

Alternate vs. Alternative

If an accident happens and you get stuck in traffic, do you take an alternate route or an alternative one? The words alternate and alternative have become interchangeable nowadays but they actually have different uses and meanings.

As a noun, the term alternate refers to “one that substitutes for or alternates with another.”

The Air Jordan 6 Alternate Is Dropping Soon

[KicksOnFire](#)

7-Round Mock Draft with alternates and UDFAs for the Jets

[The Jet Press](#)

Trumbull commissioners name 11 people, three alternates, to budget review committee

[Youngstown Vindicator](#)

It may also be used as an adjective which means “occurring in or forming a repeated series” or “taking the place of.”

Alternate-week garbage pickup begins Monday across Waterloo Region

[Waterloo Record](#)

Robbie Williams’ Mixed Signals alternate ending unveiled – which sees wife Ayda Field kissing another woman!

[Mirror.co.uk](#)

Physicists assure us that we’re not living in an alternate reality where Trump is president

[CNBC](#)

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Finally, as a verb, alternate means “to place or do different things so that one follows the other in a repeated series.”

An actor’s career alternates between extreme success and being written off, says Shahid Kapoor

[The Indian Express](#)

“He alternated good throws with Clemson product Deshaun Watson during the passing drills.”

[Bleacher Report](#)

“Broad humor alternates with serious themes as the children encounter the politics and prejudices of the world around them.”

[The Providence Journal](#)

Meanwhile, the term alternative can be used as a noun referring to “one of two or more available possibilities.”

Marriage isn’t for me – but the fight for an alternative is not a civil rights issue

[The Guardian](#)

An Alternative to NATO Expansion That Won’t Antagonize Russia

[Wall Street Journal](#)

Road salt alternatives alter aquatic ecosystems

[Science Daily](#)

It may also be used as an adjective meaning “offering or expressing a choice” or “different from the usual or conventional.”

Alternate vs. Alternative

Drawing a Line From Alternative Theories to Untruths

[New York Times](#)

Alternative Oscars! What If The Academy Awards Got It Right When Picking “Best Picture?”

[Huffington Post](#)

To avoid confusion, keep in mind that if you're talking about taking turns, you should use alternate but if you are referring to available options, alternative is the better word choice.