

Alexander Pope, an eighteenth-century writer, commented in one of his poems that "to err is human." Certainly, people try to do their best, but everybody makes mistakes. Some errors are minor and are corrected easily, such as a misspelled word. Other errors may be more serious but may still have positive results. For example, Alexander Fleming made the mistake of exposing to the air a bacteria culture that he was studying. The mistake, though, led to his discovery of penicillin.

Each of the words in this lesson deals with some form of error or confusion. You will find these words useful in describing behavior typical of all of us at various times.

WORD LIST

amiss
bewilder
blunder
erroneous
fallible
faux pas
fluster
miscalculate
misinterpret
overestimate

DEFINITIONS

After you have studied the definition and example for each vocabulary word, write the word on the line to the right.

1. **amiss** (ə-mī's) *adjective* Out of proper order; wrong; faulty. *adverb* In an improper or defective way.

Example Lucinda knew immediately that something in the room was *amiss*; on closer examination she saw that the furniture had been rearranged.

2. **bewilder** (bi-wīl'dər) *verb* To confuse or befuddle, especially with numerous conflicting situations, objects, or statements.

Related Word **bewilderment** *noun*

Example The noise and traffic of the busy street *bewildered* the tourist.

3. **blunder** (blūn'dər) *noun* A serious mistake, usually caused by ignorance or confusion. *verb* **a.** To botch or bungle; say stupidly or thoughtlessly **b.** To move awkwardly or clumsily; stumble. (From the Middle English word *blunderen*, meaning "to go blindly")

Example Buying the worthless automobile was a *blunder* that cost Malcolm several thousand dollars.

4. **erroneous** (ī-rō'nē-əs) *adjective* Wrong; mistaken; false. (From the Latin word *errare*, meaning "to wander")

Related Word **erroneously** *adverb*

Example There were several *erroneous* conclusions in the detective's report.

1. _____
USAGE NOTE: To take *amiss* is an idiom that means "to misunderstand" or "to feel offended by."

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____
See *fallible*.

5. **fallible** (fāl'ə-bəl) *adjective* Likely to be wrong; capable of making an error. (From the Latin word *fallere*, meaning "to cause to fall" or "to deceive")

Related Word *fallibility* *noun*

Example All human beings are *fallible*; no one is perfect.

6. **faux pas** (fō-pä') *noun* A minor social error that may cause embarrassment. (From the French phrase *faux pas*, meaning "false step")

Example Selma made a *faux pas* when she ate her salad with her dinner fork.

7. **fluster** (flūs'tər) *verb* To make nervous, excited, or confused. *noun* A state of agitation or confusion.

Example Simon *flustered* Lila when he complimented her on her haircut.

8. **miscalculate** (mīs-kāl'kyə-lāt') *verb* a. To make a wrong estimate of; make an error in judgment. b. To compute numbers incorrectly. (From the Latin *mis-*, meaning "wrong," and *calculus*, meaning "a stone used for counting")

Related Word *miscalculation* *noun*

Example The television producer *miscalculated* the appeal of the new program.

9. **misinterpret** (mīs'in-tūr'prīt) *verb* To draw a wrong conclusion from; understand incorrectly.

Related Word *misinterpretation* *noun*

Example Lionel *misinterpreted* Ms. Nelson's message and drove to the airport at the wrong time to pick her up.

10. **overestimate** (ō'vər-ēs'tə-māt') *verb* To rate, value, or esteem too highly.

Related Word *overestimation* *noun*

Example Erica often feels that her coach *overestimates* her ability to make the Olympic team.

5. _____
USAGE NOTE: *Erroneous* means that something is definitely wrong, whereas *fallible* means that someone or something is capable of being wrong.

6. _____

7. _____

8. _____

9. _____

10. _____