Linguistic BrainTeasers

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Words

Avoid telling these in succession, or your listeners may catch on to the trick.

Word pronounced wrong

What 5 letter word does every college graduate pronounce wrong?

- Faulty Assumption
  Assuming there is a particular word that is incorrectly pronounced.
- Correct Answer
  The word “wrong.”

Between heaven and earth

Regardless of their religious beliefs, what can everyone agree is between heaven and earth?

- Potential Answers
  – The sky.
  – Stars and outer space.
- Faulty Assumption
  Assuming the desired answer is an actual thing.
- Correct Answer
  The word “and.”

Add letters – make shorter

What 5 letter word becomes shorter when you add 2 letters?

- Faulty Assumption
  Assuming that adding letters can result in fewer letters.
- Correct Answer
  The word “short.” Adding “er” makes the word “shorter.”

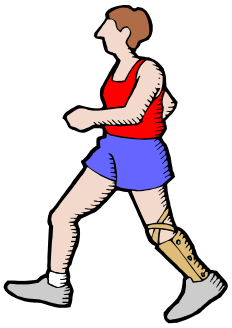
Remove letters – pronounce same

What 5 letter word can you remove 4 letters from without changing the pronunciation?

- Faulty Assumption
  None, but the answer is unique.
- Correct Answer
  The word “queue.” Removing the last 4 letters results in “q.”
  (A queue is a line of people or items awaiting processing.)

Grammar

Photo – artificial leg



In this country, you can't take a photo of a woman with an artificial leg.
Why not?

- Potential Answers
  - – Disability laws forbid embarrassing the disabled.
  - – Religious laws force women to keep their bodies covered.
- Faulty Assumptions
  Assuming that "can't take" prohibits taking a photo.
- Correct Answer
  You must use a camera. An artificial leg can't take a photo.

Two coins – one not nickel

Two coins total 30 cents. One of the coins is not a nickel.
What are the two coins?

- Faulty Assumption
  Assuming *neither* coin can be a nickel.
- Correct Answer
  A quarter and a nickel. One coin is not a nickel. The other coin is.

Vocabulary

Cabin – dies

A man steps out of his cabin and dies. How?

- Potential Answers
  - – He was accidentally shot by a hunter or killed by a wild animal.
  - – He had a heart attack or other fatal malady.
- Faulty Assumption
  Assuming that "cabin" refers to a house in the wilderness.
- Correct Answers
  - – He stepped out of his airplane cabin and plunged to his death.
  - – He stepped out of his boat cabin and drowned.

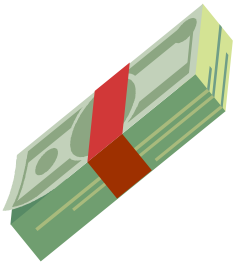
Deer – shot

A man shot a deer from close range but it wasn't hurt. Why not?

- Potential Answers
  - – The bullet was deflected by a tree branch or other object.
  - – The deer moved at the last moment and wasn't hit.
- Faulty Assumption
  Assuming that "shot" means to shoot a gun.
- Correct Answer
  He shot a picture of the deer with his camera.

Dollars worth more

Why are 1990 dollar bills worth more than 1980 dollar bills?



- Potential Answers
  - – Inflation (which would actually make them worth *less*).
  - – Deflation (as cost of items fall, same money buys more).
- Faulty Assumption
  Assuming that "1990" and "1980" refer to years.
- Correct Answer
  1,990 dollar bills are worth $10 more than 1,980 dollar bills.