



Affect v. Effect

Affect and *effect* are notoriously tricky. It doesn't help that each can be both a noun and a verb, so you're actually dealing with four words rather than two. To keep all these straight, know how the words get used most often and how the meaning changes for the less common usages.

Common Usage

Word + form	Definition	Examples
Affect (verb)	To have an impact/effect on something; to make a difference	Traveling to another country will affect how you perceive your own. Sleeping more will affect your health in a positive way.

Affect – a verb

Test whether the sentence makes sense with another action word like *alter*, *modify*, *transform*, etc.

Word + form	Definition	Examples
Effect (noun)	The outcome, result, or aftermath of something	What effect will this have on our learning? The medical side effects of this drug are very well understood.

Effect – a noun

Test whether the sentence works with another noun; also look for articles – they'll not always be used, but they can be a sign that you need a noun and not a verb.



Less Common Usage

Word + form	Definition	Examples
Affect (noun)	One's demeanor or emotional state. Also, an observed response.	The patient had a very positive affect. Psychiatrists often consider a person's affect.

Affect – a noun

When used, it's often used within psychology or psychiatry (but, of course, not always).

Affect (the noun) is something that a person has or that one observes in a person.

Word + form	Definition	Examples
Effect (verb)	To cause something to happen; to produce a result; to start to apply	They were happy to know that his release had been effected. It will take at least a decade to effect changes that benefit all students.

Effect – a verb

This verb means to cause something, to make something change, or to implement something, so consider whether it's possible to use *implement*, *produce*, *engineer*, or similar verbs in the sentence.