Discreet vs. Discrete

Another set of homophones (two or more words having the same pronunciation but different meanings, origins, or spelling) that confuse writers are the words discreet and discrete. Not only do they sound alike but also their spellings are separated by the placement of a few letters. This is not a surprise since they also originate from the same Latin word discretus, which means "separated, distinct." This post will discuss the differences between these two in terms of function and meaning.

The term discreet is used as an adjective meaning "careful and circumspect in one's speech or actions, especially in order to avoid causing offense or to gain an advantage" or "having or showing discernment or good judgment in conduct and especially in speech."

Cannes: How Streamers Are Keeping Dealmaking "More Discreet"
Hollywood Reporter

Amber Rudd: We will be 'more discreet' in negotiations
BBC News

Christie and Cuomo Have Discreet Breakfast Meeting at New Jersey Diner
New York Magazine

On the other hand, the word discrete is used as an adjective which means "constituting a separate entity," "consisting of distinct or unconnected elements," or "taking on or having a finite or countably infinite number of values."

EUR/USD to witness two discrete ECB-driven jumps – ING
FXStreet

"We believe that innovation comes in solving small, discrete problems."
IndustryWeek

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"Integral to that vision are containers, the ability to launch applications as discrete pieces of code or containers instead of launching a single monolithic application."
TechCrunch

Now that you've learned the differences in their meanings and uses, it would be easier for you to use them properly in your writing. One trick to remember how to use discrete is by noticing that the two e's are separate from each other. You may also look at the last letters of the words to remember their meanings. Discreet means being quiet and not drawing attention while discrete is related to separate.