

Assure Me That You Can Insure Me to Ensure Continuity

Mark Twain said it best: “The difference between the right word and the almost right word is the difference between lightning and the lightning bug.” Translation of the title? Tell me that you can insure my property to guarantee continued coverage.

Here’s an explanation to help you keep these three troublesome words straight in your mind:

Assure To pledge or give confidence to people--use in the same way as *reassure*: *He assured us that he would attend.*

Ensure To guarantee or make certain—use in cases other than when referring to people: *This new packaging will ensure that the product arrives safely.*

Insure To make certain or protect against loss--use when referring to monetary payments: *This bond will insure payment up to \$2000.*

The dictionary gives all three words as synonyms of each other. But a synonym has a SIMILAR meaning--not the same meaning. For example, “big,” “large,” “ huge,” and “gargantuan” are synonyms, but you can’t use them interchangeably: You might say, “He gave a BIG speech about saving money.” But you wouldn’t say, “He gave a LARGE speech about saving money.”

When your choices are “assure,” “insure,” and “ensure,” take care. Unless you work for an insurance company, you’ll need “ensure” most of the time.
