

Easily confused words

The words breath, breathe, aid, aide etc. are often confused by English learners. In this lesson we will take a look at some of these easily confused words.

Breath and breathe

Breath is a noun. It rhymes with death. Breath denotes the air inhaled or exhaled during the process of breathing. Breath is a countable noun. It can be used with the article a.

Take a deep breath. (NOT Take a deep breathe.)

The brave warriors fought until their last breath.

Breathe is a verb. To breathe is to inhale and exhale air.

Fish breathe through their gills. (NOT Fish breath through their gills.)

He breathed a sigh of relief. (OR He heaved a sigh of relief.)

Aid and aide

Aid can be a verb or a noun. As a noun it means help or assistance. To aid (verb) is to help or assist.

The poor woman cried aloud but nobody came to her aid.

Rich nations must aid the poor. (= Rich nations must help the poor.)

An aide is a helper or an assistant.

The minister visited the flood affected region with his aides.

Confident, confidant and confidante

The word confident is an adjective. If you are confident you are not shy and believe in your own abilities.

She is confident of her success.

A confidant is a person with whom you can discuss your private or personal matters. Of course, you wouldn't do it with someone who doesn't enjoy your trust.

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If you have trust issues, you may not be able to find a confidant.

Confidante means the same, but is only used to refer to a female confidant.