

English Vocabulary – Confusing Words

1) Consider this sentence:

*When we were young, we used **to spend** hours in front of the TV.*

Often, Brazilians use the word **pass** here instead of the word **spend** as it's more similar to the Portuguese word. However, the use of the word **pass** here is wrong. Below you will see some more words that sometimes cause confusion for Brazilians.

Exercise 1. Choose one of the words in brackets to complete the sentences.

2. I don't like our maths teacher – he gives us too much _____.
(*homework/housework*)
3. Sue was very sad when she heard that she _____ the geography test.
(*failed/lost*)
4. Our teacher always gives us five minutes at the end of every lesson to _____ questions. (*ask/make*)
5. I don't like school because there are too many _____. (*rules / laws*)
6. There are twenty students in my Spanish _____. (*lesson / class*)
7. John studied hard and so he _____ the final test. (*passed / approved*)

2) Now look at these two sentences:

*I can't **remember** your new telephone number.
Please **remind** me of my appointments today.*

These two words are often confused in English because they have similar meanings. Other words in English are also confused because they mean similar things or because they sound similar. Take a look at the list below:

remember / remind
terrific / terrible
miss / lose
wait / hope

sensible / sensitive
hear / listen
borrow / lend
propaganda / advertising

Exercise 2. Choose the correct words to complete the sentences.

1. Could you please _____ your car to me this evening? (*borrow / lend*)
2. I must _____ to take warm clothes with me. It gets very cold at night.
(*remember / remind*)
3. Paul and Maria are _____ for a bus. (*hoping / waiting*)
4. Political parties often use _____ to try to change voters' opinions. (*propaganda / advertising*)

5. I can _____ a dog outside my house. (*hear / listen*)

6. Be gentle with your comments about Lisa's work. She is a very _____ person. (*sensible / sensitive*)

7. What _____ shoes you have! I love them! Where did you buy them? (*terrific / terrible*)

8. Sorry I'm late – I _____ the bus! (*lost / missed*)

3) There are some words in English that can be confusing for Brazilians because they look similar to words in Portuguese, but mean something else (false cognates). For example:

intend / pretend

stranger / foreigner

library / bookstore

journal / newspaper

perform / realize

legends / subtitles

novel / soap opera

attend / watch

actually / currently

commitment / compromise

Exercise 3. Complete the following sentences using a word from the above list.

1. People come here from many different countries, so the streets are full of _____.

2. Sometimes on a rainy day I enjoy going to the _____ to buy some good books.

3. When I was young I used to read the _____ every day, but now I use the internet to get the news.

4. What do you _____ to do when you finish university?

5. It was a great success. On the first night, more than 500 people _____ the lecture.

6. Sometimes when I get home after a busy day at work, I like to sit down in front of the TV and watch my favorite _____.

7. Yesterday I saw a French film at the cinema, but I didn't take my glasses, so I couldn't read the _____.

8. _____, we live in Miami, but we will move to New York next month.

9. He didn't _____ that he had left his house with his slippers on his feet.

10. I'm sorry. I'd love to go, but unfortunately I have a _____ at that time.