False Friends: The Classics

English words that look familiar but mean something different, the words you really want, and how meanings drift, from A1 to C2.

A1–C2 · English Vocabulary, Lesson 6

a carpet on the floor · a folder for papers · the actual cost

Trap words *A1–A2*

carpet	on the floor
library	borrow books
exit	the way out
large	big
actually	really, in fact
success	it went well
long	not short

a large coffee = a big coffee

Words you want *A1–A2*

folder	keep papers
bookshop	buy books
way out	exit
at the moment	now
a long street	not short
a big success	a great result
a large park	a big park

You buy books in a bookshop; you borrow them from a library

The classics *B1–B2*

Feelings and health: embarrassed (feeling silly in front of others) · I've got a cold · sensible (wise) · sensitive (easily hurt)

Actions: pretend (act as if) · intend (plan to) · realise (suddenly understand) · carry out (do)

Going and helping: attend a class (be there) · assist someone (help them)

Time and results: eventually (in the end) · possibly (maybe) · success (a good result) · an incident, an event

*I **attended** the meeting, and later I **realised** I had left my bag there. **Eventually** I found it.*

attend a meeting (no "to") · assist = help

Half friends and register *C1–C2*

Partial false friends: the actual cost (real) · realise an ambition (make real) · realise assets (sell for money) · a pretender to the throne (a claimant)

Precise choices: the current president · a temporary job · a noticeable improvement · sensitive data · carry out or conduct a study

Register: assist and attend are formal; help and go to are everyday · attend to a customer (deal with)

Talking about evidence: cognate · partial false friend · drift in meaning · the cognate facilitation effect

*The **eventual** winner had a **temporary** job, and the **actual** cost was double the estimate.*

Not just true or false: many friends are half friends

Say it right

- *Where's the bookshop?*
- *I've got a cold.*
- *How embarrassing!*
- *Actually, I'm Spanish.*

Common mistakes

- ~~I assisted the class.~~ → I **attended** the class.
- ~~I pretend to be a doctor one day.~~ → I **intend** to be...
- ~~We realised a survey.~~ → We **carried out** a survey.
- *actualmente* (now) → **at the moment**, not actually

Words with a past

- **carpet**: once a cloth for a table
- **success**: Latin, "what comes after"
- **assist**: Latin, "to stand by"
- **attend**: Latin, "to stretch towards"

My new words

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