



# The University Writing Center

Connecting Writers with Readers

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## Affect vs. Effect

*Which* one do I use and *when*?

### THE PRINCIPLE

Affect and Effect are two very commonly confused words. This handout explains the difference between the meanings of the two words, and when and how to properly use each.

**Affect**- (verb): to have an INFLUENCE over something or someone.

To move one EMOTIONALLY, to touch someone's feelings.

Ex 1: The blizzard affected voter turnout in the late November election.

Ex 2: I found myself truly affected by the speaker's words.

**Ask yourself:** Am I describing the reason or cause for something?

If YES, use **AFFECT!**

**Effect**- (noun): the RESULT of a particular CONSEQUENCE

A CHANGE that results from a decision or action.

Ex 1: The effects of Hurricane Katrina upon New Orleans were devastating.

Ex 2: Some scientists claim that the effects of climate change are irreversible.

**Ask yourself:** Am I describing the impacts of a cause?

If YES, use **EFFECT!**