WE PRESENT A PRESENT

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Ode to Present the Present
PRESENT = HERE.
PRESENT = NOW.
PRESENT = A GIFT.
QED: Here = Now = a Gift! — Anil (1974)

The present present we present is an unnamed class of same-word homonyms we dub FOOLERs: words of the same root, spelling, and basic or approximate meaning that fool us by differing in pronunciation in different forms, like the present and past tenses of "read". (Read and present were in fact the prime cases that prompted this unexpectedly large study.) We exclude as foolers:
1) words merely pronounced differently in different dialects (tomato) or contexts (a, the);
2) hyphens and charades (resign/re-sign; markdown/mark down);
3) unrelated pairs (glower, severer);
4) proper nouns pronounced differently from same-root common nouns (Concord, Primates);
5) related words that fool but have diverged greatly in meaning (desert, digitalises [foxtail drugs vs. makes digital], helios/es, minute, proceeds, remise, resume).

We count second or variant pronunciations if they're in just one of the pair. We consider meanings to be similar even if in just one of several definitions. In our incomplete study we found 478 pairs. Double-counting those that also fool with an added -[e]s (plural noun and present tense verb) takes it to 806. Four types had so many examples we kindly give only samples. Complete lists are available from anil.123@bigpond.com.

Each pair member is a separate headword in Web3 unless referenced. To give the details (form, pronunciation, meaning) for each pair—as done for type T—would make this article massive, so we ask readers to consult their dictionaries where curious or in doubt.

Type S: Stress difference only: (including, rarely, change in split or number of syllables)
S(vb/n±adj): 133 found, eg: abstract, accent, ally, decrease, explant, foment, increase, inlay, interlace, interplay, introvert, involute, misprint [OAD], outflow, overlap (+46 more over-), pervert, recoil, relay, retread, subject, suspect, transfer, transport, upset
S(adj/n or vb): concrete, inbred, indivisible, infralapsarian (theology), instinctivist, interrogatory, intuitionist, invitation, over(bearing/cast/head/night/seas/set/side/size/square/year), paramedic, peripatetic, prescript, procelematic (metric foot), profane, propaedeutic (introductory), proprietorian, prostrate, serrate
S(2n): inlayer

Type V: Vowel sound difference only:
V(vb/n): inring (curling shot), lives, parade, prog (prod), wind (blow)
V(vb/adj): bowed (bent), incarnadine (dye flesh-coloured, an old racist word), live
V(2vb, different tenses): plead [OED], (mis/copy/proof/re)read
V(2n):  **putter, putting** (into the hole)

V(2n, 2vb, n/vb or vb/n!):  **bow**

V(n/adj):  **liver**

Type C. Consonant sound difference only:

C(vb/n±adj):  (ab/dis/ChD)/mis/re/over/under)use, excuse, froth, grease, (ware)house, mouse, mouth, south

C(vb/adj):  close, diffuse, mouthed, profuse [OED], sheathed, teethed, toothed, wraithed

C(n/adv):  **inwards** ("innards")

Type SV. Stress & Vowel difference:

SV(vb/n±adj):  52 -ATE, eg: advocate, aggregate, confederate, deviate, (over/under)estimate, intimate, moderate, opiate, precipitate, predominate, sophisticate, syndicate.

SV(“ “):  93 other, eg: affect, compound, confines, contact, convert, defect (fail/ure), discharge, excise, experiment, export, fragment, implant, incline, intrigue, orient ([face] east), perfect, presage, produce, protest, rebel, record, recount [OAD], retard [OAD], subject

SV(vb/adj):  34, eg: absent, approximate, consummate, crooked, deliberate, dogged, elaborate, frequent, (de/re)generate, incorporate, learned, numerate [ChD], proliferate

SV(vb/adv):  multiply

SV(n/adj):  complex, contrary, furrier [CoD], incentive, inceptive, inexpert, invalid (not good!), precedent, preschool

Type SC. Stress & Consonant difference:

SC(vb/n):  ferment, overcome, surmise

SC(n/adj-adv):  overall

SC(adj/adv):  **stilly** [RH]

Type VC. Vowel & Consonant difference, stress unchanged:

VC(vb/n):  bases, excuse, metropolises [OED], syphilises [ChD], **tour** (tower of duty!)

VC(vb/adj):  breathed, effuse

VC(2vb):  bathed, bathing, clothed [OED]

VC(2n):  coup

VC(n/adj):  **premiere**

Type SVC. Stress & Vowel & Consonant differences:

SVC(vb/n), -SE/-SIS:  **ana/atmo[ChD;Web3]/auto[ChD;Web3]/cata[RH]/dia/hydro/para/plasmo[Web3;OED]/psychoana[OED]/pyro[ChD;Web3]lyses, anamorphoses, anastomoses, ankyloses, asbestoses, anthropomorphoses [OED+Web3], diagnoses, fibroses, metamorphoses [ChD], metaphrases [OED], necroses [OED], osmoses, paraphrases, prognoses [RH], symbioses
SVC(vb/n), other: attaches, concert [ChD], consort, devise, disease (or 2n) [ChD], expertise [ChD], imagines (pl. of imago), permit, premise, refuse [OAD], surmise, survey

SVC(n/adj): overage, protean, rosier

SVC(2n): antipodes [RH], auspices [CoD], drawer [ChD], keratosis [OED; Web3], prayer

Type P. Plural nouns spelt same as singular (or alternative singular) but pronounced differently:

C: chablis, chassis, debris, précis

VC: kudos

SVC: glacis, pyrites

Type T. TRIPLE FOOLERS, three forms, three pronunciations (some arguable):
Underlined schwas mean i or a depending on dialect. Parenthetical accent (' ) = secondary stress.

1. Beloved, past part. (bæ-'lovəd); noun (bæ-'lovəd); adj. (bæ-'lovəd). May be dialect differences only.

2. Coordinate, verb (-'ord-i-'nət); adj (-'ord-i-nət); noun (-'ord-nət) [OAD].

3. Endosmoses, plural of three different singular spellings of same word meaning inward osmosis: endosmosis (pl. -őseez), endosmose (-őzes) and endosmos (-őses). Endosmos is from OSPD, not found elsewhere except in old medical texts. We infer its plural pronunciation from cosmases.

4. Fracas, singular noun (ˈfrækəs); Brit. plural (ˈfrækəz); pl. of Scot. variant fraca (frəˈkæs).

5. Infatuate, verb (ənˈfachə(ˈ)wət); noun, person (ənˈfachəwət); adj, infatuated (ənˈfachə(ˈ)wət).

6. Ingenerate, verb, cause, generate (ənˈjenə(ˈ)rət); adj 1, generated (ənˈjen(ə)rət); adj 2 (separate listing; a contronym), not generated [God] (ˈinəˈjen(ə)rət).

The longest fooler we found was ANTHROPOOMORPHOSES. The shortest were BOW and USE.

References:
OAD — Oxford American Dictionary, 1980, computer version undated

After this article was submitted, Richard Lederer in May (15-120) presented a similar but more restricted study of differently pronounced same-spelling homonyms, mostly of the "Phrye's rule" type of verb/noun stress shifts [our Type S(vb/n)]. Most of his examples are either in the present article or among those we alluded to but didn't present. Our 478 examples, which we knew was not a complete list, missed 39 of his, 20 that are in Web3 and 19 debatable ones that are not. We wish to acknowledge his "parallel genius" and forestall any inference that we copied him.