

Affect vs Effect

While these words sound very similar, their meanings and usages differ, and using the wrong one can change the meaning of your sentence into something you didn't intend.

Identifying Affect and Effect

This distinction can get tricky. Let's start with a simple way to think about it. If you are using a verb, you probably want affect. If you are using a noun, you probably want effect.

Do you mean that something influenced or impacted something else? You probably want affect. *Her explanation affected me.* The results of this influence, the aftereffects, are just that: effects. *Her explanation had an effect on me.*

You might try this mnemonic to help you remember: A as in Affect refers to Actions; E as in Effect refers to the End result.

Exceptions to the Rules

The above explanation, although useful, is a bit of an oversimplification. Sometimes, affect can be a noun and effect can be a verb. For example, if someone has *inappropriate affect*, they tend to laugh or smile at very sad times. Or, if a counselor works with that person, and the person's behavior changes for the better, the counselor has brought about change in that person's behavior and has therefore *effected positive change*.

This might seem like it defies the rules we explained above, but when we look harder, it doesn't, necessarily. When affect is a noun, it generally refers to displays of emotion, ways we express *the condition of being affected*. When effect is a verb, it refers to the process of getting to the end result or *the act of creating an effect*.

Practice Sentences from Purdue OWL

Fill in the blank with Affect or Effect (answer key below Conclusion and Sources Referenced)

1. Wars _____ everybody, and their destructive _____ last for generations.
2. Television has a strong _____ on public opinion.
3. My mood can _____ my thinking, too.
4. I see that you're trying to _____ apathy, but I know that you really do care.
5. Falling on my head had a bad _____ on my memory.
6. His years of smoking have negatively _____ ed his health.
7. This plan will surely _____ significant improvements in our productivity.
8. The patient shows normal _____ and appears to be psychologically stable.
9. The principal's new rules _____ the school.

10. Supply and demand have a direct _____ on the prices of commodities.
11. The _____ of the speech was visible on the faces of the sleeping audience.
12. He's just trying to seem cool; his indifference is completely _____ ed.
13. We may never know the full _____ of the radiation leak.
14. The early frost will _____ the crops.
15. What kind of _____ can this quiz have on your dinner tonight?

Conclusion

While telling the difference between these two words may seem confusing at first, take a second to slow down and think through what you mean to say. While these homonyms might affect your mood, if you take your time and think through the definitions listed on this worksheet, you'll be able to create your intended effect!

References Consulted

1. "Affect/Effect Spelling Exercise // Purdue Writing Lab." *Purdue Writing Lab*, Purdue University,
https://owl.purdue.edu/owl_exercises/spelling_exercises/affect_effect/affect_effect_spelling_exercise.html.

Answer Key

1. Wars **affect** everyone, and their destructive **effects** last for generations.
2. Television has a strong **effect** on public opinion.
3. My mood can **affect** my thinking, too.
4. I see that you're trying to **affect** apathy, but I know that you really do care.
5. Falling on my head had a bad **effect** on my memory.
6. His years of smoking have negatively **affected** his health.
7. This plan will surely **effect** significant improvements in our productivity.
8. The patient shows normal **affect** and appears to be psychologically stable.
9. Slim tried to **effect** an escape through the air ducts.
10. Supply and demand have a direct **effect** on the prices of commodities.
11. The **effect** of the speech was visible on their faces.
12. He was just trying to seem cool; his indifference is completely **affected**.
13. We may never know the full **effect** of the radiation leak.
14. The early frost will **affect** the crops.
15. What kind of **effect** will this quiz have on your dinner tonight?