

HOMOPHONE PAIRS

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Variant pronunciations of words are more common than variant spellings. And just as dictionaries try to reflect accepted spellings, so also do they give common pronunciations. They seldom, of course, catch local accents, twangs, intonations or cadences.

Recognizing this great variability in local preferences for pronunciation but still demanding dictionary conformity, I have tried to construct a list of 26 homophone pairs -- one for each letter of the alphabet. The underlying idea is to locate two words which sound alike but which differ in spelling by only one letter.

A	oar, or	N	damn, dam
B	lamb, lam	O	joust, just
C	scent, sent	P	psalter, salter
D		Q	
E	doe, do	R	
F		S	scent, cent
G	reign, rein	T	tarot, taro
H	hour, our	U	buy, by
I	waive, wave	V	
J		W	two, to
K	knot, not	X	
L	halve, have	Y	rey, re
M		Z	

For D, some say that (ledger, leger) is an acceptable pair, but I shy away from variant spellings. In England, (farther, father) might be acceptable for R. It does not seem fair to me to allow pairs in which one of a doubled letter is dropped, as in (add, ad).

Readers are invited to try completing this list. Common words are preferred, but it may be necessary to use rare ones for some of the missing letters.