



tipsheet

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Affect vs. Effect

Higher cost affects the bottom line. The CEO effected a change in management structure. Affect vs. effect. The difference between the two words stumps many writers. But think of how much of business writing includes results – and both of these words can describe results. Remembering key rules (and a couple of tricks!) will ensure that you use the correct word in your writing.

The key

Affect is almost always a verb (to influence). Effect is typically a noun (a result), but can be a verb as well (to cause).

Note: Affect can also be a noun, but it is a psychological term used to describe emotion. For all practical purposes consider affect to be a verb.

General definitions (from www.dictionary.com)

Affect:

Verb:

1. To have an influence on or effect a change in.
2. To act on the emotions of; touch or move.
3. To attack or infect, as a disease.

Effect:

Noun:

1. Something brought about by a cause or agent; a result.
2. The power to produce an outcome or achieve a result; influence

Verb:

1. To bring into existence.
2. To produce as a result.
3. To bring about.

Some Tricks

For effect, think “double e.” **The effect.** Therefore effect is usually a noun. *The effect of the restructuring is that employee morale deteriorated.* Therefore affect is usually a verb. *The company restructuring negatively affected employee morale.*

Alphabetically, a comes before e and affecting (influencing) comes before the effect (the result).

Examples:

Affect: Sam’s decision to pull an all-nighter affected his performance on the econ exam.

Effect: The effect of Sam’s all-nighter was poor performance on the econ exam.

Affect: The CEO’s heartfelt speech greatly affected his employees, who were touched by his words.

Effect: The CEO effected a change in his employees’ perception of his leadership with a heartfelt speech.

Affect: Some say that red wine can positively affect one’s circulatory system.

Effect: Frequent exercise often has a positive effect on one’s health.

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