



Difference Between Ache, Pain, Sore, and Hurt

The words **ache**, **pain**, **sore**, and **hurt** all describe an unpleasant feeling in our bodies. They can be easy to confuse.



The Difference Between ACHE and PAIN

Ache is a constant feeling of discomfort. It is commonly part of a compound word like headache or toothache. Is not often severe.

Pain is a feeling of discomfort resulting from an illness or an injury. It can be severe but not constant. It may be limited to when you move in a certain way.

Ache noun

An **ache** (**noun**) is a constant feeling of pain and it can last for some time. It is not very severe.

- “I have an **ache** in my lower back.”
- “A regular massage is great for taking away my body **aches**.”

Ache can also be used to show a sad emotional condition.

- “After the break-up, Kyle felt an **ache** in his heart.”
(*Kyle was sad to be alone.*)

- “Our hearts **ache** for the people whose lives have been destroyed by war.”

Ache is often used in compound words like backache or toothache.

- “I have a **headache**.”
- “I went to the dentist because I had a **toothache**.”
- “I ate too much at the buffet, and now I have a **stomach ache**.” (*Stomach ache is written as two words.*)

Pain (noun) is the feeling that you have in your body when you have been hurt or when you are ill.

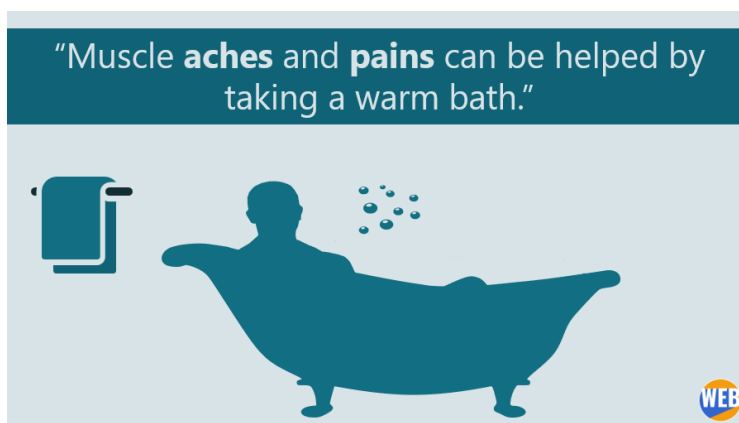
- “I feel a sharp **pain** in my knees when I bend down.”
- “Tanya took some medicine to relieve the **pain**.”

It can also come suddenly.

- “The skier hit the tree hard. He was clearly in a lot of **pain**.”

Their meanings are slightly different but the plural forms **aches** and **pains** are often used together.

- “Standing up and taking a short walk down the aisle can relieve some **aches and pains** caused by long flights.”
- “Muscle **aches and pains** can be helped by taking a warm bath.”



Ache – noun ([LINK](#))

Pain – noun ([LINK](#))

Ache Synonyms

Here are some synonyms of the noun ACHE.

*The noun ACHE is often used with the verbs HAVE and FEEL. I will use a similar sentence pattern for the synonym examples.

pang – a sudden strong feeling of physical or emotional pain

- Ralph felt a pang of **regret** for his actions.

twinge – a sudden short feeling of pain

- After training William felt a **twinge** of pain in his knee.

throb – a feeling of pain that you experience as a series of strong beats

- Courtney's shoulder injury soon became a constant dull **throb** in her neck.

cramp – a sudden pain that you get when the muscles in a particular part of your body contract, usually caused by cold or too much exercise

- Tanner got a **cramp** in his left thigh and had to stop running.

irritation – the fact of your skin or a part of your body being painful

- Mary developed a skin **irritation** after wearing a wool sweater.

discomfort – a feeling of slight pain or of being physically uncomfortable

- The medicine may cause some stomach **discomfort**.

soreness – pain and redness in a part of the body, especially because of infection or because a muscle has been used too much

- Jacob bought some cream from the drugstore to reduce the **soreness** and swelling in his foot.

tenderness – the fact of a part of the body being painful when you touch it

- Martin complained of **tenderness** in his shoulder after the accident.

The nouns **SORENESS** and **TENDERNESS** are made by adding the suffix -NESS to the base adjectives sore and tender. You can do a deep dive into the suffix -NESS at my blog post –

<https://worldenglishblog.com/learn-the-suffix-ness/> (Video + Free PDF)

All synonym definitions are from [Oxford Learner's Dictionaries](#). This is my favorite online dictionary to use with my own private students.

Ache and Pain Collocations

Some ache collocations (words that are often used with ache)

adjective

dull (not very severe, but continuous)

verbs

feel (be aware of something)

“After the accident, he *felt* a *dull* ache in his right hip.”

have (to possess or hold something)

“Peter wanted to play soccer but he *had* a backache.

preposition

in (at a point within an area or a space)

“After the accident, he felt a dull ache *in* his right hip.”

[How to use the English prepositions IN, AT, ON](#)

Some **pain** collocations

adjectives

chronic ([of a disease] lasting for a long time; difficult to cure)

• “Chris suffered from **chronic** knee pain.”

agonizing (causing great pain, anxiety, or difficulty)

• “The pain was **agonizing**.” [it was difficult to endure]

severe (very bad)

- “Neil was in **severe** pain after the fall.”

___ **of** pain

stab – noun (a sudden sharp pain or unpleasant feeling)

- “Earl felt a **stab of pain** in his leg. He looked down and saw that he was bleeding.”

verbs + pain

be in

- “Neil **was in** severe pain after the fall.”

be racked with (to make somebody suffer great physical or mental pain)

- “Three days after surgery Wayne **was** still **racked with** pain.”

experience

- “Men never have to **experience** the pain of childbirth.”

preposition

in

- “Lucy looks like she is **in** pain.”

pain + noun

control

- “After a serious surgery, **pain control** is very important.”

management (the activity of controlling something)

relief (the act of removing or reducing pain, worry, etc.)

▪ “The staff at the rehab center helped me with **pain management**. I used ice and took some **pain relief** medicine.”

How to use Sore

To use the noun form and the adjective form of **sore** correctly we need to look at the grammar.

A **noun** will follow an article (A, AN, THE) or a possessive noun or pronoun (Steve’s, hers, my, etc.)

- I have an ugly **sore** on the back of my leg. I think it’s a heat rash but I’m not sure.
- The **sore** on my arm is getting bigger.
- I hope my cold **sore** goes away before we have our company photos.



Adjectives will always follow a form of the verb TO BE.

- My back is **sore** today from carrying heavy boxes last night.
- You should lift with your legs if you don’t want your back to be **sore**.

Get is also possible.

- You should lift with your legs if you don't want your back to get **sore**.

Ache and Pain – Verb forms

Ache verb

① to feel a continuous pain that is not severe

② to have a strong desire for somebody/something or to do something

Ache – verb tenses with example sentences:

ACHE (simple present) “It makes my heart **ache** to see animals suffer.”
(Sad emotional feeling)

ACHES (present simple third-person singular) “Peter won't play soccer with us today. He says his back **aches**.”

ACHED (past simple) “Louis **ached** to see Paris again.”

*The past tense is most often used with the emotional meaning of ache.

ACHING (continuous) “I'm **aching** all over.”

ACHE is a regular verb. This means the past tense and the past participle both end with _ed.

ACHED (past participle) “My heart has ached for you since the first time I saw you.”

*The past participle is most often used with the emotional meaning of ache.

The past and past participle tense of ache (meaning ①) are often used with the continuous tense.

“After I ran the marathon last summer my knees **were aching** for 5 days.”

**Past continuous*

“My shoulder **has been aching** for 2 weeks. I should see a doctor.”

**Perfect continuous tense*

Pain verb – to cause somebody pain or make them unhappy

*This is the only way we use the verb form of pain in conversation. *To show that something makes us sad.*

The subject will commonly be “**it**” and it is only used with the present simple third-person singular tense, the past tense, and the past participle.

I don’t really hear or use the verb PAIN in the simple present tense. We also don’t use it in the continuous tense.

PAINS (present simple third-person singular) “It **pains** me to see you upset.”

PAINED (past simple) “It **pained** me to watch her cry.”

PAIN is a regular verb. This means the past tense and the past participle both end with _ed.

PAINED (past participle) “The fact that my older brother didn’t have the same advantages as my sister and I **has** always **pained** me.” *Perfect tense

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How to use the Present Perfect Tense

Ache – verb ([LINK](#))

Pain – verb ([LINK](#))

Sore – Adjective and Noun Definitions

Sore adjective

If a part of your body is **sore** (**adjective**), it is painful, and often red, especially because of infection or because a muscle has been used too much

- “The coach made us practice for 3 hours this morning. My whole body is **sore** now.”
- “Ian’s chest **was** **sore** after a hard workout at the gym.”
- “The pitcher’s shoulder was **sore** after pitching for 9 innings.”



Sore noun

The noun form of **sore** means a painful, often red, place on your body where there is a wound or an infection

- “The patient had **sores** on the heels of both feet.”
- “Dennis sometimes gets cold **sores** if the air is dry and cold.”

Sore – adjective ([LINK](#))

Sore – noun ([LINK](#))

Hurt – Noun Adjective Verb

The word **hurt** is used in three ways.

① noun – a feeling of unhappiness because somebody has been unkind or unfair to you

- “You could feel the **hurt** and anger in her voice.”
- “I apologized to my coworkers for any **hurt** I had caused.”

② adjective – injured physically

- “Luckily no one was badly **hurt** in the accident.”
- “Be careful playing rugby with your friends. You don’t want to get **hurt**.”

③ verb– to cause physical pain to somebody/yourself; to injure somebody/yourself

The verb **hurt** means to feel painful

- “My knee **hurts** when I bend down.”

HURT (simple present) “I **hurt** myself every time I ride my skateboard. I have to be more careful.”

HURTS (present simple third-person singular) “It **hurts** when I breathe.”

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HURT (past simple) “I **hurt** my shoulder playing rugby.”

HURTING (continuous) “My back is really **hurting** me today.”

HURT is an irregular verb. The simple present tense, the past tense, and the past participle don't change.

HURT (past participle) “I didn't think I **had hurt** anyone with my decision, I'm truly sorry if I did.” ***Had hurt** is the perfect tense grammar.

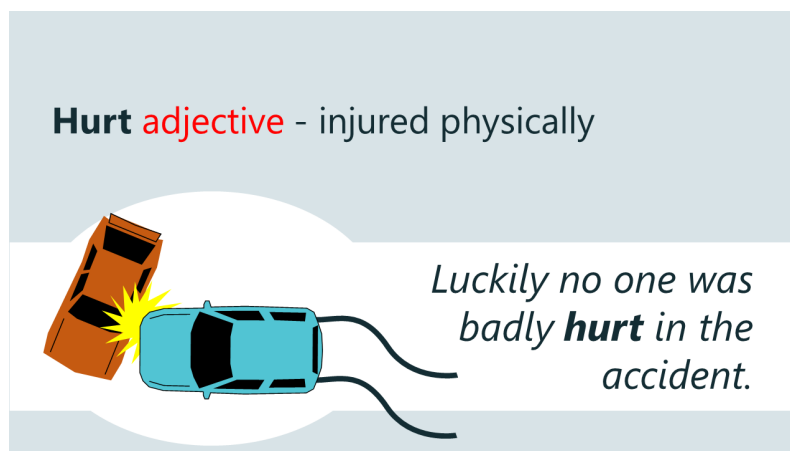
4 more meanings of the verb HURT can be found here – [LINK](#)

Hurt Collocations

Hurt is often used with these adverbs.

badly – used to emphasize how serious a situation or an event is

- “Her leg was **badly hurt** in the accident. It will be hard to walk for a while.”
- “He wasn't killed by the fall but he was **badly hurt**.”



seriously – in a serious way

- “Don’t play near construction sites. You could get **seriously hurt** by those machines.”
- “Luckily no one was **seriously hurt** in the accident.”

Hurt – noun ([LINK](#))

Hurt – adjective ([LINK](#))



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