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# HEARD, OVERHEARD, and EAVESDROP

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Today I'm gonna talk about the difference between **heard** and **overheard** – and I'm gonna add an extra word in there, which is **eavesdrop**. The English language has a lot of these words, which are similar but actually different and we use them in different situations.

Okay, so heard and overheard. Well, these are the **past tenses** of the verbs **hear** and **overhear**. I want to call your attention to the pronunciation. Hear and overhear in the present have the eer sound but in the past notice that the spelling doesn't really change much, we just add a D but the vowel sound actually changes. Instead of eer, now we have er. So in the past, we pronounce them heard and overheard.

So what do they mean? Well, let's take an example sentence. I **heard** that the company is having financial problems. If you hear something, it's just a general word meaning to perceive it with your ears. So, if you say, "I heard that the company is having financial problems," that means, for example, you were talking to your coworker and your coworker told you and you heard that the company is having financial problems. It means you perceived it with your ears instead of reading about it or finding out in some other way. I heard is more general, just meaning to perceive something with your ears.

**Overheard** has a specific meaning. If you overheard something, it means you accidentally heard a conversation that you were not part of so you were not intended to hear this information. So an example of this, "I overheard that the company is having financial problems" – would be if you happened to walk by your boss's office while she was on the phone with the company president and the two of them were talking about the company's financial problems. You were not included in that conversation but, because you happened to walk past the office, you overheard it. You accidentally heard it, okay? So I heard is more general and I overheard means you accidentally heard someone else's conversation.

The key word there is accidentally You didn't do it on purpose. But let's say, if you go up to your boss's door and you listen in because you want to hear a private conversation

and you're doing it on purpose, the verb for that is **eavesdrop**. You are eavesdropping on your boss. That's kind of an impolite thing to do. If you overheard something, it was an accident, you couldn't help it. But if you eavesdrop, it means you're trying to listen on purpose to someone else's conversation.