Affect or Effect?

There are four distinct uses for these two words!

Affect

Most common use:

1. When “affect” is accented on the final syllable (a-FFECT), it is a verb meaning “to have an influence on”: “The million dollar donation from the industrialist did not affect my vote for the Clean Air Act.”

Less used:

2. A much rarer meaning is indicated when the word is accented on the first syllable (AFF-ect), meaning emotion. In this case the word is a noun used mostly by psychiatrists and social scientists: “Psychologists study the affects of the unconscious.”

The problem arises when people confuse the first word with the second: “effect.”

Effect

Most common use:

3. The more common “effect” is a noun meaning “result” or “consequence”: “When I left the stove on, the effect was that the house filled with smoke.”

Less used:

4. The less common is a verb meaning “to bring about” or “create”: “I’m trying to effect a change in the way we purchase software.”

Here are fun examples of sentences using “affect” (1.) and “effect” (3.):

“When you affect a situation, you have an effect on it.”

“The drug did not affect the disease, and it had adverse side effects.”