While counsel, council, and consul sound alike, they are different words with different meanings. Counsel can be used as a verb or a noun, whereas council and consul are nouns.

Counsel as a verb means to advise; as a noun, it means the person doing the advising (such as an attorney) or the advice itself. Less commonly, counsel means guarded thoughts or advice. Counselor is another word for the noun form of counsel, or adviser.

- Alyssa Barton is counsel to the Acme Company. (counsel as a noun meaning adviser)
- She counseled the company during the hostile takeover. (counsel as a verb meaning to advise)
- Her counsel was critical to the plan’s success. (counsel as a noun meaning advice)
- He’s a loner who keeps his own counsel. (counsel as a noun meaning guarded thoughts)
- Ms. Greenlee is one of the counselors in the program. (advisers)

Council is a noun meaning an assembly of people, often elected or appointed, brought together to discuss or deliberate something. A member of a council may also be a councilor.

- The city council met today to vote on the new benefits package.
- One of the councilors abstained from voting.

Finally, consul, a noun, means a person appointed to represent a government in a foreign country.

- The President appointed Ben Masters consul to Albania.