alive	_____	✔
2. _____	_____	_____
3. _____	_____	_____
4. _____	_____	_____
5. _____	_____	_____
6. _____	_____	_____
7. _____	_____	_____
8. _____	_____	_____
9. _____	_____	_____
10. _____	_____	_____

Homophones and minimal pairs

4.   Think of 3 minimal pairs for each combination

short and long A
1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

short and long E
1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

short and long I
1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

short and long O
1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

short and long U
1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

6. Can you think of more homophones?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____
11. _____
12. _____

5.   Think of 2 minimal pairs for each combination

B - P
1. _____
2. _____

B - V
1. _____
2. _____

L - R
1. _____
2. _____

S - Z
1. _____
2. _____

S - Sh - Ch
1. _____
2. _____

J - Y
1. _____
2. _____

S - Th
1. _____
2. _____

T - Th
1. _____
2. _____

D - T
1. _____
2. _____