

HOMONYMS VS. HOMOPHONES

Homonyms are the words that sound like one another, particularly when that are pronounced the same way but spelt differently. Each of the two or more words having the same spelling and/or pronunciation or different spelling and/or pronunciation but different meanings and origins.

Example: Pole and Pole

The first Pole refers to a citizen of Poland who could either be referred to as Polish or a Pole. The second Pole refers to a bamboo pole or any other wooden pole.

The Homonyms will have the similarity among them either in their spellings or in their pronunciation or in both. Homonyms are good friends of writers specializing in humor, since they make excellent raw materials for puns.

What is the difference between homophone and homonym?

In everyday contexts these two words are used interchangeably. But there is a difference in meaning between the two. The word homophone comes from the Greek homo meaning same and phone meaning sound. Strictly speaking therefore, the word homophone is used to refer to words which sound alike, although they have a different spelling and meaning.

EXAMPLES:

mail, male;
wear, ware;
metal, mettle; etc.

A homonym, on the other hand, is used to refer to words which have the same spelling and pronunciation but have a different meaning.

Here are a few examples:

May (month), may (possibility); can (be able), can (put something in container);
bear (the animal), bear (to carry).

As we mentioned earlier, this distinction is seldom maintained in everyday conversation. People in general tend to use homonym to mean homophone.