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When drafting a contract, care must be taken to use exactly the right words to convey the desired meaning. The following chart illustrates how easily certain words can be confused or misused, and if you don't read over a contract very carefully, these common mistakes can be easy to miss. This list is by no means exhaustive, but it should help alert you to some common errors and keep you on your toes in order to catch others.

WORD: MEANING

CAN BE CONFUSED WITH: MEANING

Affect: To alter, influence, or change

Effect: A result, or to bring about change

Alternate: A substitute or second choice, or to take turns

Alternative: One choice among various options

Among: Occurring in a group of three or more

Between: Occurring in a set of two

Assure: To convince

Insure: To guard against loss

Assure: To convince

Ensure: To make certain

Bimonthly: Every other month

Semimonthly: Twice a month

Biweekly: Every other week

Semiweekly: Twice a week

Capital: City that is the seat of local government, or relating to money, or an uppercase letter

Capitol: The building in which the legislature meets

Continual: Intermittent or repeated at intervals

Continuous: Without interruption

Discreet: Prudent or cautious

Discrete: Separate or detached

Eminent: High in rank

Imminent: About to occur

Farther: Greater distance

Further: Greater degree, time, or quantity

Fewer: A smaller number of units

Less: A smaller quantity

i.e.: That is

e.g.: For example

Imply: To suggest

Infer: To conclude

Its: Belonging to it

It's: It is

Mean: The number obtained by adding all values together and dividing by the number of values

Median: The value that falls in the middle of all of the recorded values, with an equal number of values above and below it

Practical: Useful in actual practice

Practicable: Capable of being put into practice

Principal: Head or chief

Principle: A basic truth or assumption

Stationary: Fixed or immovable

Stationery: Writing materials