

# Commonly Mispronounced Words

At some point in time, most everyone mispronounces a word or two. But you don't want to continually mispronounce words, especially ones that others will recognize as some of the commonly mispronounced words.

There are some pronunciation differences that can be attributed to dialects like the difference between "cray fish" and "craw fish" or how someone from Boston may pronounce car. But I'm not talking about that; I'm speaking of mispronunciations on a national level. The words that are mispronounced everywhere.

Some of these words are mispronounced so often and by so many people the mispronunciations are not only becoming accepted, they are in danger of replacing the original way of pronunciation. A perfect example of this is "cardsharp". The correct pronunciation is "card sharp" and yet, as you can see from the Google ngrams below, "card shark" has overtaken the correct pronunciation by a long shot.



## So without further ado, let's have a look at the commonly mispronounced words.

I'm sure that you don't mispronounce *all* of these words, but I'd be surprised if you didn't mispronounce *some*.

Word	It's <i>not</i> pronounced like this:	It's pronounced like <i>this</i> :

across	a-crossed	a-cross (no "d" sound and no "d")
affadavit	aff-a-da-vid	aff-a-dav-it (it's a "t" at the end, not a "d".)
almond	al-mond	ah-mund (the "L" is silent)
athlete	ath-a-lete	ath-lete (It only has two syllables.)
banal	bay-nal	buh-nal (accent on the last syllable)
barbiturate	bar-bit-u-ate	bar-bit-ur-ate (don't forget the second "r")
candidate	can-ni-date	can-di-date (don't forget the first "d".)
cavalry	cal-val-ry	ca-val-ry (the "L" comes after the "v".)
colonel	cor-o-nel	ker-nel (pronounced just like a kernel of corn—two syllables only)
cardsharp	card-shark	card-sharp (although becoming accepted, cardsharp is <i>not</i> the correct way to pronounce it; it's cardsharp.)
champ at the bit	chomp at the bit	champ at the bit. (Almost no one says this phrase the proper way anymore, so I doubt it will take long to become fully accepted, but for now, it's still "champ at the bit".)
clothes	close	clothes (this is an easy to mispronounce word, especially when speaking fast. Try to enunciate the "th" sound when speaking.)
daylight saving time	daylight savings time	daylight saving time (it's "saving" without the "s".)
diphtheria	dip-ther-i-a	dif-ther-i-a (I had been mispronouncing this all my life. It's said as if it's an "f", not a "p".)
drown	drowned	Drown (There is no "D" at the end of drown.)
espresso	ex-presso	es-presso (There is no "X" in espresso.)
etc.	ex-cet-era	et-cet-era (Same as espresso, there is no "X".)
February	Feb-yu-ar-y	Feb-ru-ar-y (Don't forget to enunciate the first "R".)
foliage	fol-i-age	fol-age (According to Merriam-Webster, there are only two syllables, however, several other dictionaries recommend three syllables.)
forte	for-tay	fort (for-tay is only used when speaking of musical direction, not when using the word to mean an individual's strong point.)

height	heighth	height (There is no "h" at the end of the word.)
hierarchy	hi-ar-chy	hi-er-ar-chy (Hierarchy has four syllables. Don't leave one out.)
jewelry	jew-ler-y	jew-el-ry (Remember that "jewel" is pronounced first. The "e" goes before the "L".)
liable	li-bel	li-a-ble ("Libel" means releasing a false statement about someone that causes others to have a bad opinion of them; "liable" means <i>apt</i> to do something or responsible for.)
masonry	mas-on-ar-y	mas-on-ry (The word only has three syllables.)
miniature	min-it-ure	min-i-a-ture (Most dictionaries agree that the word should be pronounced with four syllables, although a few accept the pronunciation using three.)
mischievous	mis-ché-v-i-us	mis-che-vous (Don't put the extra "l" in there. It only has three syllables.)
ordnance	ord-in-ance	ord-nance (Again, no "l". This word has only two syllables.)
prerogative	per-og-a-tive	pre-rog-a-tive (The "R" goes before the "E".)
prostate	pros-trate	pros-tate (There is no "R" in <i>gland</i> and the word meaning gland has only one "R". The word meaning "recumbant" though, has two "r's".)
Realtor	Real-a-tor	Real-tor (The word only has two syllables, and it is capitalized.)
sherbet	sher-bert	sher-bet (This one surprised me when I researched it. All my life, I had been saying "she-bert" only to discover it was "her-bet".)
triathlon	tri-ath-a-lon	tri-ath-lon (Don't put an extra "a" in the word.)
verbiage	ver-bage	ver-bi-age (It sounds like it's spelled— <i>with</i> the "l".)

I didn't list all the words. There are plenty of others that could have been listed. A few are listed below.

cache (pronounced like *cash*)

niche (noes)

nuptial (not nup-tu-al)

nuclear (not nu-cu-lar)

often (the "t" is silent)

prescription ("r" before "e")

peremptory ("e" before "r")

pronunciation (not pro-*noun*-ci-a-tion)

respite (res-pit—does not rhyme with despite)

spay (not spade) Spade is a word, but the meaning is different.

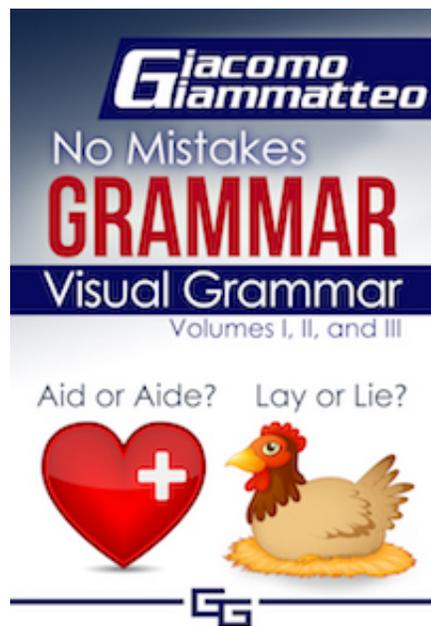
tack (not tact) Tact is a word, but the meaning is different.

Tenet (not tenant) A tenant is a renter. A tenet is a belief or a doctrine.

## The Bottom Line

---

This about wraps it up—at least for now—regarding the commonly mispronounced words. But there are always the *misused words* to concern yourself over. For a look at some of them, pick up one of my grammar books. Book three, [Visual Grammar](#), has the most of them.



### If you enjoyed this post, please share.

Giacomo Giammatteo is the author of [gritty crime dramas](#) about murder, mystery, and family. And he also writes nonfiction books including the [No Mistakes Careers](#) series as well as books about [grammar](#), [publishing](#), and [children's fiction and nonfiction](#).

When Giacomo isn't writing, he's helping his wife take care of the animals on their sanctuary. At last count, they had forty animals—seven dogs, one horse, six cats, and twenty-five pigs.

Oh, and one crazy—and very large—wild boar, who used to take walks with Giacomo every day.

He lives in Texas where he and his wife have an animal sanctuary with forty-five loving “friends.”