When Should You Use *Affect*?

*Affect* with an *a* is a *verb* meaning "to influence," as in, "The arrows affected Ardvark," or "The rain affected Amy's hairdo." *Affect* can also mean, roughly, "to act in a way that you don't feel," as in, "She affected an air of superiority."

When Should You Use *Effect*?

*Effect* with an *e* has a lot of subtle meanings as a *noun*, but to me the meaning "a result" seems to be at the core of all the definitions. For example, you can say, "The effect was eye-popping," or "The sound effects were amazing," or "The rain had no effect on Amy's hairdo."

Common Uses of *Affect* and *Effect*

So most of the time *affect* with an *a* is a *verb* and *effect* with an *e* is a *noun*. There are rare instances where the roles are switched, and I'll get to those later, but for now let's focus on the common meanings. This is "Quick and Dirty" grammar, and my impression from your questions is that most people have trouble remembering the basic rules of when to use these words, so if you stick with those, you'll be right 95% of the time.

Rare Uses of *Affect* and *Effect*

So what about those *rare meanings* that don't follow the rules I just gave you? Well, *affect* can be used as a *noun* when you're talking about psychology—it means the mood that someone appears to have. For example, "She displayed a happy affect." Psychologists find it useful because they know that you can never really understand what someone else is feeling. You can only know how they *appear* to be feeling.

And, *effect* can be used as a *verb* that essentially means "to bring about," or "to accomplish." For example, you could say, "Aardvark hoped to effect change within the burrow."