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Words and phrases that can confuse

Classic - Classical





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Both words come from the word **class**, meaning quality, but the meanings are different.

Classic and **classical**, both from around the end of the seventeenth century, come from the French term *classique*, from the Latin *classicus*, which in turn comes from *classis* indicating the first rank of Roman citizens.

Classic means “of recognized value,” or “enduring” or “traditional”; the sense is of something that represents a standard of excellence or has a timeless quality. It may also be used to refer to something authentic or typical or that we all remember, such as, “Do you remember when the president of the USA fell over? Classic!”

As a noun, it denotes a traditional event or something with a longstanding reputation of high quality. It is often applied to sports events such as the KC Golf Classic. In plural form, it refers to the study of ancient Greek and Roman culture, language, and literature; note that this term is not capitalized.

- The **classic** test, developed by Alan Turing, has the computer hidden from the human...
- Such as Ekman’s **classic** six basic emotions...
- Mining social media for sentiment or **classic** emotions has been a particularly popular topic...
- There he conducted his now-**classic** starfish experiments...
- Think of the **classic** image of a group of ants...
- Such activities are **classic** examples of “emergent” behaviour...



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Classical also means “traditional,” but the sense is more of something authoritative rather than authentic: A scholar of the classics is a classical scholar, not a classic scholar, and studying ancient Greek or Roman civilization is a classical education, not a classic education. The word is perhaps most frequently used in the phrase “classical music,” which refers to compositions for symphonies or chamber-music ensembles in a European-based tradition.

One distinction between the two words is that **classic** can be a noun or an adjective, **classical** is never used as a noun.

- **Classical** ballet, the most formal of the ballet styles
- **Classical** music, a variety of Western musical styles from the 9th century to the present
- **Classical** guitar, a common type of acoustic guitar
- **Classical** Latin, the Latin language used by the ancient Romans
- **Classical** economics, school of economics developed in the late 18th and early 19th century
- **Classical** physics, the study of physics before the general theory of relativity and quantum mechanics

And finally, remember:

Mozart’s music was **classical**;

the Rolling Stone’s is **classic**!