



## Than vs. Then

A common mistake in students' papers is the confusion of "than" and "then." Although they look and sound similar, the difference of one letter creates a whole new meaning. The dictionary definition may be accurate, but it is not always enough. Here is how the tutors of the Writing Center would explain it to you:

**Than-**is a way to compare two different subjects.

Ex: *She is smarter **than** I am.*

In this sentence "than" is comparing the speaker's intellectual level to everyone else.

**Then-** is used as a way to talk about a time in the past or in the future.

Ex: *I have a lot of homework to do by **then**.*

Here "then" is used to talk about a time in the future, instead of using the actual time or date that the homework will not be finished by.

## Their, They're, and There

As writers, we not only confuse "than" and "then" are easily confused, but there is also the common mistake between "their," "they're," and "there." These three terms come up in college papers a lot, but once you understand how they are used, it will be easy to remember.

**Their-** is the possessive pronoun of an object.

Ex: *The neighbors brought **their** puppy to the picnic.*

The puppy belongs to the neighbors, so you know to use "their" when writing about it.

**They're-** is simply a conjunction of the words "they" and "are".

Ex: *Do you know when **they're** leaving for vacation?*

This sentence would have the same meaning if you asked, "*Do you know when they are leaving for vacation?*"

**There-** is in reference to a place or an idea.

Ex: *I do not want to go over **there**.*

In this phrase, "there" is just replacing the actual location that the subject is discussing.