**Word for Word**

*Underlie or underline?*

**Underlie** and *underline* differ by only one letter, but their meanings are entirely different. *Underlie* means "to be the basis of" or "to form the foundation of"¹ and can be used when describing fundamental principles.

**Examples:**
The principles that underlie the proposal should be summarized in the Specific Aims page.
The mechanisms that underlie the sucrose-signaling pathway are not fully understood.
The layer underlying the epidermis is the dermis.
Has the patient's underlying disease been considered in the treatment plan?

*Underlie* and *underlying* should not be confused with *underline*, which means "to put emphasis on" or "to show clearly or emphatically."¹

**Examples:**
These findings underline the importance of the CFTR gene in the development of cystic fibrosis.
The nurse repeated the last few words, underlining their significance.
References

--Ashli Villarreal

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