



Do You Need One Word or Two?

*distinguishing between similar words
with slightly different meanings*

a special publication from Firebelle Productions

It is sometimes difficult to choose the right words when similar words have different meanings. This newsletter addresses how to determine whether you need one word or two to convey the proper meaning.

already or all ready

Already means “previously.” *All ready* means “completely ready” and is used only where *ready* alone would make sense.

We were *all ready* to ventilate the structure, but the fire had *already* vented before we arrived.

all right or alright

All right is generally written as two words. Most experts recommend against using the nonstandard spelling *alright*.

all together or altogether

All together means “in a group.” *Altogether* means “entirely.”

The chief gathered us *all together* to tell us he thought we made *altogether* too many mistakes on that incident.

anymore or any more

Anymore means “any longer” or “presently.” *Any more* means “additional.”

It shouldn't rain *anymore* today. However, we may have a problem with flooding if we get *any more* rain this week.

**Already means
“previously.”**

**They were
already drunk
when I arrived.**



**All ready means
“completely
ready.”**

**I was all ready
to drive home,
but they didn't
want to leave
the party.**

anyone or any one

Anyone means “anybody.” *Any one* refers to any single item in a number of items.

Anyone with a high school diploma can apply.

Any one of the applicants would make a good police officer.

anytime or any time

Anytime means “at any time” or “whenever.” *Any time* means “any amount of time.” It is often used after a preposition such as *at*.

Did you see your husband *anytime* last week?

Did you spend *any time* with him the night of the murder?

Did he threaten you at *any time*?

awhile or a while

Awhile means “for a short time.” *A while* means “a short time.”

The children had been gone for *a while* before anyone noticed they were missing.

We may have to wait *awhile* before we get any leads on her disappearance.

everyday or every day

Everyday means “daily, usual, or common.” *Every day* means “each day.”

False alarms are an *everyday* occurrence at this building.

We’ve had false alarms almost *every day* since they installed the new alarm system.

everyone or every one

Everyone means “everybody.” *Every one* refers to each one in a group. Use *every one* when it is followed by an *of* phrase or is used to mean “one of a number of things.”

Everyone here is required to be certified in CPR.

Every one of the students will need to pass a skills test and a written exam before they can be certified.

***Any more means
“any longer” or
“presently.”***

***Some
departments
don’t get cats
out of trees
anymore.***



***Any more means
“additional.”***

***Are there any
more cats that
need to be
rescued?***

in, into, or in to

In refers to location or condition. *Into* refers to movement from outside to inside or to a change in condition.

Melanie is *in* the hospital. She has been *in* a coma for two days.

We brought Melanie *into* the hospital after she hit her head and slipped *into* a coma.

Do not use *into* (one word) when *in* is part of a verb phrase.

We sent an entry team *in* to stop the leak. (*In* is part of the verb phrase *sent in*; *to* is part of the infinitive *to stop*.)

The incident report should be turned *in* to Chief Smith. (*In* is part of the verb phrase *turned in*; *to* is a preposition.)

on, onto, or on to

Both *on* and *onto* refer to movement over something. *Onto*, however, implies first moving toward and then over.

Climbing *onto* the roof was easy. However, the roof is so slippery that walking *on* it is treacherous.

Use *onto* (one word) when you mean “aware of.”

The police are *onto* us.

Do not use *onto* (one word) when *on* is part of a verb phrase.

Let’s move *on* to the next room. (*On* is part of the verb phrase *move on*; *to* is a preposition.)

on, upon, or up on

Upon can mean “up and on,” “in an elevated position on,” “or immediately or very soon after.” *On* and *upon* are often used interchangeably when the meaning is “on.” However, some experts say that you should avoid using *upon* when *on* will do because *upon* sounds too formal.

We believe the fire started when a bottle rocket landed *on* (or *upon*) the roof.

Please notify us *upon* your return.

Do not use *upon* (one word) when *up* is part of a verb phrase.

Stuart has been assigned to follow *up on* your case. (*Up* is part of the verb phrase *follow up*; *on* is a preposition.)

***Into* refers to movement from outside to inside or to a change in condition.**

We sent a single entry team into the building.



Do not use *into* (one word) when *in* is part of a verb phrase.

The entry team was sent in to retrieve the package.

someday or some day

Someday means “an unspecified time in the future.” *Some day* means “a specific but unnamed day.”

Jack wants to do a ride-along *someday*. Let’s schedule it for *some day* next week.

sometime, sometimes, or some time

Sometime means “at some indefinite time in the future.” *Sometimes* means “occasionally” or “now and then.” *Some time* means “a period of time.”

I plan to visit Lindy in the hospital *sometime* this evening. I *sometimes* visit her during my lunch hour. But since I couldn’t go at lunch today, I need to set *some time* aside this evening.



Test Your Knowledge

In each of the sentences below, determine whether it is appropriate to use one word or two. Circle the correct answer.

1. Don’t hesitate to call anytime/any time you have a question.
2. It rained everyday/every day this week.
3. Everyone/every one of the residents escaped unharmed.
4. We’re going to be hit by a major earthquake someday/some day.
5. The children were all together/altogether in the library when the bomb exploded.
6. The chief will be gone for awhile/a while, attending a counterterrorism conference in Washington, D.C.
7. I assumed command on/upon/up on arrival.
8. I’m going into/in to investigate.
9. Jean hurt her back moving a patient onto/on to the gurney.
10. Mark isn’t working in the training division anymore/any more.

Sometimes means “occasionally.”

Sometimes we get lucky.



Some time means “a period of time,” while sometime means “at some indefinite time in the future.”

She will be sore for some time, but she will be all right. You can visit her sometime this afternoon.

Check Your Answers

The following are answers to the quiz on the previous page.

1. Don't hesitate to call anytime you have a question.
2. It rained every day this week.
3. Every one of the residents escaped unharmed.
4. We're going to be hit by a major earthquake someday.
5. The children were all together in the library when the bomb exploded.
6. The chief will be gone for a while, attending a counterterrorism conference in Washington, D.C.
7. I assumed command on/upon arrival. (Either choice is acceptable.)
8. I'm going in to investigate.
9. Jean hurt her back moving a patient onto the gurney.
10. Mark isn't working in the training division anymore.



For More Information

This newsletter is adapted from Chapter 10 of *Take Command of Your Writing* by Jill Meryl Levy. *Take Command of Your Writing* is the first comprehensive guide to more effective writing geared specifically for emergency services personnel. It is an essential resource for anyone who wants to present ideas more effectively, write more accurate reports, and create more readable and user-friendly documents of any kind. It is also an excellent tool for anyone who wants to place higher on promotional exams requiring any kind of writing exercise.

Firebelle Productions

Post Office Box 110848, Campbell, California 95011-0848
Phone: (800) 477-7151 or (408) 866-2081
(phone after 8:30 a.m. California time please)
Fax: (408) 866-6108

www.firebelleproductions.com

**Everyone means
“everybody.”**

**Everyone in the
intensive care
unit must be
evacuated.**



**Every one refers
to each one in a
group and should
be used when it is
followed by an of
phrase or is used
to mean “one of a
number of
things.”**

**Every one of the
patients must be
evacuated.**