WHAT IS A HOMONYM?

Homonyms are words that sound the same but have completely different meanings. For example:

**Incorrect:** Their house is a mess!
(“Their” refers to the possessive form of “they.” This sentence makes sense and shows that the house belongs to them.)

**Correct:** Their house is a mess!
(“Their” refers to the possessive form of “they.” This sentence makes sense and shows that the house belongs to them.)

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The following are examples of how homonyms are used incorrectly and correctly:

**Affects v. Effects**
- **Incorrect:** The affects of global warming are raising sea levels and climate change.
- **Correct:** The effects of global warming are raising sea levels and climate change.
  (Here, you use “effects” because you are discussing the results of global warming, not the influences.)

**Allusion v. Illusion**
- **Incorrect:** Often, authors make an illusion to Greek mythology.
- **Correct:** Often, authors make an allusion to Greek mythology.
  (Here, you use “allusion” because you are talking about an indirect reference, not a belief.)

**Ascent v. Assent**
- **Incorrect:** Josh nodded his head in ascent with his friend’s argument.
- **Correct:** Josh nodded his head in assent with his friend’s argument.
  (Here, you use “assent” because Josh is in agreement with his friend.)

**Cite v. Site**
- **Incorrect:** The archaeological cite is located on the property of the Lakota Indian Reservation.
- **Correct:** The archaeological site is located on the property of the Lakota Indian Reservation.
  (Here, you use “site” because you are talking about a place, not a quotation.)

**Its v. It’s**
- **Incorrect:** It’s a shame that its raining today because I was really looking forward to going to the beach.
- **Correct:** It’s a shame that it’s raining today because I was really looking forward to going to the beach.
  (Here, you use “it’s” because you are saying “it is.”)

**Their v. They’re**
- **Incorrect:** Shannon and I are going over to they’re house around 8:30.
- **Correct:** Shannon and I are going over to their house around 8:30.
  (Here, you use “their” because it shows that the house belongs to “them.” You do not use “they are.”)

**To v. Too**
- **Incorrect:** Today I forgot my book, notebook, and my cell phone, to!
- **Correct:** Today I forgot my book, notebook, and my cell phone, too!
  (Here, you use “too” because you forgot your cell phone in addition to other things.)

**Wear v. Where**
- **Incorrect:** Can you please tell me wear the bookstore is?
- **Correct:** Can you please tell me where the bookstore is?
  (Here, you use “where” because you are asking for a location, not clothing yourself.)

**Weather v. Whether**
- **Incorrect:** It does not matter weather you go to Fooodtown or Shop Rite; they both carry natural foods.
- **Correct:** It does not matter whether you go to Foodtown or Shop Rite; they both carry natural foods.
  (Here, you use “whether” because you are introducing a choice between Foodtown and Shop Rite.)
The following are examples of how homonyms are used incorrectly and correctly:

**Whose v. Who’s**
- **Incorrect:** Whose going to the concert tonight?
- **Correct:** Who’s going to the concert tonight?
(Here, you use “who’s” because you are asking “who is.”)

**Your v. You’re**
- **Incorrect:** Try not to forget you’re keys today!
- **Correct:** Try not to forget your keys today!
(Here, you use “your” because it is the possessive form of “you.”)