

The 2014 Grammar Guide

120 Grammar and Vocabulary Mistakes to Avoid



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The purpose of this book

English is full of problems for a foreign learner. While some of these problem points are easy to explain, others cause difficulty even for the advanced students and learners. For example, how exactly is the *present perfect tense* used? What are the differences between *big, large and great*, between *come and go*? Is *unless* the same as *if not*?

This eBook is a guide to questions of this kind. It addresses 120 points which regularly cause problems for the foreign learner. Rules and guidelines are given, using as little linguistic terminology as possible.

Who will benefit from this book?

This book is aimed at students who wish to improve the quality of their sentences. It is compiled for the use at school or at home.

How to use this book?

Entries are arranged alphabetically. Each entry contains an explanation of a problem, examples of correct usage and typical mistakes. Explanations are, as far as possible, given in simple everyday language.

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1. According to

- Incorrect: **According to me**, she should have resigned earlier.
- Correct: **In my opinion**, she should have resigned earlier.

We do not give our own opinions with **according to**.

2. Across and through

The difference between **across** and **through** is similar to the difference between **on** and **in**. We use **through** to talk about movement in three dimensional spaces with things on all sides.

- We walked **across** the field. (= We were on the field.)

- We walked **through** the wood. (= We were in the wood.)

3. Adjectives ending in -ly

- Incorrect: She smiled friendly.
- Correct: She smiled in a friendly way.
- Incorrect: He laughed silly.
- Correct: He gave a silly laugh

Here the error lies in using an adjective instead of an adverb. We use adverbs to modify verbs. Most adverbs end in -ly; there are also a few adjectives that end in -ly. Examples are: *costly, friendly, lively, likely, lonely, lovely, silly and ugly*. There are no adverbs *costly/costlily* or *friendly/friendlily*.

4. Ago and before

- Incorrect: His father died three years **before**.
- Correct: His father died three years **ago**.

Ago is used to count back from the present. It is used with a past tense and a time expression. **Before** is used when you date back from any point of time which is made specific.

- I saw him two years **before** I went to England.

5. All and every

- Incorrect: Every children need love.
- Correct: **Every child needs** love.
- Incorrect: All the light was out.
- Correct: **All the lights were** out.

Every is used with a singular noun. **All** is used with a plural noun.

6. All right and alright

The standard spelling is **all right**, but **alright** is more common although many people consider it incorrect.

7. Already and all ready

- Incorrect: We are **already** for the show.
- Correct: We are **all ready** for the show.
- Incorrect: They have **all ready** arrived.
- Correct: They have **already** arrived.

All ready means '*all are ready*'. **Already** means '*by now*' or '*sooner than expected*'.

- The train had **already** left before we reached the station.
- The patient had **already** died before the doctor arrived.

8. Alternate and alternative

Alternative means '*different*', '*instead*', '*on the other hand*'.

- We will make an **alternative** arrangement if these plans don't suit you.
- I had to go. There was no **alternative**.

Alternate means '*every second*' or '*in turns*'.

He only comes to work on **alternate days**.

9. Altogether and all together

Altogether means '*entirely*' or '*everything considered*'.

- I don't **altogether** agree.
- It is **altogether** wrong to ill-treat animals.

All together simply means '*everybody / everything together*'.

- They **all** went out **together**.
- She put the glasses **all together** in the sink.

10. Any and some

Both **some** and **any** suggest an indefinite amount or number. **Some** is more common in affirmative clauses. **Any** is used in questions and negative clauses.

Compare:

- I need **some** pencils. (NOT I need any pencils.)
- Have you got **any pencils**?
- Sorry, I **haven't got any pencils**.

11. Anyhow and somehow

- Incorrect: He did it anyhow.
- Correct: He managed to do it **somehow**.
- Incorrect: He keeps his things somehow in his desk.
- Correct: He keeps his things **anyhow** in his desk. (= He doesn't keep his things in order.)
- Incorrect: He may not come but somehow I shall.
- Correct: He may not come but **anyhow** I shall. (= I will certainly come.)

Use '**anyhow**' to mean 'in disorder'. 'Anyhow' can also mean 'for certain'.

12. Articles

The misuse of **the** and **a** is very common. Here are the basic rules for the use and omission of articles.

Proper nouns (e.g. John, Alice and India) do not take articles.

- Incorrect: The John is my friend.
- Correct: John is my friend.
- Incorrect: The Tokyo is a big city.
- Correct: Tokyo is a big city.

A **singular common noun** (e.g. boy, cat, tree, book, apple etc.) must have an article.

- Incorrect: There is cat on roof.
- Correct: There is **a cat** on **the roof**.

A **plural common noun** cannot be used with the article **a**. It is usually used with no article, though '**some**' is sometimes used before it.

Compare:

- **A spider** has eight legs.
- **Spiders** have eight legs.

Remember that a noun can be common in one sentence and proper in another sentence.

A **superlative adjective** is usually used with **the**.

- Incorrect: He is best player in the team.
- Correct: He is **the best player** in the team.

13. Article a – correct use

The article '**a**' placed in front of a noun conveys the idea of 'one'. When writing about two separate objects, a second '**a**' must be used. If the two objects are considered as one, then the second 'a' may be left out.

- Incorrect: I have a hammer and chisel.
- Correct: I have **a hammer** and **a chisel**. (Here we are talking about two separate objects.)
- Incorrect: She has a son and daughter.
- Correct: She has **a son** and **a daughter**.
- Incorrect: The mechanic used a block and a tackle to lift the machine.
- Correct: The mechanic used **a block and tackle** to lift the machine. (Here we are talking about one object.)

14. Ask and ask for

Ask for: ask somebody to give something

Ask: ask somebody to tell something

- He **asked** me **for** a loan. (NOT He asked me a loan.)

- They **asked** ten dollars **for** the book.
- If you don't know the answer, **ask** the teacher.
- Don't **ask** me my name. (NOT Don't ask me for my name)

15. At first and first

At first is used to talk about the beginning of a situation. It is often followed by **but**. In other cases, we usually use **first**.

- **At first** everything seemed fine, but then things started going wrong.
- I **first** met her at a restaurant.

16. Avenge and revenge

- Incorrect: I must revenge my father.
- Correct: I must **avenge my father**.
- Incorrect: I must revenge my enemy.
- Correct: I must **take revenge on** my enemy.

These two words are often confused. To '*avenge my father*' means to 'punish someone who has hurt my father'.

17. Back and again

When used with a verb, **back** suggests a return to an earlier situation or a movement in the opposite direction.

- **Give** me my watch **back**. (NOT Give me my watch again.)
- Take your money **back**.
- Put the book **back** on the shelf when you have finished with it.
- These mangoes aren't good. I am taking them **back** to the shop.

When used with a verb, **again** suggests repetition.

- I did not hear what you said. Please say it **again**.
- That was a lovely song. Can you play it **again**?

18. Bath and bathe

In British English, the verb **bath** is used to mean '*wash oneself in a bath tub*'.

- Children should **bath** regularly.

The verb **bath** is not used in American English. Instead, the expressions '*have a bath*' or '*take a bath*' are used.

- As I was feeling hot, I **took a bath**.

In British English, **bathe** means '*swim for pleasure*'. It is very formal. In an informal style, we use the expressions '*have a swim*' or '*go for a swim*'.

- He said he had a good **bathe**.

In American English, **bathe** is used to mean '*take a bath*'.

- I always **bathe** before I go to bed. (= I always take a bath before I go to bed.)

Note that *to lie in the sun* is to **sunbathe**.

19. Beat and win

Beat is usually followed by an object which refers to the person you are playing or fighting against.

- She always **beats me** at poker.

Win can also be followed by an object, but it usually refers to things like money or prize. You can also *win in a game, a race, a battle or an argument*.

- She **won the first prize** in the quiz competition.
- She always **wins when we play poker**.

20. Because

- Incorrect: He did not come to school. **Because** he was ill.
- Correct: He did not come to school **because** he was ill.

This is a very common punctuation mistake. **Because** is a subordinating conjunction. It must not be separated from its main clause by a full stop.

21. Because and because of

Because is a conjunction. It is used to join two clauses and is followed by a subject and verb.

- We couldn't go out **because it rained.**
- I did it **because he told me to do it.**

Note that the '*because clause*' can come before or after the main clause.

- Because it was so hot, we went home.
- We went home because it was so hot.

Because of is a two-word preposition. It is used before a noun or a pronoun.

- We couldn't go out **because of the rain.**
- I did it **because of** him.

22. Because and for

- Incorrect: I am glad **for** tomorrow is a holiday.
- Correct: I am glad **because** tomorrow is a holiday.

For is hardly wrong, but it is better to use **because** to introduce a casual clause.

23. Begin and start

There is little or no difference between **begin** and **start**. **Begin** is more common in a formal style.

- He **started / began** working when he was 19.
- We will **begin / start** the next lesson tomorrow.
- It is time to **begin / start** work.

Cases where begin is not possible

We *start* (but not begin) a journey or a machine.

- We **started** in the morning and reached before sunset. (NOT We began in the morning...)
- How do you **start** a washing machine? (NOT How do you begin a washing machine?)
- At last the train **started**. (NOT At last the train began.)

24. Beside and besides

Beside is a preposition. It means 'by' or 'next to'.

- The mother sat **beside** her children.
- Who is that fat lady sitting **beside** Peter?

Besides is similar to **as well as**. It is used to add new information to what is already known.

- **Besides** the violin, he can play the guitar and the piano.
- Who was at the party **besides** Jane and Peter?

25. Besides, except and apart from

These expressions often cause confusion. **Besides** usually adds whereas **except** subtracts.

Compare:

- **Besides mathematics**, we have to learn physics and chemistry. (We learn three subjects.)
- He can play all musical instruments **except the flute**. (He can't play the flute.)

Apart from can be used in both senses.

- **Apart from mathematics**, we have to learn physics and chemistry. (= Besides mathematics, we have to ...)
- He can play all musical instruments **apart from the violin**. (= He can play all musical instruments except the violin.)

26. Between and among

We use **between** with two or more clearly separate people or things. We use **among** when the reference is to a group, a crowd, or a mass of people or things which we do not see separately.

- She sat **between** Alice and Mary. (Two clearly separate people)
- She sat **among** her students.

- There is a tourist home **between the woods, the river and the hills.**
(Three clearly separate things)
- The tourist home is hidden **among the trees.**

We use **between**, not among, after **difference**.

- What is the main **difference between** a square and a rectangle?

27. Between and during

- Incorrect: England grew prosperous between Queen Victoria's reign.
- Correct: England grew prosperous **during** Queen Victoria's reign.
- Incorrect: The First World War was fought during 1914 - 18.
- Correct: The First World War was fought **between 1914 - 18.**

Two events must be mentioned if you want to use **between**.

28. Between and from

A common mistake that is often noticed these days is the use of **to** after **between**.

- Incorrect: The interview will be held between 2 to 4pm.
- Correct: The interview will be held **between 2 and 4 pm.**
- Incorrect: The conference will take place between the 12th to the 18th of this month.
- Correct: The conference will take place **between the 12th and the 18th of this month.**

Or else you can say:

- The interview will be held **from 2 to 4 pm.**
- The conference will take place **from the 12th to** the 18th of this month.

29. Big, large and great

We use **big** and **large** with concrete nouns - the names of objects which we can see or touch. In an informal style, **big** is more common than **large**.

- He has got **big / large** feet.
- They have a **large / big** house in the city.

We use **great** with abstract nouns - the names of things which we cannot see or touch.

- I think it was a **great mistake**.
- I have **great respect** for him.

In an informal style **big** is also used with countable abstract nouns. **Large** is not used with abstract nouns.

- I think it was a **big mistake**. (BUT NOT I think it was a large mistake.)

None of these three words are used with uncountable nouns.

- I have got a **lot of luggage**. (NOT I have got big/large/great luggage.)

30. Born and borne

The passive form of the verb **born** (be + born) is used to talk about coming into the world at birth.

- He **was born** to poor parents.
- I **was born** on a Friday.
- She **was born** in Italy.

Borne is the past participle form of the verb **bear**. It is sometimes used to mean 'give birth to' or 'carry'.

- She **has borne** eight children. (= She has given birth to eight children.)

31. Bring and take

- Incorrect: I don't know what to **bring** when I leave for the conference.
- Correct: I don't know what to **take** when I leave for the conference.
- Incorrect: I shall **bring** my wife with me when I go.
- Correct: I shall **take** my wife with me when I go.
- Incorrect: **Take** that book to me at my desk.
- Correct: **Bring** that book to me at my desk.

Use **bring** when something is being moved towards the speaker.

- **Bring** me that book.

Use **take** when something is being moved away from the area of the speaker.

- **Take** that file with you. (Here the file is being moved away from the area of the speaker.)

32. But

- Incorrect: He is the fastest runner and he came last.
- Correct: He is the fastest runner **but** he came last.

But is the conjunction to use when the second main clause gives unexpected or contradictory information.

33. Change of tense

The first verb in a sentence establishes the tense of any verb that comes later. If you begin writing in the past, don't change to the present. Similarly, if you begin writing in the present, don't change to the past.

- Incorrect: In the story, the king *loses* his kingdom, but he *regained* everything in the end.
- Correct: In the story, the king **loses** his kingdom, but he **regains** everything in the end.
- Incorrect: The team *won* yesterday, but *goes* and *loses* this afternoon.
- Correct: The team **won** yesterday, but **went** and **lost** this afternoon.

34. Close and shut

There is little difference of meaning between **close** and **shut**.

- **Shut/close** your eyes.
- Can you **close/shut** the door?
- They **close/shut** the shops at 8 o'clock.

Cases where close is preferred

We *close* (and not *shut*) roads, letters, bank accounts, meetings etc.

- You should **close** your existing account before opening a new account. (NOT You should shut your existing account ...)

35. Cloth and clothes

Cloth is the material used for making clothes. **Clothes** are things you wear.

- His **clothes** are made of expensive **cloth**.

36. Collective nouns

Group words or **collective nouns** take a singular verb if you are talking of the group as a whole. They take a plural verb if you are talking about the individual members of the group.

Compare:

- **The jury is** in the courtroom. (Here we are talking about the whole group.)
- **The jury are** still debating the case. (Here we are talking about the individual members of the group.)

Note: Collective nouns are always singular in American English.

37. Come and go

Come is used for movements to the place where the speaker or hearer is.

- Come to me. (Movement towards the speaker)
- 'Alice, can you come here?' 'Yes, I am coming.' (NOT I am going.)
- Can I come and sit beside you? (Movement towards the hearer)

Go is used for movements to other places.

- Let's **go** and see them. (NOT Let's come and see them.)
- I want to **go** and live in the hills. (NOT I want to come and live in the hills.)

38. Common preposition + noun combinations

- At the cinema; at the theatre; at the party; at university
- By car/bike/bus/train/boat/plane/land/sea/air
- On the radio; on TV; on the phone
- In pen/pencil/ink
- In a suit/raincoat/shirt/skirt/hat etc

39. Comparatives and superlatives

The comparative (e.g. taller, sharper, stronger, heavier, shorter etc.) is used to compare one person or thing with another person or thing.

- John is **taller** than Peter.
- Alice is **cleverer** than Mary.

The superlative (e.g. tallest, sharpest, strongest, heaviest, shortest etc.) is used to compare somebody or something with the whole group to which she/he/it belongs.

- John is the **tallest boy** in the class.
- Alice is the **prettiest of** the four girls.
- He is the **best player** in the team.

When a group has only two members, we prefer the comparative to the superlative.

- Incorrect: Take the shortest of the two routes.
- Correct: Take the **shorter** of the two routes.
- Incorrect: She is the prettiest of the two sisters.
- Correct: She is the **prettier** of the two sisters.

40. Comparatives: a common error

In comparative sentences be careful to compare the same part of two things. **That of, these of** and **those of** are necessary words that are often omitted.

- Incorrect: His teaching was like Jesus Christ.
- Correct: His teaching was like **that of Jesus Christ**.
- Incorrect: The size of the shoe must be the same as this shoe.
- Correct: The size of the shoe must be the same as **that of this shoe**.
- Incorrect: My books are better than my friend.
- Correct: My books are better than **those of my friend**.

41. Conjunctions

One conjunction is enough to join two clauses. English does not require a second conjunction.

- Incorrect: Though he is old but he is healthy.
- Correct: **Though** he is old he is healthy. OR He is old but he is healthy.
- Incorrect: As he was fat so he ran slowly.
- Correct: **As** he was fat he ran slowly. OR He was fat so he ran slowly.
- Incorrect: If you work hard then you will succeed.
- Correct: **If** you work hard you will succeed.
- Incorrect: Because he is clever therefore he gets good marks.
- Correct: **Because** he is clever he gets good marks.

42. Correlatives

When the correlatives **either...or, neither...nor, both...and, not only...but also** are used, you must see that they are placed before words of the same part of speech.

- Incorrect: The car either dashed against a dog or a goat. (verb-noun)
- Correct: The car dashed against **either a dog or a goat**. (noun-noun)
- Incorrect: Neither he would eat nor allow us to eat. (noun-verb)
- Correct: He would **neither eat nor allow** us to eat. (verb-verb)
- Incorrect: Neither he smokes nor drinks. (noun-verb)
- Correct: He **neither smokes nor drinks**. (verb-verb)

43. Dead and died

Dead is an adjective. It is used to modify a noun.

- He is **dead**. (NOT He is died.)
- A **dead** man (NOT A died man)

Died is the past tense and the past participle of the verb **die**.

- He **has died**. (NOT He has dead.)
- He **died** last year. (NOT He dead last year.)

44. Determiners

Articles (a/an, the), possessives (my, your, his, her, their, our etc.) and demonstratives (this, that, these and those) are called **Group A determiners**.

Note that we cannot put two Group A determiners together. We can say *my cat*, *the cat* or *that cat*, but not *the my cat* or *my that cat*.

In order to put together the meanings of a possessive and an article or a demonstrative, we use a structure with **of**.

- He is **a** friend **of mine**. (NOT He is a my friend.)
- **These** shoes **of mine** pinch me terribly. (NOT These my shoes pinch me terribly.)
- **Those** dirty fingers **of yours** have stained the walls. (NOT Those your dirty fingers have ...)

45. Do and make

Do is sometimes confused with **make**. **Make** is used to talk about building or creating.

- Let's **make** a cake.
- I once **made** a toy train.

Do is sometimes used instead of **make**. This is common when we want to sound casual about a creative activity.

- 'What shall we eat?' 'Well, let me **do an omelette**.' (More casual than 'Let me make an omelette'.')

Common fixed expressions with do and make

Both **do** and **make** are used in some common fixed expressions.

Do good, harm, business, one's best, a favor, sport, exercise, one's hair, one's teeth, one's duty, 50mph etc.

Make a journey, an offer, arrangements, a suggestion, a decision, an attempt, an effort, an excuse, an exception, a mistake, a noise, a phone call, money, a profit, a fortune, love, peace, war, a bed, a fire, progress etc.

46. Double negatives

Never use a negative verb and a negative qualifier (e.g. nothing, hardly, scarcely, nobody etc.) together.

- Incorrect: I *haven't nothing* to prove.
- Correct: I **have nothing** to prove.
- Incorrect: Alice *can't hardly* wait until her birthday.
- Correct: Alice **can hardly** wait until her birthday.
- Incorrect: There *wasn't nobody* at the door.
- Correct: There **was nobody** at the door.

47. During and for

During is used to say when something happens. **For** is used to say how long it lasts.

- Incorrect: I was in France **for** the summer.
- Correct: I was in France **during** the summer.
- Incorrect: I was in France during two months.
- Correct: I was in France **for** two months.

48. Each and every

Use **each** and **every** together only if you want to convey very strong emphasis.

- Incorrect: **Each and every** person wore a hat.
- Correct: **Each person** wore a hat.
- Correct: **Everybody** wore a hat.

49. Each other and one another

In modern English **each other** and **one another** are used in the same way. **One another** is preferred when we are making general statements.

- They have stopped talking to **each other/one another**.

Both expressions can be used in the possessive form.

- They would sit for hours listening to **each other's / one another's tales**.

50. East, eastern, north, northern etc.

The words **east, west** etc., are used for clearly defined places. The words **eastern, western** etc., are used when we are talking about vague areas.

Compare:

- The **northern part** of the country is hilly.
- The **north side** of the house has four windows.

Capital letters

Capital letters are used at the beginning of *East, Eastern, North, Northern* etc., when they come in official place names.

- South Africa
- the Middle East
- North Korea

In other cases these words begin with small letters.

- The sun rises in **the east**.
- He came from **the west**.

51. Elder and eldest

- Incorrect: He is **elder** than me.
- Correct: He is **older** than me.
- Incorrect: He is the **eldest** man in the village.
- Correct: He is the **oldest** man in the village.

Elder and **eldest** can be used to talk about the order of birth of the members of a family. Note that they are only used before nouns. After a verb we use **older** or **oldest**.

- My **elder/older brother** is a writer.
- His **eldest/oldest son** is in the Army.
- He is **older** than me. (NOT He is elder than me. Elder and eldest can't be used in the predicative (after a verb) position.)

52. End and finish

When followed by a direct object, **finish** means complete.

- I have **finished my job**. (= I have completed my job.)
- You never let me **finish a sentence**. (= You never let me complete a sentence.)

Finish can be followed by an **-ing form**.

- Have you **finished writing** that novel?

When followed by a direct object, **end** means **stop**.

- They have decided to **end their affair**. (NOT They have decided to finish their affair.)

End cannot be followed by an **-ing form**.

When they are not followed by objects, **end** and **finish** have similar meanings.

- When does the concert **finish/end**?

53. Enough

- Incorrect: He was **enough foolish** to trust her.
- Correct: He was **foolish enough** to trust her.
- Incorrect: If I were **enough rich**, I would buy a new car.
- Correct: If I were **rich enough**, I would buy a new car.

The adverb **enough** comes after the adjective which it qualifies.

54. Especially and specially

Both **specially** and **especially** can often be used with the same meaning.

- It was not **specially / especially** cold.

Especially can mean 'above all'.

- Sometimes I feel rather lonely, **especially** in the evenings.

Specially is used to mean 'for a particular purpose'.

- I made this cake **specially** for you.

55. Except and except for

- Incorrect: Except you, I like everyone.
- Correct: **Except for you**, I like everyone.
- Incorrect: Except this mistake, you did very well.
- Correct: **Except for this mistake**, you did very well.

Except can be used without **for** after words like **all, every, no, everything, anybody, nowhere, whole etc.** In other cases we usually use **except for**.

- He cleaned **all** the rooms **except** the bedroom. OR He cleaned **all** the rooms **except for** the bedroom. (Except can be used without for after all.)
- **Nobody** was invited **except Peter and Alice**. OR Nobody was invited **except for** Peter and Alice.
- I like everyone **except / except for** you.
- They were all tired **except / except for** John.
- That was a good essay, **except for** a few spelling mistakes. (NOT That was a good essay, except a few spelling mistakes.)

Before prepositions and conjunctions we use **except**.

56. Expect and hope

- Incorrect: She is hoping a raise.
- Correct: She is expecting a raise.

When we **expect** something we think that it will in fact happen. When we **hope** for something to happen, we would like it to happen, but we don't know whether it will.

- She is **expecting** a baby. (= She is pregnant now.)
- She is **hoping** that it will be a girl. (She doesn't know whether it will be a boy or a girl, but she will be happier if it is a girl.)

We can *expect* good or bad things to happen, but we only *hope* for good things.

57. Expressions without prepositions

The verbs **discuss, enter, marry, lack, resemble** and **approach** are normally followed by objects without prepositions.

- Incorrect: She married with an old man.

- Correct: She **married an old man**.
- Incorrect: We must discuss about the plans.
- Correct: We must **discuss the plans**.
- Incorrect: The baby resembles to its dad.
- Correct: The baby **resembles its dad**.

58. Far and a long way

We use **far** in questions and negative clauses.

- Did you walk **far**?
- The railway station is **not far** from here.

We use **a long way** in affirmative clauses.

- We walked **a long way**. (NOT We walked far.)
- The post office is **a long way** from here.

Far is common in affirmative clauses with adverbs like **too, so, enough** and **as**.

- You have walked a bit **too far**.

59. Gerund

- Incorrect: I am thinking to write a novel.
- Correct: I am **thinking of writing** a novel.
- Incorrect: We were prevented from enter the room.
- Correct: We were prevented **from entering** the room.

A preposition is followed by **a gerund (-ing forms)** and not an infinitive.

- Incorrect: They insisted on me resigning the post.
- Correct: They insisted on **my** resigning the post.
- Incorrect: They objected to John playing for the other team.
- Correct: They objected to **John's** playing for the other team.

A noun or a pronoun used before a gerund should be in the **possessive case**. Note that the possessive case should not be used with a gerund when the gerund is in the passive or when the noun or pronoun denotes a lifeless thing.

- Incorrect: There is no danger of the roof's crashing.

- Correct: There is no danger of the **roof** crashing.

60. Historic present

When writing about a past event, we can use the present tense to make it appear as if the event is actually happening. Even if a person is dead, he or she can still be spoken of in the present tense. This is known as using the **historic present**.

The following sentences are written using the historic present.

- Winston Churchill **is** one of England's greatest statesmen.
- Captain Cook **is** responsible for white settlement in Australia.

61. I don't mind

- Incorrect: 'Will you have some coffee?' 'I don't mind.'
- Correct: 'Will you have some coffee?' 'Thank you' OR 'No, thank you.'

Say 'Thanks' or 'Thank you' while accepting an offer. Say 'No, thanks' or 'No, thank you' while declining an offer.

'*I don't mind*' is rude. It shows indifference: that the person does not care whether he drinks coffee or not. 'I don't mind' should be used only when it is permissible to indicate no strong preference.

62. If clauses

- Incorrect: If it **rains** we **would cancel** the match.
- Correct: If it **rains** we **will cancel** the match.
- Incorrect: If you **hit** the dog, it **would bite** you.
- Correct: If you **hit** the dog, it **will bite** you.

When the verb in the **if-clause** is in the simple present tense, we use **will/shall/can/may + infinitive** in the main clause.

- Incorrect: If you **studied** hard, you **will get** a first class.
- Correct: If you **studied** hard, you **would get** a first class.

When the verb in the if-clause is in the simple past tense, we use **would/should/could/might + infinitive** in the main clause. Sentences of these types are used to talk about purely imaginary situations.

- Incorrect: If you **had studied hard**, you **would get** a first class.
- Correct: If you **had studied hard**, you **would have got** a first class.

When the verb in the main clause is in the past perfect tense, we use **would/should/could/might + have + past participle** in the main clause.

63. Imperative sentences

- Incorrect: See that you will come for the meeting in time.
- Correct: See that you **come** for the meeting in time.
- Incorrect: Take care that you will not be cheated.
- Correct: Take care that you **are** not cheated.

It is wrong to use **future tense** in the subordinate clause when the verb in the main clause is in the **imperative mood**. In such clauses, the **simple present** should be used instead of the **simple future**.

64. Indirect questions

The indirect question is really not a question at all. It has no inversion of subject and predicate as in a direct question. It does not use the auxiliary **do** either.

Compare:

- Direct: Where are you going?
- Indirect: He asked me **where I was going**. (NOT He asked me where was I going?)
- Direct: When does he propose to start?
- Indirect: I want to know **when he proposes to start**. (NOT I want to know when does he propose to start?)

Note that we do not use a question mark at the end of an indirect question.

65. Invent and discover

- Incorrect: Who invented America?
- Correct: Who **discovered America**?
- Incorrect: Who discovered the telephone?
- Correct: Who **invented the telephone**?

Use **invent** of something which did not exist until man created it. Example: a computer or a telephone. Use **discover** of something which existed without man's knowledge. Example: mineral deposits, countries, continents, planets etc.

66. Inversion of subject and verb

- Incorrect: Never I have seen such a sight.
- Correct: **Never have I** seen such a sight.
- Incorrect: Hardly I have had any rest for a week.
- Correct: **Hardly have I** had any rest for a week.

When the first word of the sentence is a negative, the main verb comes before the subject, as in a direct question.

67. Its and it's

These two words often cause confusion.

Its is the possessive form of **it**.

- Every country has **its** traditions.

It's is the contracted form of **it is** or **it has**.

- **It's** raining. (= It is raining.)
- **It's** gone. (= It has gone.)

68. Joining sentences

- Incorrect: This is my friend, he was at school with me.
- Correct: This is my friend **who** was at school with me.
- Incorrect: This is my house, I live here.
- Correct: This is my house **where** I live.
- Incorrect: This is an interesting story, I am reading it.

- Correct: This is an interesting story **which** I am reading.

Two main clauses which are not separated by a full stop should be linked by a conjunction or a relative pronoun.

69. Keep and put

- Incorrect: He **kept** the book on the table.
- Correct: He **put** the book on the table.
- Incorrect: He always **puts** his money in this box.
- Correct: He always **keeps** his money in this box.

Use **keep** of a more or less permanent resting place. Use **put** of only a temporary one.

70. Kind and kinds, sort and sorts etc.

The words **kind, sort, type** and **class** are singular and should be used with **this** or **that** to modify a singular noun. The words **kinds, sorts, types** and **classes** are plural and should be used with **these** or **those** to modify plural nouns.

- Incorrect: I like these kind of mangoes.
- Correct: I like **these kinds of mangoes**.
- Incorrect: I don't like this sort of meat pies.
- Correct: I don't like **this sort of meat pie**.
- Incorrect: Those are the kinds of film I like to watch.
- Correct: **Those** are the **kinds of films** I like to watch.
- Incorrect: These type of cars are very fast.
- Correct: **These types of cars** are very fast.

71. Less and fewer

Less refers to a quantity that cannot be counted. **Fewer** refers to a number that can be counted.

Compare:

- I am eating **less meat**.
- We caught **fewer fish**.

- There were **fewer children** in the class than expected.
- We did **less work** today than yesterday.

72. Lie and Lay

- Incorrect: Dad has laid on the sofa all morning.
- Correct: Dad **has lain** on the sofa all morning.
- Incorrect: Mother says she has already lain the table.
- Correct: Mother says she **has already laid** the table.
- Incorrect: The book was lain on the table.
- Correct: The book **was laid** on the table.
- Incorrect: I would like to lay in the sun.
- Correct: I would like **to lie** in the sun.

To lie means **to rest**. Its different forms are given below:

Infinitive: lie; -ing form: lying; Past tense: lay; Past participle: lain

- I **lie** on the bed.
- I **am lying** on the bed.
- I **was lying** on the bed.
- I **lay** on the bed.
- I **have lain** on the bed.

To lie also means '*to not tell the truth*'. Its different forms are given below:

Infinitive: lie; -ing form: lying; past tense: lied; past participle: lied

- I **lie**.
- I **am lying**.
- I **was lying**.
- I **lied**.
- I **have lied**.

To lay means '*to put something down*.' Its different forms are:

Infinitive: lay; -ing form: laying; past tense: laid; past participle: laid

- I **lay** the plate on the table.
- I **am laying** the plate on the table.
- I **was laying** the plate on the table.
- I **laid** the plate on the table.
- I **have laid** the plate on the table.

73. Like and as

As is followed by a clause. **Like** is followed by a noun.

- Incorrect: He did like he was told.
- Correct: He did **as he was told**.
- Incorrect: He fought like a tiger does.
- Correct: He fought **like a tiger**.
- Correct: He fought **as a tiger does**.

74. Look after and look for

Look after means 'take care of'. **Look for** means 'try to find'.

- Nurses **look after** sick people. (= Nurses take care of sick people.)
- I am **looking for** my keys. (= I am trying to find my keys.)

75. Lose and loose

Lose is an irregular verb (lose – lost – lost). **Loose** is the opposite of **tight**. It is an adjective.

- She needs to **lose** oodles of weight. (NOT She needs to loose oodles of weight.)
- This shirt is **loose** for me. (NOT This shirt is lose for me.)

76. Many/much and plenty of/a lot of

The expressions **a lot of**, **plenty of** and **a great deal of** are preferred in affirmative clauses. In questions and negatives, we usually use **much** or **many**.

Compare:

- I have **a lot of** work to do. (NOT I have much work to do.)
- Do you have **much** work to do? (More natural than 'Do you have a lot of work to do?')

- No, I don't have **much** work to do. (More natural than 'No, I don't have a lot of work to do')
- **Plenty of** people want to buy cars.
- Are there **many** people who want cars?
- Yes, but there aren't **many** people who can afford them. (NOT There aren't plenty of people who can afford them.)

Many is occasionally used in the affirmative, but **much** is almost never used in that way. The expressions **a lot of**, **plenty of** and **a great deal of** are almost never used in the negative, but they are occasionally used in questions.

77. May and can

Can expresses ability.

- She **can** speak English.
- He **can** play the piano.
- **Can** you speak Hindi?

Can is also used in the sense of **may** to give permission, though **may** is more correct.

- You **can** take one of those books. OR You **may** take one of those books.
- You **can** go now. OR You **may** go now.

Nowadays, **can** is also being increasingly used to ask permission.

- '**Can** I come in, Sir?'

78. Maybe and perhaps

These two words mean the same. **Maybe** is more common in an informal style.

- **Maybe/perhaps** he will come.

Perhaps is often pronounced 'praps' by British people. In American English, **perhaps** is rather formal.

79. Much and many

Much is used with singular nouns. **Many** is used with plural nouns.

- There aren't **many people** who can afford cars.
- Have you got **much work** to do?

Much and **many** are mostly used in questions and negative sentences. They are unusual in affirmative clauses except after words like **as, so** and **too**.

- She has got **lots of** friends. (More natural than 'She has got many friends.')

80. Neither, nor and not...either

Negative additions to negative remarks are made with **nor/neither + auxiliary verb + subject**

- Incorrect: 'I can't swim.' 'I also can't'
- Correct: 'I can't swim.' '**Neither/nor can I.**'
- Incorrect: John didn't come, and Peter didn't too.
- Correct: John didn't come, **neither/nor did Peter.**

Not either means the same as **neither** and **nor**. It is preceded by **subject + auxiliary verb**.

- Incorrect: 'I can't swim.' 'I also can't.'
- Correct: 'I can't swim.' '**I can't either.**'

81. Nominative and objective case

Pronouns that are used as subjects of verbs are: **I, he, she, we, they** and **you**

- Neither **Alice** nor **I** like the opera. (NOT Neither Alice nor me like the opera. Here the pronouns Alice and I are part of the subject.)

Pronouns that are used as objects of verbs or prepositions are: **me, him, her, us, them** and **you**. Note that **you** does not change its form.

- I tackled **him**. (NOT I tackled he. Here him is the object of the verb tackled.)
- She sat above **me**. (NOT She sat above I. Here me is the object of the preposition above.)
- Between you and **me** there are few secrets. (NOT Between you and I there are few secrets. Here the pronouns you and me are the objects of the preposition between.)

- There are no problems between **him** and **her**. (NOT There are no problems between he and she.)
- Let **you** and **me** do it. (NOT Let you and I do it. Here you and me are the objects of the verb let.)
- He has given great trouble to my father and **me**. (NOT He has given great trouble to my father and I. Here my father and I are the objects of the preposition to.)

Grammarians formerly used to recommend that a pronoun used as the complement of the verb **be** (is/am/are/was/were), should be in the nominative (subject) form. Today the use of the nominative form in such cases is considered extremely formal and over-correct. Instead, we use the objective form.

- It **is me**. (More natural than It is I.)
- That **was him**. (More natural than That was he.)

82. No sooner ...than

It is wrong to use **when** instead of **than** in these sentences. If **no sooner** begins the sentence, the auxiliary **did** or **had** must come immediately after it.

- Incorrect: **No sooner had** she read the telegram *when* she fainted.
- Correct: **No sooner had** she read the telegram **than** she fainted.
- Incorrect: No sooner I heard the shot than I rushed to the spot.
- Correct: **No sooner did** I hear the shot **than** I rushed to the spot.

83. Nouns that do not have a singular form

Some nouns do not have a singular form. Examples are: *oats, cattle, pants, scissors, tongs, shears, trousers, binoculars, shorts* and *tweezers*. We cannot say *a pants* or *a cattle*.

- **The tongs were** by the fireplace. (NOT The tong was by the fireplace.)
- **Tweezers are** useful when handling stamps. (NOT A tweezer is useful when handling stamps.)

The singular aspect of the word is usually indicated by using '*a pair of*'.

Compare:

- **The scissors are** in the drawer.

- **A pair of scissors is** in the drawer.
- **The garden shears were** used to clip the hedge.
- **A pair of garden shears was** used to clip the hedge.
- **Trousers were** hanging in the cupboard.
- **A pair of trousers was** hanging in the cupboard.

84. Nouns with no plural forms

Some nouns do not have a plural form. Examples are: *scenery, furniture, wheat, dust, silverware, information, news, luggage, bread, advice, chess, chewing gum, equipment, grass, permission, publicity, rubbish, traffic etc.*

- Switzerland is known for its **scenery**. (NOT Switzerland is known for its sceneries.)
- We bought some **furniture** yesterday. (NOT We bought some furnitures yesterday.)
- Have you received any **information**? (NOT Have you received any informations?)
- I packed my **luggage**. (NOT I packed my luggages.)
- There are no **loaves** in this shop. (NOT There are no breads in this shop.)

Nouns that do not have a plural form are usually treated as uncountable nouns. Most uncountable nouns have countable equivalents.

Advice (uncountable) - a piece of advice (countable)

Bread (uncountable) - a piece of bread / a loaf / a roll

Equipment - a piece of equipment / a tool

Baggage - a piece of baggage

Furniture - a piece of furniture / an article of furniture

Grass - a blade of grass

Information - a piece of information

Lightning - a flash of lightning

Luck - a bit of luck / a stroke of luck

News - a piece of news

Poetry - a poem

Travel - a journey / a trip

Work - a piece of work / a job

- We bought **a piece of furniture** yesterday. (NOT We bought a furniture yesterday.)
- We heard **a piece of news**. (NOT We heard a news.)
- I need **a piece of equipment** to fix this. OR I need a tool to fix this. (NOT I need an equipment to fix this.)
- I am learning **a new poem**. (NOT I am learning a new poetry.)
- He gave me **some advice**. OR He gave me **a piece of advice**. (NOT He gave me an advice.)

85. Nouns with identical singular and plural forms

Some nouns have identical singular and plural forms. Examples are: **sheep and deer**.

- **This deer is** hungry.
- **These deer are** hungry.

86. Numbers

Write the numbers of kings and queens in Roman characters.

- Elizabeth II
- King George VI

Write ordinal numbers (first, second, third etc.) up to twelfth in words except in dates.

- Incorrect: He came a 3rd time.
- Correct: He came a **third** time.

Write dates thus, '*May 12th*' or '*12th May*' and not thus, '*the 12th of May*' or '*the twelfth of May*'.

Write cardinal numbers up to twelve in words, except when telling the time.

Write cardinal and ordinal numbers above twelve and twelfth in either words or figures as seems in each case the more convenient.

87. On and in

Use **on** when the meaning is clearly 'on top of'. Example: 'on a table'. Use **in** when 'on top of' is not appropriate.

- Incorrect: He rides in a cycle.
- Correct: He rides **on a cycle**.
- Incorrect: He rides on a car.
- Correct: He rides **in a car**.
- Incorrect: He sat on a tree.
- Correct: He sat **in a tree**.

88. Only

The word **only** should be written in front of and next to the word or phrase it modifies.

Compare:

- **Only John** may play in the garden. (= John and nobody else may play in the garden.)
- John may play **only in the garden**. (= John may play nowhere else.)
- John may **only play** in the garden. (= John may play - but do nothing else - in the garden.)

89. On time and in time

- Incorrect: The meeting must start exactly **in time**.
- Correct: The meeting must start exactly **on time**.

On time = at the planned time; neither late nor early

In time = before the last moment; with enough time to spare

90. On the whole and the whole of

On the whole is used to sum up your opinion of something which is good and bad in parts. For instance, you may say, *'The script of the film was bad, but the story was excellent. On the whole I enjoyed it.'*

- Incorrect: It is a very good film. I liked it on the whole.
- Correct: It is a very good film. I liked **the whole of it**.

91. Participles

- Incorrect: Having bitten the postman, the farmer decided to shoot the dog.
- Correct: **The dog having bitten** the postman, the farmer decided to shoot it.

Here the first sentence means that it was the farmer who bit the postman and not the dog.

The participle is a verb-adjective. It should be related to a proper subject of reference. If the subject is lacking or if a wrong subject is used, the whole sentence will be wrong.

- Incorrect: *Being a rainy day*, we didn't go out.
- Correct: **It being a rainy day**, we didn't go out.
- Incorrect: *Being too costly* for him, he could not buy the watch.
- Correct: **The watch being too costly for him**, he could not buy it.

92. Positive or comparative?

- Incorrect: He is *becoming strong*.
- Correct: He is **becoming stronger**.
- Incorrect: She is *getting young*.
- Correct: She is **getting younger**.

The sentence *'He is becoming strong'* is of course correct English, but the English language has a special fondness for the comparative adjective, instead of a positive adjective, when growth or change is implied in a sentence. For example when we are talking of a boy's progress in class, we often say *'He is working better now'* thinking of a time past when he worked less.

93. Past perfect tense

- Incorrect: He said that his father died last year.
- Correct: He said that his father **had died** last year.
- Incorrect: The patient died before the doctor arrived.
- Correct: The patient **had died** before the doctor arrived.
- Incorrect: The train left before we reached the station.
- Correct: The train **had left** before we reached the station.

The past perfect tense should be used when the time of one past tense verb is more past than that of another.

94. Possessive case

The use of the **possessive case** should be confined to the following:

1) Names of living beings and personified objects.

Examples are: *the minister's bodyguards, the lion's mane, the girl's mother, nature's laws, fortune's favorites etc.*

2) A few stereotyped phrases:

Examples are:

- The boat's crew
- At his fingers' ends
- For goodness' sake
- For conscience's sake

3) Nouns denoting space or time

Examples are:

- A day's work
- A hand's breadth
- In a year's time

95. Prepositions

We do not use prepositions before a number of common expressions beginning **next, last, this, that, one, every, each, some, any, all etc.**

- Incorrect: See you on next Sunday.
- Correct: See you **next Sunday**.
- Incorrect: Come on any day you like.
- Correct: **Come any day** you like.
- Incorrect: The party lasted for all night.
- Correct: The party lasted **all night**.

96. Present perfect tense

The **present perfect** is a present tense. So when you use the present perfect tense, the action cannot be placed at a point of time in the past. However, a period of time extending up to the time of speaking can be mentioned - *for two hours, for three years, in the last two years* etc. Adverbs like *just, recently, as yet, ever, never, already, today, this morning* etc., may also be used.

- Incorrect: I have seen him yesterday.
- Correct: I **saw** him **yesterday**.
- Incorrect: We have lived here till 2004.
- Correct: We **lived** here **till 2004**.
- Incorrect: 'Where is John?' 'He has been to Sydney.'
- Correct: 'Where is John?' 'He has gone to Sydney.'

'He has been to Sydney' means that sometime in the past he went Sydney and came back. So he knows Sydney; he is not a stranger to that city.

'He has gone to Sydney' means that he is still in Sydney; he hasn't come back yet.

97. Price and Prize

The **price** is what you pay when you buy something. A **prize** is what you are given if you win a competition.

- Incorrect: What is the prize of that watch?
- Correct: What is the **price** of that watch?
- Incorrect: The boy was given a price.
- Correct: The boy was given a **prize**.

98. Pronouns

A pronoun used as subject should not be separated from its verb if possible.

- Incorrect: I with some friends went for a walk.
- Correct: **I went** for a walk with some friends.

Agreement with antecedent in number, gender and person

A pronoun must agree with its antecedent in number, gender and person.

- All **passengers** were asked to show **their** tickets. (Here the pronoun 'their' agrees with its antecedent *passengers* in number, gender and person.)
- **Each girl** gave **her** own version of the story. (Here the pronoun '**her**' agrees with its antecedent *girl* in number, gender and person.)
- Every **man** must bear **his** own burden.

99. Say and tell

The verb **tell** is followed by an indirect object without **to**.

- Incorrect: **Tell to me** what happened.
- Correct: **Tell me** what happened.
- Incorrect: John **told to me** about it.
- Correct: John **told me** about it.

When used with a **that-clause**, **tell** takes an indirect object. **Say** is used without an indirect object.

- Incorrect: She told that she would come.
- Correct: She **told me** that she would come.
- Correct: She **said** that she would come.

100. Scarcely...when

It is wrong to use **than** instead of **when** in these sentences.

- Incorrect: **Scarcely** had I reached the station **than** the train steamed out.
- Correct: **Scarcely had** I reached the station **when** the train steamed out.

When **scarcely** begins the sentence, the auxiliary **had** must come immediately after it.

- Incorrect: Scarcely I had solved one problem when another cropped up.
- Correct: **Scarcely had** I solved one problem **when** another cropped up.
- Correct: I **had scarcely** solved one problem **when** another cropped up.

101. Search and search for

- Incorrect: When we searched it we found it.
- Correct: When we **searched for** it we found it.
- Incorrect: I searched him.
- Correct: I **searched for** him.

'*I searched him*' is only correct when it means '*I looked in his pockets*' or something similar.

102. Sincerely

- Incorrect: Your sincerely...
- Incorrect: Your's sincerely
- Correct: **Yours sincerely**

103. Singular and plural nouns

The pronouns **another, anything, each, everyone, everybody, anyone, someone, somebody, no one, none, much, person, either** and **neither** are singular and should be followed by **singular verbs**. The pronouns **all, some, most, many** and **people** are plural and should be followed by **plural verbs**.

- Incorrect: Every people know this.
- Correct: **Every man / everyone knows** this.
- Incorrect: Everyone in the class have handed in work.
- Correct: **Everyone** in the class **has** handed in work.
- Incorrect: Neither of the boys are correct.
- Correct: **Neither** of the boys **is** correct.
- Incorrect: Each of the boys were given a prize yesterday.
- Correct: **Each** of the boys **was** given a prize yesterday.

104. Subordinate clause

- Incorrect: I will call you when the dinner will be ready.
- Correct: I **will call** you when the dinner **is ready**.
- Incorrect: They will come if you will invite them.
- Correct: They **will come** if you **invite** them.

When the verb in the main clause is in the future tense, the verb in the subordinate clause should be in the present and not in the future.

105. Suggest

The verb **suggest** is used with a **that-clause** or a **gerund** (-ing form). It cannot be used with a **to-infinitive**.

- Incorrect: She suggested *to consult* a doctor.
- Correct: She **suggested consulting** a doctor.
- Correct: She **suggested that I (should) consult** a doctor.

106. Than and as

Object pronouns (me, him, her etc) can be used after **as** and **than**, especially in an informal style.

- She is taller **than me**.
- He earns as much **as her**.
- She doesn't sing as well **as him**.

In a formal style, we prefer **subject + verb** after **as** and **than**

- She is taller **than I am**.
- He earns as much **as she does**.
- She doesn't sing as well **as I do**.

Note that a subject form without a verb (e.g. than I) is unusual in this structure in modern English.

- He ran as fast **as me**. OR He ran as fast **as I did**. (More natural than '*He ran as fast as I*'.)

107. Thank you and please

- Incorrect: 'I have a bad headache.' 'Please?'
- Correct: 'I have a bad headache.' '**I beg your pardon.**'

To ask people what they have said, we use '*I beg your pardon*' (formal) or '*sorry*' (informal). '*Please*' cannot be used with this meaning.

- Incorrect: 'Have you got a pen I could use?' 'Yes, please.'
- Correct: 'Have you got a pen I could use?' '**Yes, here you are.**'

We do not use **please** when we give things to people.

- Incorrect: 'Thanks a lot!' 'Please'
- Correct: 'Thanks a lot!' '**That's OK**'

Please is not used as a reply to '*thanks/thank you*'. If a reply is necessary, we may say '*Not at all*' (rather formal), '*You are welcome*', '*Don't mention it*', '*That's all right*' or '*That's OK*' (very informal).

- Incorrect: 'Will you have some coffee?' 'No, please.'
- Correct: 'Will you have some coffee?' '**Yes, please.**'
- Correct: 'Will you have some coffee?' '**No, thank you.**'

'**No, please**' is always wrong. '*Yes, please*' and '*No, thank you*' are the polite replies when accepting and declining an offer.

108. Told and asked

- Incorrect: I asked my servant to bring water.
- Correct: I **told** my servant to bring water.
- Incorrect: I told the teacher to excuse me.
- Correct: I **asked** the teacher to excuse me.

Use '**I told him to...**' only towards a person to whom you have a right to give an order. Use '**I asked him to...**' towards a person of whom you can or want to make a request only.

109. Too and very

- Incorrect: The story is too interesting.
- Correct: The story is **very interesting**.

Too means 'more than it ought to be'. It has a negative meaning. It is usually followed by **to** or **for**. **Too** should not be used in the general sense of **very** which has a positive meaning.

- He is **too** fat.
- It is **too** hot **to** go out.

110. Transitive verbs

- Incorrect: Here is my cup; please fill.
- Correct: Here is my cup; please **fill it**.
- Incorrect: I enjoyed when I went to Paris.
- Correct: I **enjoyed myself** when I went to Paris.

All transitive verbs (e.g. fill, break, take and bring) must have an expressed object.

Some transitive verbs (e.g. give and lend) must have two objects.

- Incorrect: I asked for my book, but he didn't give me.
- Correct: I asked for my book, but he didn't **give it to me**. (Here the pronouns **it** and **me** are the objects of the verb **give**.)

111. Two words or one

The following are written as one word:

Nowadays, somehow, anyhow, everybody, into, moreover, cannot, together, today, sometimes, everyone, afterwards, everywhere, nobody, meanwhile, newspaper, outside, already, anything, anyone

The following are written as two words:

All right, at once, some time, at least, no one, on to

112. Unless and if

Unless means 'if not' and, therefore, it is superfluous to introduce another **not** into the following clause.

- Incorrect: **Unless** you **do not** give the keys of the safe you will be shot.
- Correct: **Unless** you give the keys of the safe, you will be shot.

- Correct: **If** you **do not** give the keys of the safe, you will be shot.

113. Verbs

The verbs **enjoy**, **avoid**, **miss**, **postpone** and **suggest** should be used with a **gerund**, and not an infinitive.

- Incorrect: She enjoys *to sing*.
- Correct: She enjoys **singing**.
- Incorrect: She avoids *to meet* people.
- Correct: She avoids **meeting** people.
- Incorrect: Mother suggested *to consult* a doctor.
- Correct: Mother suggested **consulting** a doctor.

114. -ward and -wards

- Incorrect: You can't make a **forwards pass** in rugby.
- Correct: You can't make a **forward pass** in rugby.

The words **backward(s)**, **forward(s)**, **upward(s)**, **northward(s)** etc., do not have the **-s** when they are used as **adjectives**. When these words are adverbs, they can be used with or without **-s**.

115. Well and Good

- Incorrect: He speaks English good.
- Correct: He **speaks** English **well**.
- Incorrect: She speaks well English.
- Correct: She speaks **good English**.

Well is an adverb. **Good** is an adjective. Adverbs are used to modify verbs. Adjectives are used to modify nouns. In the sentence '*He speaks English well*', the adverb **well** modifies the verb **speaks**. Similarly, in the sentence '*She speaks good English*', the adjective **good** modifies the noun **English**.

- Incorrect: She speaks *well English*.
- Correct: She **speaks** English **well**.

Adverbs cannot usually go between the **verb** and the **object**.

116. Why not + infinitive

Read the following sentence:

Why not arrange a party in his honor?

This means 'Why should we not arrange a party in his honor?' It is a way of suggesting something for other people's consideration and acceptance.

- Incorrect: Why not you buy now and pay later?
- Correct: **Why not** buy now and pay later?
- Incorrect: Why not we dismiss the fellow?
- Correct: **Why not** dismiss the fellow?

This is a very common error which should be carefully avoided. No noun or pronoun should come after *why not*.

117. Whether and If

- Incorrect: We haven't settled the question **of if** we should move to a new house.
- Correct: We haven't settled the question **of whether** we should move to a new house.

Only **whether** is possible after a preposition.

- Incorrect: They can't decide if to wait or leave.
- Correct: They can't decide **whether to wait** or leave.

Only **whether** can be used before **to-infinitives**.

118. Whose and who's

Whose is a possessive word. It is used in questions and relative clauses. **Who's** is the contraction of **who is** or **who has**.

- Incorrect: Who's is this coat?
- Correct: **Whose** is this coat?

- Incorrect: Whose is that over there?
- Correct: **Who's** that over there?

119. Will or shall?

The distinctions between **will** and **shall** are now strictly observed only by precise speakers. **Shall** is becoming less common especially with the second and third person pronouns. With first person pronouns, however, **shall** is still being used to indicate the simple future.

In conversation people generally use the shortened form **'ll**.

- **We'll** have a party tomorrow.
- I think **I'll** send him a letter.

In these sentences, according to strict grammatical rules, one has to use **shall**. But **'ll** may be the contraction of either shall or will. However, research has shown that most people consider **'ll** to be a contraction of **will**, which proves that in actual usage **will** has been replacing **shall**.

Instead of using **shall** with second and third person pronouns to express a command, promise, threat or determination, people often use other verbs and forms of expression.

For example, instead of saying 'You shall go at once', people often say:

- You **will have to go** at once.
- You **are to go** at once.
- You **must go** at once.

120. Yes and No

- Incorrect: 'Aren't you going out?' 'Yes, I'm not.'
- Correct: '**No, I'm not.**'
- Correct: '**Yes, I'm.**'

Yes is used with affirmative sentences and **no** with negative sentences.