

English Vocabulary – Binary-Specific Words

“Binary-specific” words (or word pairs) are terms which apply to exactly two items. For example:

1. Both... and

The word ‘both’ refers to two items together.

- **Both** cars **and** trucks pollute our cities.
- I like **both** cats **and** dogs.
- **Both** John **and** Mary attended the service.

2. Each other

This expression refers to reciprocal relationships between two parties.

- They looked at **each other**.
- John and Peter trust **each other**.

3. Either... or

These words define a binary choice.

- **Either** the manager **or** the assistant will call you.
- You can have **either** a hamburger **or** a hot-dog.

4. Neither... nor

These words define a binary negative choice.

- **Neither** the teacher **nor** the student could solve the problem.
- I want **neither** chocolate **nor** strawberry ice-cream. I want vanilla!
- A: We should choose Option B or Option F.
B: In my opinion, **neither** option is suitable. (*two items are implicitly implied*)

5. Between... and

This is a preposition to define a position (physical or otherwise) relative to two items/ideas.

- I can't choose **between** options A **and** B.
- The cat is sleeping **between** the armchairs. (*there are only 2 armchairs*)
- I'm stuck **between** a rock **and** a hard place.
- I'm **between** jobs at the moment.

6. From... to

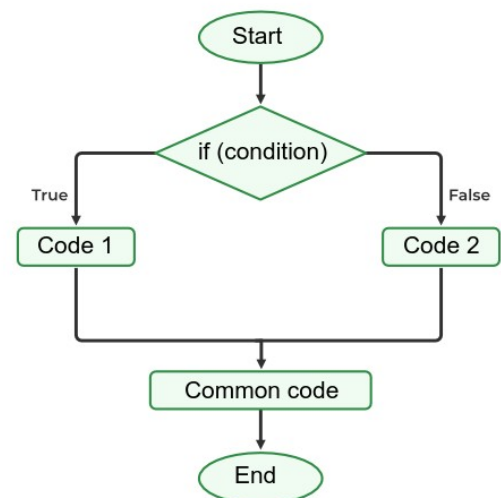
This pair of words defines a start and an end point.

- I work **from** Monday **to** Friday, **from** 8am **to** 6pm.
- We drove **from** Chicago **to** New York.

7. If... then... else

This programming instruction defines a two-path condition.

- **if** total=0 **then** print “Empty” **else** print “Not empty”
- **if** true **then** code1 **else** code2



8. Instead of / Rather than

These expressions define an alternative (second) choice.

- I think I will stay at home **instead of** going out tonight.
- Let's go to the mountains this year **rather than** the beach.

9. Versus (vs.)

This word defines a contest or an argument between two entities/ideas.

- I'm going to watch the match of Brazil **vs.** Argentina.
- I need to analyse your idea **versus** that of my son.

10. Per

The word 'per' implies a ratio of two numbers.

- Miles **per** hour
- Cost **per** person
- Trips **per** year

Some words form natural pairs:

- true / false
- boy / girl
- man / woman
- black / white
- up / down
- in / out
- left / right