



### Problem or trouble? Affect or effect?

Students often confuse *problem/trouble* and *affect/effect*. Read these extracts from the *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary (CALD)* and the *Cambridge Learner's Dictionary (CLD)*.

trouble or problem?

Problem means 'a situation that causes difficulties and that needs to be dealt with'. You can talk about a problem or problems.

Tell me what the problem is.  
He's having a few problems at work.

Trouble means 'problems. Difficulties or worries and is used to talk about problems in a more general way. Trouble is almost always uncountable, so do not use the determiner a before it.

We had some trouble while we were on holiday.

affect or effect?

Affect is a verb which means 'to cause a change'.

Pollution seriously affects the environment.



Use the noun effect to talk about the change, reaction or result caused by something.

Global warming is one of the effects of pollution.

### Questions

- 1 Which word, 'trouble' or 'problem', can you make plural?
- 2 Which doesn't use the word 'a' before it?
- 3 Which word would you use when talking about a difficulty you want to work on or solve?
- 4 Which word might you use for something which worries you but you won't take any action?
- 5 Which word is a noun and which is a verb?

### Answers

1 problems 2 trouble 3 problem 4 trouble 5 noun – effect; verb – affect

### Exercise 1

Underline the correct word in sentences 1-4.

- 1 They may have some problems / troubles, but usually they accept them.
- 2 They notice only the things that cause them a problem / trouble.
- 3 Feelings of disorientation and anxiety no longer affect / effect them.
- 4 These feelings may have the affect / effect of people rejecting the new culture.

### Exercise 2

Five of these sentences contain a mistake. Find and correct the mistakes.

- 1 Many students' studies are by difficulties with languages. affected
- 2 Overseas students have accommodation problems.
- 3 Modern lifestyles have an affect on our health.
- 4 Other countries effect our customs.
- 5 Immigrants have an affect on the local economy.
- 6 Most children can deal with their own troubles.

### Answers

1 2 problem 3 affect 4 effect  
2 correct 3 ~~affect~~ effect 4 ~~effect~~ affect 5 ~~affect~~ effect 6 ~~troubles~~ problems

