

## 9 Frequently confused pairs of words

This is a small sample of words that are often confused. When in doubt, look it up!

### alternate(ly), alternative(ly)

**Alternate** means by turn.

**Alternative** means in a way that offers a choice.

### among, between

Divide something **between** two people or **among** three or more. Often, however, between is the correct word to express the relation of one thing to several others.

Although **between** expresses a relation of one thing to another, it may also be used to express a relation of one thing to many surrounding things, both individually and severally (a treaty between three or more countries; a choice between the three most promising candidates).

Diplomatic relations between Italy, France and Germany are strained.

**Among** expresses the relationship collectively (can be replaced by "into a group of") and broadly (can be replaced by "one of").

He fell among thieves; it is among my dearest possessions.

### at present, presently

**At present** means now.

**Presently** means soon or in the near future.

### comprised of

This is incorrect; use "comprises."

### comprises, includes

When **comprises** is used, it should always fit the saying, "The whole **comprises** the parts" and all of the parts must be included.

**Includes** implies an incomplete list.

The Atlantic provinces comprise Newfoundland and the Maritime provinces. The Maritime provinces include New Brunswick.