

Principal and principle

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These words sound similar, yet they are different.

First, “principal”. A principal can be a headmaster (director de una escuela) of a school or college. Principal (principal en español) also means main or primary. Two examples.

- Grapes are the principal - or main - crop (...el cultivo principal...) in La Matanza, Tenerife.
- The principal door (puerta principal) to La Moncloa is closed. Of course, one can write “the main door...”.

Now, principle. A principle (principio) can be a tenet, or a rule. It can also be a basic truth such as the principle of gravity. Contemplate these examples.

- The principle of low taxes is good, but at the moment the British government has high public debts.
- It is a principle of science (...un principio de ciencia...) that energy can neither be created nor destroyed.
- The principles of a democracy are...

So many mortals have principles, and some work as a principal too.