

# CHAPTER 5

## Building Blocks

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### RULES OF ENGLISH GRAMMAR

#### Agreement Problems (Subject and Verb)

**Rule 1** Make a verb agree in number with its subject; make a pronoun agree in number with its antecedent.

The *list* of spare parts *was* long. (Singular)

The *lists* of spare parts *were* long. (Plural)

Singular subjects take singular verbs (*list*→*was*), and plural subjects take plural verbs (*lists*→*were*).

Even an *animal* has *its* own territory. (Singular)

Even *animals* have *their* own territory. (Plural)

Singular antecedents are referred to by singular pronouns (*animal*→*its*) and plural antecedents are referents of plural pronouns (*animals*→*their*).

**Exception:** A plural verb is always required after *you* even when it is used in singular, referring to one person, e.g:

You *were* very helpful during my stay with you.

**Note:** 's' added to a noun indicates the plural form but 's' added to a verb indicates the third person singular.

She *favours* the move.

They *favour* the expansion of the school.

**Rule 2** Ensure the verb agrees with the true subject and not with an intervening plural object of a preposition or any other intervening plural.

The *box* of Nestle's chocolates *is* missing.

(Here the true subject is *box* and not Nestle's chocolates. Chocolates is the object of preposition *of*.)

His *experience* as teacher to boys and girls *gives* him understanding.

The *prices* of the new model *vary* from town to town.

**Rule 3** Subjects joined by *and* are usually plural and take plural verbs.

His typewriter and my radio *were* stolen.

Sony and Sanjay *are* going to Chennai today.

#### **Exception**

(a) If a subject consisting of two singular nouns connected by *and* refers to the same person or thing, a singular verb is used.

My best friend and advisor *has* changed *his* mind again.

Here the subject is treated as singular because both qualities are found in one person.  
 Cornflakes and milk *is* our Sunday breakfast.

- (b) When two subjects connected by *and* are preceded by *each*, *every* or *many* a, a singular verb is used.

Each man and boy is expected to meet *his* obligation.

Every shirt, tie and coat *is* marked for reduction sale.

**Rule 4** Words like *with*, *together with*, *along with*, *besides*, *as well as*, *including*, *in addition to*, etc. do not affect the number of the verb. If the subject is singular, a singular verb is required; if plural, a plural verb.

The television, along with the cabinet, is to be sold.

Mrs Paul, with her son and daughter, is going to the theatre this evening.

Our chief competitor, as well as ourselves, is obliged to increase prices.

The decoration of the room, including the carpets and furniture, is most pleasing.

**Rule 5** If the subject is made up of both singular and plural words connected by *or*, *nor*, *either ... or*, *neither ... nor*, *not only ... but also*, the verb agrees with the nearer part of the subject.

Neither the quality nor the *prices have* changed.

Neither the prices nor the *quality has* changed.

Not only the headmaster but also the *teachers are* in favour of the expansion of the school.

Not only the teachers but also the *headmaster is* in favour of the expansion of the school.

Neither the salesmen nor the *buyer is* in favour of the system.

Neither the buyer nor the *salesmen are* in favour of the system.

**Rule 6** If the subject consists of two singular words connected by *or*, *neither ... nor*, or *either ... or*, the subject is singular and requires a singular verb.

Neither our Accounts Department nor our Head Office *has* a record of the transaction.

Sunita or Neetu *has* the swimming suit.

Either October or November *is* a good vacation month.

Neither the radio nor the television *was* in working order.

**Rule 7** Nouns that are plural in form but singular in meaning, such as *news*, *measles*, *mumps*, *physics*, *electronics*, *tactics*, *economics* and so on, usually take singular verbs.

*News is* travelling faster than ever before.

*Physics has* fascinated my hostelmate for months.

Some nouns ending in *-ics* (such as *athletics*, *statistics* and *politics*) are considered singular, when referring to an organised body of knowledge and plural when referring to individual facts, qualities or activities.

*Athletics provide* good recreation. (i.e. various games)

*Athletics is* required of every student. (i.e. participation in games)

**Rule 8** A linking verb usually agrees with its subject, not with its complement.

Excessive *absences* were the reason for his failure.

The *reason* of his failure *was* excessive absences.

**Rule 9** Plural verbs are required for many nouns that have no singular form, such as *proceeds*, *goods*, *ashes*, *remains*, *credentials*, *premises*, etc.

The *proceeds* of the magic show *are* to be given to the fund for soldiers' welfare.

The *goods are* being despatched today by goods train.

**Collective Nouns** A collective noun is a word that represents a group of persons, animals or things, e.g. *audience*, *committee*, *company*, *council*, *army*, *police*, *society*, *board*, *department*, *cabinet* etc. The following rules govern the form of verb to be used with a collective noun:

**Rule 10** When the group acts as a unit, the verb should be singular.

The *committee has* agreed to submit its report on Friday.

The *Board of Directors meets* once in a month.

The *firm is* one of the most reputed in the country.

The *majority has* made its decision.

**Rule 11** When the members of the group are thought of as acting separately, the verb should be plural.

The *teams are* arguing over who should be the captain. (individual members in the team are arguing)

The *committee were* not in agreement on the action to be taken.

The *audience were* cheering and laughing; even crying.

**Rule 12** Company names may be either singular or plural, according to their meaning. The plural form emphasizes the individual personnel making up the company.

Mudra and Corporation *have* retained the goodwill of *their* customers.

The Oil Corporation *is* located at Nariman Point, Mumbai.

**Rule 13** When nouns expressing *periods of time, amounts of money, or quantities* are considered as a single unit, singular verbs are used.

Ten rupees *seems* too much for the job.

Three months *is* too long a time to wait.

The number of board members *is* very small.

That Rs 1,00,000 *was* an inheritance from my father.

Yes, 5 metres *is* ample for a suit.

**Rule 14** After such expressions as *one-half of, two-thirds of, a part of, a majority of,*

(a) use a *singular verb* if a *singular noun* follows the *of*.

A *part of* the office *is* closed.

*Two-thirds of* the mailing list *has* been typed.

A *majority of* 3500 *indicates* his popularity in the constituency.

(b) use a *plural verb* when a *plural noun* follows the *of*.

*Part of* the walls *are* to be painted.

*Two-thirds of* our workers *live* in the suburbs.

*The majority of* our staff members *live* in villages.

**Rule 15** The expression *the number* has a singular meaning and requires a singular verb, whereas the expression *a number* has a plural meaning and takes a plural verb.

*The number of* board members *is* very small.

*A number of* board members *were* absent.

*The number of* orders still to be executed *is* estimated at nearly a hundred.

*A number of* our staff *are* going on leave.

**Rule 16** In sentences containing the words *one of*, the verb is chosen as follows:

(a) In simple form *one of* or *one of the*, a singular verb is used.

*One of* the reasons for his demotion *is* his carelessness.

*One of* the pens *is* missing from my desk.

(b) The sentences containing phrases *one of those who* or *one of the things that*, a plural verb is required.

He *is one of those* managers *who favour* increasing the staff.

Here, *favour* agrees with *those*. In the phrase *one of those who*, *those* is the plural object of the preposition *of*. In the subordinate clause *who favour*, the relative pronoun *who* is the subject and must agree with its antecedent *those*.

Mr Verma *is one of our officers who are* accompanying me.

He *is one of our employees who are* always alert.

However, when *only* precedes *one of/one of those*, a singular verb is used.

Ramesh *is the only one of our employees who is* always alert.

Mr Verma *is the only one of our officers who is* accompanying me.

**Rule 17** Certain collective nouns, though singular in form, are always used in the plural sense and take a plural verb. For example, *gentry, cattle, poultry, alphabet, offspring* etc.

These poultry *are* ready for sale.

There *are* twenty-six alphabets in English.

The cattle *are* grazing near the canal.

**Rule 18** Certain nouns are always used in singular and followed by singular verbs. These are not used in the plural sense and do not take on plural verbs. For example *hair, issue, advice, information, scenery, luggage, mischief, bread, abuse, furniture, land, business, machinery, poetry* etc.

Her hair *has* turned grey now.

The scenery of Kasauli *is* beautiful.

Is there any information in this regard?

All the machinery *is* old.

I have sold all the furniture that *was* useless.

My luggage *is* lying at the bus stand.

**Note:** A plural sense is often expressed by using some other suitable word before the above nouns. For example:

He gave me *many* pieces of advice. (not advices)

I have brought *many* items of furniture. (not furnitures)

They have purchased *many* plots of land. (not lands)

**Rule 19** The words *each, every, either* and *neither*, used as pronouns or as adjectives, are always singular and require singular verbs.

*Each* of them *does* have political ambitions.

*Each* employee is responsible for clearing his desk in the evening.

*Neither* of the boys *is* eligible for taking the examination.

*Neither* boy *is* eligible for selection.

**Exception:** If a parenthetical *each* follows a plural noun or pronoun, the verb should be plural.

The members *each* feel *their* responsibility.

They *each* have *their* own problems.

Ten *each* of these books *are* required.

**Rule 20** *All, any, more, most, some* may be singular or plural depending on the meaning, and take verbs accordingly.

*Some* of the books *seem* too old.

*Some* of the food *is* not good.

All the typing *has* been finished.

All the reports *have* been typed.

*Most* of the goods *have* been sold.

*Most* of the stock *has* been sold, but more of these shirts *are* due.

**Rule 21** The titles of books or magazines are considered singular and take singular verbs.

*The Hindustan Times* *still has* wide circulation.

'*The Two Faces of Indira Gandhi*' *is* a best seller.

**Rule 22** The following words and their compounds are always singular and require a singular verb.

*body* (anybody, everybody, nobody, somebody)

*thing* (anything, everything, nothing, something)

*one* (anyone, everyone, someone, no one)

*Something* *is* wrong with *him* these days.

*Everybody* in the office *has* tickets.

*Everyone* *is* required to clear their dues.

*Nobody knows the trouble I have seen.*

*No one is entitled to have his debts cancelled.*

**Rule 23** A relative pronoun (*who, which, that*) used as a subject takes a singular or plural verb to accord with its antecedent.

Measles is among the *diseases that are* curable.

This is the only one of the local *papers that prints* a weekly horoscope.

### Troublesome Pronouns

Pronouns are words used in place of a noun. Hence, a pronoun should not be used to begin a sentence; a noun must first be used and then a pronoun should be used in place of it.

**Rule 24** Use of *who, which* and *that*

- (a) *Who* and *that* are used when referring to persons, *who* being used when the individual person or the individuality of a group is implied and *that* when a class, type or species is implied.  
He is the boy *who* understands Punjabi.  
She is the kind of student *that* we want.
- (b) After adjectives of superlative degree *that* is used.  
He is the *wisest* man *that* ever lived.  
This is the *best* *that* we can do.
- (c) After two antecedents, one of which is the name of a person, and the other the name of some animal or thing, use *that* in place of *who* or *which*.  
The lady and her pet dog *that* came yesterday have come again today.
- (d) After such words as *all, any, none, only, alone, nothing* use *that* in place of *which* or *who*.  
Man is the only animal *that* can think.  
All *that* glitters is not gold.
- (e) *Which* is used when referring to *places, objects* and *animals*.  
Our Annual Report, *which* is long, is now ready for distribution.

**Rule 25** The *self-* or *selves-*ending pronouns (*myself, yourself, himself, herself, itself, ourselves, themselves*) should be used as follows:

- (a) To emphasise a noun or pronoun already expressed.  
The Principal *himself* distributed the sweets.  
I will write *myself*.  
The doctor *himself* examined the patient.
- (b) To reflect the action expressed by the verb back on to the subject.  
We have satisfied *ourselves* as to the wisdom of the action.  
He found *himself* the only one in favour of the move.
- (c) With words such as *absent, apply, enjoy, present, drink, avail, exert* etc.  
He *presented himself* before the manager.  
He *absented himself* from the office today.
- (d) But not in place of simple personal nouns.  
Raman and *I* can distribute the sweets. (not *myself*)  
The tickets are for Mr Gupta and *me*. (not *myself*)

**Rule 26** When the indefinite pronouns (i.e. pronouns used for persons and objects in a general way), *one* is the subject in a sentence, it must be followed by *one* or *one's* and not *his, her* or *him*.

*One* should keep *one's* promise.

*One* should do *one's* duty.

However, if *anyone*, *anybody*, *each one*, *everyone*, *someone* are used, do not use *one* but *his* or *her*.

*Everyone* should take care of *his* health.

*Everyone* should take care of *her* dress.

**Rule 27** *Same* is not a pronoun and as such it should not be used in place of a noun.

When you have read this book, please return *it* to me. (not return the *same* to me)

Take these books and return *them* to the library. (not return the *same* to library)

**Rule 28** Use of *each other* and *one another*:

(a) *Each other* is used in reference to *two* persons.

The two brothers disliked *each other*. (not *one another*)

The two children quarrelled with *each other*. (not *one another*)

(b) *One another* is used in reference to *more than two*.

Good boys do not quarrel with *one another*. (not *each other*)

**Rule 29** Use of *either*, *neither*, *none*, *any*, *any one*:

Use *either* or *neither* when referring to one out of two persons or things and when referring to one out of more than two, use *any*, *none*, *no one*.

*Either* of you *two* can pay for it.

*Neither* of the *two* brothers has been selected.

*Any one* of the employees can claim it.

*None* of the students of this class has passed.

## Troublesome Verbs

**Rule 30** Use *were* to express a condition that is contrary-to-fact, an uncertainty or a wish.

I wish I *were* a king. (a wish)

If Mr Anil *were* here, he would know. (contrary-to-fact)

We saw a streak in the material, as if the goods *were* faded. (uncertainty)

**Rule 31** Use of *shall* and *will*

(a) To indicate mere future action, use

I or we *shall* ...

You *will* ...

He, she, it or they *will* ...

I (or we) *shall* be glad to hear from you.

You *will* meet him at the railway station.

They (or he or she) *will* not find the journey too tiring.

Always say *I shall* unless you really mean *I am willing* or *I am determined*.

We *shall* appreciate an early reply.

If you use *will* here, it would mean we are determined to appreciate.

(b) To indicate determination, promise, desire, choice or threat use:

I or we *will* ...

You *shall* ...

He, she, it or they *shall* ...

*I will* clear the dues by the end of the week. (promise)

In spite of the risk, *I will* go to Punjab. (determination)

You *shall* obey me. (threat)

We (or I) *will* report you to the police. (threat)

He (or they) *shall* not work in my department any more. (determination)

(c) In questions

(i) Always use *shall* with *I* and *we*.

*Shall* I meet you at the railway station?

Shall I pay for it?

(ii) With *you, he, she, it* and *they*, use the word that is expected in the answer:

Shall he be punished? (expected answer: 'He shall')

Will you get the report typed today? ('Yes, I will')

(d) To emphasise willingness, use *will* in all cases.

Yes, *I will* meet you in the evening.

Yes, *he will* meet you in the office.

### **Rule 32** Use of *should* and *would*

*Should* and *would* are past tenses of *shall* and *will* and in general express the same ideas as do *shall* and *will*, except that *should* sometimes means *ought*.

You *should* not speak in that way.

We *should* respect our parents.

You *should* visit them now.

You *would* not enjoy that experience either.

I *would* not allow such an agitation.

Every day I *would* go jogging in the morning.

**Note:** In first person, always use *should* with the words glad, pleased, like etc.

### **Troublesome Adjectives and Adverbs**

Adjectives and adverbs function as modifiers; that is, they qualify or restrict the meaning of other words. Adjectives modify nouns and pronouns. Adverbs modify mainly verbs, adjectives and other adverbs.

**Rule 33** When referring to *two* persons, places or things use the comparative form; when referring to *more than two*, the superlative form.

Rakesh *is the taller* of the two. (not *tallest*)

Of the two positions open, you have chosen the *more* promising. (not *most*)

That is the *more* efficient of the two methods. (not *most*)

That is the *most* efficient method that could be devised. (not *more*)

Today is the *warmest* day of the year. (not *warmer*)

Was Monday or Tuesday *warmer*? (not *warmest*)

**Rule 34** Some adjectives and adverbs, from their very meaning, allow no comparison; for example *round, unique, square, perfect, completely, universally, correct, always, never, dead* etc. Such words may be modified in meaning, however, by such adverbs as *hardly, nearly* or *almost*, in order to suggest an approach to the superlative.

It is *almost* a *square* table. (not *most* or *more*)

That design is *very nearly* unique.

This plate *is almost* round.

**Rule 35** When comparing one person or thing with a group of which it is a part, use the comparative degree and the words *any other* to exclude the thing compared from other objects of the same class or kind. In other words, in a comparative construction we must be sure that if *A* and *B* are compared, *A* is not included as part of *B*.

This coffee has a better flavour than *any other* coffee in the market.

Ludhiana is more populated than *any other* city in Punjab.

Gold is more costly than *any other* metal.

**Rule 36** When comparing two qualities of the same person or thing, use *more* and not *-er* to form the comparative.

Sujata is *more clever* than wise. (not *cleverer*)

Rajesh is *more brave* than wise. (not *braver*)

**Rule 37** Guard against using double comparatives and superlatives.

She is the *cleverest* girl of her class. (not *most cleverest*)

Bhatnagar is one of the *richest* men of the town. (not *most richest*)

**Rule 38** Fewer/less

*Fewer* refers to numbers and *less* refers to quantity and size or amount.

No *fewer* than fifty passengers were killed in the accident. (not *less* than)

*Less* effort was put forth by the members and thus *fewer* people attended the meeting.

Women now spend *fewer* hours in the kitchen.

Women now spend *less* time in the kitchen.

**Rule 39** As many as/as much as

*As many as* expresses the number whereas *as much as* expresses quantity.

You have to collect *as many* stamps *as* possible. (not *as much as*)

Of the thirty students, *as many as* ten have failed. (not *as much as*)

**Rule 40** Elder and eldest/older and oldest

*Elder* and *eldest* are used for the members of the same family. Also *elder* is followed by *to* and not *than*.

*Older* and *oldest* can be used with reference to persons.

I am the *eldest* member of my family. (not *oldest*)

Mr Gupta is *older than* his assistant. (not *elder*)

Sheela is *eldest of* the three sisters. (not *oldest*)

Ranjan is *elder to* Munish. (here both *elder* or *older* can be used because they may be brothers or may be not)

**Rule 41** Avoid double negatives.

Words like *hardly*, *scarcely* etc. are adverbs that are negative in meaning. Therefore, no other negative should be used with them.

You could *hardly* expect that to happen (not *couldn't hardly*)

He *scarcely* recognised me. (not *didn't scarcely*)

**Troublesome Prepositions**

Prepositions are a part of speech used to show the relation of a noun or noun equivalent (the object of the preposition) to some other word in the sentence.

**Rule 42** All, of

Do not use *of* after *all*, unless the next word is a pronoun.

All the men belong to the Rotary Club.

All *of us* belong to the Rotary Club.

All *of us* boys belong to the Lake View Hostel.

**Rule 43** Among, between

*Among* always implies more than two; *between* literally implies two. *Between*, however, is now often used for three or more items, when each is regarded individually.

The teachers distributed the pens *among* the students. (more than two)

Distribute these clothes *among* the workers. (more than two)

The commission is divided evenly *between* the two partners. (only two persons)

What is the difference *between* a thief and a robber? (only two attributes)

However, *between* may be used for more than two persons or things in order to bring each person or thing into the relation expressed.

The difference *between* the three girls was so slight that they might have been triplets.

While packing glass tumblers, be sure to place paper *between* them.

The three children had but Rs 10 *between* them.

**Rule 44** *At, in*

Both *at* and *in* are used in reference to places. Mostly *in* is used for larger places and *at* for smaller places.

He lives *at* Gill Chowk in Moradabad.

She lives *in* Ghaziabad and works *at* Ingriham Institute.

**Rule 45** *In, into, in to*

*In* implies the position within and *into* implies motion without to within. *In to* is a two word phrase in which *in* is an adverb.

The correspondence is *in* the file.

He walked *into* my office.

Mr Sharma came *in to* see me.

**Rule 46** *Beside, besides*

*Besides* means in addition to; *beside* means by the side of.

*Besides*, we need your support in this venture.

*Besides* being fined, he was also jailed.

I sat *beside* my teacher in the class.

I live *beside* the Post Office.

**Rule 47** *On, upon, up on*

Both *on* and *upon* are interchangeable, although *upon* is a little more formal and emphatic. In the two word phrase *up on*, *on* is an adverb.

Please place the book *on* the table.

His statements were based *upon* the scientific data.

It will be necessary to step *up on* the school.

**Rule 48** Some words like *senior, junior, prefer, prior, superior, inferior, preferable* etc. are followed by *to* and not *than*.

He is *senior to* me in service.

Health is more *preferable to* wealth.

This cloth is *inferior to* that cloth.

**Rule 49** Certain words are used in gerund (first form of a verb followed by *-ing*) along with prepositions. For example *abstain, confident, fond, insist, keen, persist, prohibit, refrain, succeed* etc.

I prohibited him *from parking* his car near the entrance. (not *to park*)

She is *confident of speaking* English within six months. (not *to speak*)

I *abstain from drinking* on Tuesday. (not *to drink*)

He worked hard and succeeded *in securing* good marks. (not *to secure*)

**Rule 50** Certain words are used in gerund without a preposition if followed by the first form of a verb. For example, *avoid, enjoy, help, dislike, help, stop, remember*, etc.

He *enjoys playing* cards. (not *to play*)

*Stop writing* as the time is over. (not *to stop*)

I *dislike playing* with Rajan. (not *to play*)

Many people *avoid drinking* before their superiors. (not *to drink*)

**Rule 51** Certain words are followed by different prepositions in different contexts. For example:

I *agree with* Mr Saxena.

I *agree to* your proposal.

In the above example, the word *agree* is used with two different prepositions, *with* and *to*. *Agree with* is used for agreement with a person, whereas *agree to* is used for agreement to a *plan*, or *proposal*.

To change the preposition is to convey a different meaning from the one that the speaker intended or to convey no meaning at all. A partial list of such words with their appropriate prepositions in different contexts is given below:

|             |             |                                       |
|-------------|-------------|---------------------------------------|
| accompanied | <i>with</i> | anything having no life               |
| accompanied | <i>by</i>   | anything having life                  |
| agree       | <i>with</i> | a person                              |
| agree       | <i>to</i>   | a proposal or plan                    |
| agree       | <i>upon</i> | a point                               |
| agree       | <i>on</i>   | a course                              |
| adapted     | <i>to</i>   | a thing                               |
| adapted     | <i>for</i>  | a course, because of<br>one's nature  |
| adapted     | <i>from</i> | an author                             |
| angry       | <i>at</i>   | a thing                               |
| angry       | <i>with</i> | a person                              |
| apply       | <i>for</i>  | a position or for something           |
| apply       | <i>to</i>   | a person                              |
| compare     | <i>with</i> | to bring out similar qualities        |
| compare     | <i>to</i>   | without analysing                     |
| confer      | <i>on</i>   | meaning to give to                    |
| confer      | <i>with</i> | meaning to talk to                    |
| correspond  | <i>to</i>   | a thing, denoting similarity          |
| correspond  | <i>with</i> | meaning to write to                   |
| confide     | <i>in</i>   | meaning to put faith in               |
| confide     | <i>to</i>   | meaning to commit to<br>one's keeping |
| dependent   | <i>on</i>   | a person                              |
| employed    | <i>at</i>   | a certain place or salary             |
| employed    | <i>for</i>  | a purpose                             |
| employed    | <i>in</i>   | an organisation                       |
| employed    | <i>by</i>   | a certain person                      |
| liable      | <i>for</i>  | debts                                 |
| liable      | <i>to</i>   | authority                             |
| proceed     | <i>to</i>   | a place                               |
| proceed     | <i>with</i> | a matter begun                        |
| wait        | <i>at</i>   | a place                               |
| wait        | <i>for</i>  | a person                              |
| wait        | <i>on</i>   | a customer                            |

## Important Words Followed by Suitable Prepositions

For selection of the preposition to be used with different words, carefully study the following list of important words and the suitable prepositions to be used with them. This list will help you solve questions regarding

- filling in the correct preposition in the blanks.
- detection of wrong prepositions used in sentences given in, 'Spotting Errors'.
- sentence completion questions.

**Note:** Prepositions are italicised

### A

abstain *from* food  
 abide *by* a statement  
 abound *with* living things  
 accede *to* a request  
 accept *of* a favour  
 arbitrate *between* two parties  
 annoyed *at* a thing  
 annoyed *with* a person  
 account *for* a fact  
 accuse *of* a crime  
 acquit *of* blame  
 acquiesce *in* decision  
 adapt *to* circumstances  
 adhere *to* a plan  
 agree *to* a proposal  
 agree *with* a person  
 aim *at* a thing  
 alight *from* a carriage  
 answer *to* a person  
 answer *for* conduct  
 appeal *to* a person for a thing  
 appeal *against* an order  
 approve *of* an action  
 ascribe *to* a cause  
 ask *for* a thing  
 ask *from* a person  
 aspire *after* worldly greatness  
 assent *to* a proposal  
 assure a person *of* safety  
 avail oneself *of* a chance  
 admit *to* or *into* a secret

### B

bear *with* a person  
 begin *with* the fact  
 believe *in* one's truthfulness  
 belong *to* a person  
 bent *on* going  
 bequeath a thing *to* a person  
 beset *with* danger  
 bestow a thing *on* or *upon* a person  
 betray *to* the enemy  
 betray *into* his hands

beware *of* some danger  
 blame *of* an offence  
 blame a person *for* something  
 blind *to* the danger  
 blush *at* the sight  
 blush *for* one's conduct  
 boast *of* one's skill  
 borrow *of* or *from* a person  
 bring a thing *to* light  
 bring a thing *under* notice  
 brood *over* past things  
 burden someone *with* a load  
 burst *into* rage  
 buy a thing *from* a shop

### C

charge a person *with*  
 cheat a person *of* his due  
 coincide *with* something else  
 combat *with* difficulties  
 commit *to* memory  
 committed *against* the law  
 common *to* man and woman  
 comply *with* a request  
 compare something *with* another  
 compensate a person *for* his loss  
 call *upon* or *on* a person  
 call *at* the office  
 call *for* punishment  
 catch *at* an opportunity  
 caution a person *against*  
 cease *from* quarrel(l)ing  
 compete *with* a person  
 compose *of* metal  
 conceal *from* others  
 concur *with* a person  
 concur *in* an opinion  
 condole *with* a person  
 conduce *to* health  
 confer favour *on* a person  
 confer *with* a person  
 confer *about* a thing  
 confess *to* a fault  
 confide *in* a person

conform *to* a rule or norm  
 conform *with* one's views  
 congratulate a man *on* success  
 convive *at* others' faults  
 consent *to* some proposal  
 consign *to* destruction  
 consist *of* material  
 consist *in* causes *and* results  
 consult *with* a person  
 consult *on* or *about* something  
 contribute *to* a fund  
 copy *from* a book  
 coverage *to* a point  
 convict a person *of* a crime  
 cope *with* a person  
 correspond *with* a person (to write)  
 correspond *to* something  
 correspond *about* a subject  
 count *on* a thing (depend)  
 count *for* nothing  
 crave *for* or *after* happiness  
 credit *with* good intentions  
 cure a man *of* a disease

### D

dash *against* a wall  
 drawn *on* a person  
 debar *from* an action  
 defer *to* a man's wishes  
 delight *in* poetry  
 deliver *from* a danger  
 demur *to* a statement  
 depend *on* help  
 deprive a man *of* a thing  
 desist *from* an attempt  
 despair *of* success  
 deter a man *from* action  
 die *of* a disease  
 die *from* some cause  
 differ *with* a person  
 differ *on* a subject  
 differ *from* anything  
 differ *to* opinions  
 digress *from* the topic

dilate *on* a subject  
 dip *into* a river  
 disagree *with* a person  
 disapprove *of* anything  
 dispense *with* a man's service  
 dispose *off* property or something  
 discharge *from* service  
 dissent *from* an opinion  
 distinguish one thing *from* another  
 distinguish *between* two things  
 divide *between* two, *among* many  
 divert a person *from* a path  
 divest someone *of* fear  
 draw money *on* banks  
 dominate *over* a subordinate  
 drive *at* some point  
 drop *off* a tree  
 dwell *on* some matter

**E**  
 elicit *from* a person  
 embark *on* boardship  
 embark *in* business  
 emerge *from* the hiding place  
 employ *in* some work  
 encroach *on* others' right  
 endow a person *with* benefits  
 marks *upon* a career  
 enter *into* one's plans  
 entitle *to* a property  
 entrust a person *with* something  
 envy *at* others' success  
 escape *from* custody  
 excel *in* music  
 exchange my things *with* your things  
 exclude *from* the class  
 excuse him *from* paying the fine  
 exempt *from* duty  
 expel *from* college  
 expostulate *with* a person  
 extricate *from* danger

**F**  
 fail *in* one's purpose  
 fail *of* success  
 fall *among* rogues  
 fall *in* love *with* someone  
 fall *into* difficulties  
 fall *in with* a suggestion  
 fall *from* the height  
 fall *on* the rival  
 feed *on* milk  
 feed *with* milk  
 feel *for* the troubled  
 fight *against* or *with* a person  
 fight *out* the reason

finish *with* a programme  
 frown *upon* a person  
 fill *with* something  
 fish *for* words  
 flirt *with* a person  
 fly *into* rage  
 furnish a person *with* a thing  
 furnish a thing *to* a person

**G**  
 gain *on* someone *in* competition  
 get *at* the truth  
 get *on with* a master  
 get *out of* debt  
 get *to* a journey's end  
 glance *at* a sight  
 glance *over* some writing  
 grasp *at* a shadow  
 grapple *with* difficulties  
 grieve *at* or *for* an event  
 grumble *at* the change  
 guard *against* or *from* danger  
 guess *at* something

**H**  
 hanker *after* worldly pleasure  
 happen *at* a time  
 happen *in* a place  
 happen *to* a person  
 healed *of* a disease  
 hear *of* a news  
 hesitate *at* bribing  
 hint *at* the solution  
 hover *over* the rest  
 hush *up* a matter

**I**  
 impress an idea *on* a person  
 impress a person *with* an idea  
 increase *in* learning  
 indict a person *for* a crime  
 indulge *in* intoxicants  
 indulge himself *with* wine  
 inform a man *of* an event  
 inform a person *about* a thing  
 initiate a man *into* bribery  
 insinuate *into* one's favour  
 insist *upon* going  
 inspire *with* patriotism  
 introduce *with* someone  
 introduce someone *to* someone  
 introduce *into* a place  
 intrude *into* your garden  
 invent *in* a factory  
 invest *with* power  
 invite *to* a party

involve a man *in* a crime  
 issue *from* the office

**J**  
 jest *of* sorrows  
 jeer *at* a person  
 join *in* work  
 join *with* a man  
 join *to* a thing  
 judge a person *by* his word  
 jump *at* an offer (readily accept)  
 jump *to* a conclusion

**K**  
 keep *from* meeting  
 keep *to* a position  
 know *of* a secret

**L**  
 lament *for* the dead  
 laugh *at* something  
 lay facts *before* someone  
 lay a person *under* obligation  
 level changes *against* someone  
 listen *to* complaints  
 live *by* labour  
 live *on* small wages  
 live *for* the family  
 live *within* one's means  
 look *after* one's health  
 lust *after* gold

**M**  
 make away *with* a thing  
 make *out* the meaning  
 marvel *at* one's beauty  
 menace *with* punishment  
 merge *into* something larger  
 mourn *for* the dead  
 murmur *at* one's fate

**O**  
 offend *against* traditions  
 operate *on* a patient  
 originate *in* a place or thing  
 overwhelm *with* goodness

**P**  
 part *with* a person  
 partake *of* some food  
 participate *with* the team  
 participate *in* the match  
 persist *in* the denial  
 pertain *to* the answer  
 point *at* an object  
 point *to* some result

possess oneself *of* the goodwill  
 prefer one thing *to* another  
 present him *with* a purse  
 preside *at* a meeting  
 preside *over* a function  
 prevent *from* falling  
 pride oneself *on* something  
 prohibit *from* drinking wine  
 protect *from* loss  
 purge the mind *of* superstitions

**Q**

question *on* the subject  
 quake *with* fear

**R**

reconcile *to* misfortune  
 reconcile *with* an enemy  
 refrain *from* an action  
 rejoice *at* the success of another

remonstrate *against* a person  
 replete *with* wealth  
 result *from* a cause  
 result *in* consequence

**S**

search *for* something lost  
 search *into* a matter (to examine)  
 slur *over* a matter  
 smell *of* a fragrance  
 smile *at* a challenge  
 smile *on* a person  
 span *of* time  
 snap *at* a person  
 strip a person *off* his possession  
 subsist *on* a small income  
 succumb *to* hardship  
 sweep the dust *off* the surface  
 sympathize *with* a person  
 sympathize *in* his troubles

**T**

tamper *with* the figure  
 testify *to* a fact  
 trade *in* things  
 trade *with* a company  
 trespass *against* rules  
 trespass *on* a man's time  
 trespass *in* a man's premises  
 trifle *with* a man's feeling  
 triumph *over* difficulties  
 trust *in* a person  
 trust *to* his honesty

**W/Y**

wait *at* a table  
 wait *on* a person (attend)  
 yield *to* pressure  
 yearn *for* beauty

## Problems in Articles

**Rule 52** As a general rule the indefinite article *a* or *an* is used with nouns in singular number only; the definite article *the* is used with any number.

Whenever, a singular noun begins with the sound of vowels (a, e, i, o and u) the indefinite article *an* is used and if the word begins with a consonantal sound the indefinite article *a* is used; as

an industry, an office, an idea, an article

but

a book, a copy, a table, a cupboard, a cycle

If the word begins with a consonant sounding like a vowel, the indefinite article *an* is used.

an NRI, an heir

However, if the word begins with a vowel sounding like a consonant, the indefinite article *a* is used; as a university, a European country

**Rule 53** The indefinite article *a* or *an* is used before a singular noun which is countable as well as with a noun complement such as

A terrorist has been killed in *an* encounter.

A water pump is a must in houses in Rajasthan.

A cup of tea is refreshing after the day's work.

Lala Lajpat Rai was *a* great freedom fighter.

**Rule 54** An indefinite article *a* or *an* is necessary in expressions referring to numbers, speed, price and frequency such as

A kilogram of sugar

A dozen oranges

60 kilometre *an* hour

Three times *a* day

**Rule 55** Sometimes the use of the indefinite article *a* before and after certain adjectives changes the very sense of the word with which it is used. For example, the use of *a* before the adjectives 'few', 'little', 'slight', etc. changes the very meaning expressed by these words. *Few* means nearly nothing but *a few* means some. Note the following illustrations:

He has *little* time to spare. (means no time)

He has *a little* time to spare. (means sometime can be spared)

*Few* persons attended the lecture. (in negative sense means no person)

*A few* persons attended the lecture. (indicates that at least some persons)

**Rule 56** Nouns that are countable and singular usually take an article and nouns that are not countable do not take any article.

Water is essential for life. (article *not* used)

*The* water in the jug is not clean. (article *the* is used)

Gold is a precious metal. (article *not* used)

*The* gold in this ring is of poor quality. (article *the* is used)

Man is a social animal. (article *not* used)

He *is the* man who cheated me. (article *the* is used)

Apples are good for health. (article *not* used)

*The* apples in our orchard are not yet ripe. (article *the* is used)

**Rule 57** The definite article *the* is used with things that are one of their kind. For example,  
the moon, the earth, the sky, the North Pole  
the Prime Minister, the President  
In other words, nouns that single out one individual or thing.

**Rule 58** Definite article *the* is used before superlatives as also before *only* when it is used as an adjective.

This is *the best* book on the subject.

This is *the only* reason.

This is *the biggest* blunder you have made.

This is *the only* purpose of my visit.

**Rule 59** *The* is used before names of periodicals and newspapers, names of important buildings, before names of rare or unique objects, names of rivers, oceans, bays, mountains, religious groups, communities, institutions etc.

I have read this news in *the* Tribune. (newspaper)

The earth revolves round *the* sun. (heavenly bodies)

*The* Taj Mahal is located at Agra in Uttar Pradesh. (important/ rare building)

*The* Ganges is *the* largest river in India. (river)

Similarly, the definite article *the* is used before the names of books (if they do not have the name of persons):

*The* Bible, *The* Autobiography of Mahatma Gandhi

*The* Two Faces of Indira Gandhi, *The* Kuran

but:

Julius Caesar, Macbeth, Mahatma Gandhi's Autobiography

**Rule 60** The definite article *the* is used before words pointing out a *class* or *kind* of a thing. It is sometimes done by using it before an adjective to represent a whole class.

*The* crow is a clever bird. (means all the crows)

*The* young will have to shoulder the responsibility. (means all the young)

*The* brave deserve the recognition.

**Rule 61** *The* is used before a proper, a material or an abstract noun when used as a common noun.

Shakespeare is *the* Kalidasa of English literature.

*The* gold of Argentina is now freely sold.

## Problems in Tenses

**Rule 62** Ensure that correct tense is used.

- (a) Simple present tense is used to convey general or universal truth and habitual sentences.
- (b) Present continuous tense is used to convey the continuity of the action.
- (c) Present perfect tense is used to convey the completion of an action that has some bearing on the present.

For example

The earth *revolves* round the sun. (a universal truth)

I always *brush* my teeth after the meals. (habitual)

It *has been* raining for many hours. (an activity that has continued for quite some time)

**Rule 63** The past tense in the principal clause must be followed by a past tense in the subordinate or dependent clauses.

I *felt* that she *was* a little worried. (not *is*)

I *forgot* that they *were* coming today. (not *are*)

I *saw* that the machine *had* stopped. (not *has*)

I *found* that he *was* guilty. (not *is*)

I *thought* that she *was* absent. (not *is*)

### Exceptions

- (a) When a universal truth is expressed in the subordinate clause, its tense is not changed.  
He *said* that the earth *revolves* round the sun. (not *revolved*)  
I *told* him that honesty *is* the best policy. (not *was*)  
Newton *knew* that the earth *rotates*.  
He *forgot* that the earth *rotates*.
- (b) When the subordinate clause begins with *than* or *as*, any tense may be used in the subordinate clause, even if there is past tense in the principal clause:  
I *met* her more frequently than I *meet* you.  
I *saw* her oftener than I *see* you.  
She *loved* you more than she *loves* me.  
He *cared* for you more than he *cares* for his brother.

### Problems in Conjunctions

Conjunctions are words used to join words, sentences and clauses together. Note the following conjunctions:

As soon ... as

Both ... and

Either ... or

Neither ... nor

Lest ... should

Not only ... but also

Hardly ... before or when

Though ... yet

Whether ... or

Scarcely ... when or before

**Rule 64** When a negative co-relative is used in the beginning of a sentence, a helping verb must be used before the subject (e.g. *do*, *does*, *did*, etc.)

Scarcely *did* she hear the news when she began to cry.

Not only *was* he accused of theft, but also of murder.

No sooner *did* she hear the news than she wept.

No sooner *did* the doctor come than she died.

Also, note that *no sooner* is followed by *than* and not *when* or *when*;

No sooner did the news reach him *than* he fainted. (not *when* or *when*)

No sooner did she see me *than* she started grumbling. (not *when* or *when*)

**Rule 65** *Though ... yet*

- (a) When *though* is used with a verb in the subjunctive mood (expressing doubt, a condition contrary-to-fact, a wish, a concession) it is followed by *yet* and not by *but*;  
*Though* he might not have recognised me, *yet* it is rude of him.  
*Though* she disallowed me, *yet* I will go to her.
- (b) When *though* is used with a verb in an indicative mood (expressing a fact or making a statement) a comma is used in place of *yet*.  
*Though* he is my relation, I shall not spare him.  
*Though* he is known to me, I shall not favour him.

**Miscellaneous Rules**

**Rule 66** *When, while, after, till, before*: When these words are used in the subordinate clause with reference to some future event, they are not followed by a verb in the future tense.

Before the rain *would* stop, they would have reached home. (*incorrect*)

Before the rain stops, they would have reached home. (*correct*)

When you *will* come to me, we will go to Ludhiana. (*incorrect*)

When you come to me, we will go to Ludhiana. (*correct*)

**Rule 67** *Until/unless*: Mistakes are generally committed in using these words. *Until* means *time before* and *unless* shows condition and means *if not*.

I cannot solve it *unless* you tell me its method.

*Until* she was informed officially, she had no idea about the plans.

**Rule 68** *Doubt that/doubt whether*: *Doubt that* is used in negative sentences and *doubt whether* in positive sentences;

I do not *doubt that* he will succeed.

I *doubt whether* the news is true.

I *doubt whether* our country is really free.

We do not *doubt that* he will be fully cured.

**Rule 69** *Need/Needs*: As a regular verb, *need* means require. In the present tense, with third person singular, when followed by a negative, the final *s* is not added.

He need not worry. (negative *not* is followed)

He needs to be worried. (negative *not is* not followed)

However, regular forms should not be confused

He *dare* not do it again. (i.e. does not have courage)

She *dare* not come to me. (i.e. does not have courage to come to me)

However, if it is not followed by a negative word (*not*) or used in the sense of *challenge*, *s* is to be added.

She *dare* not to disobey me.

*but*

She *dares* to disobey me. (a challenge)

She *dares* to insult me. (a challenge)

It should, however, not be confused when used as a normal verb:

I dare, he dares, she dares, they dare, we dare, Sunita dares

**Rule 70** *Since/from/for*: Both *since* and *from* imply a point of time (definite time, day, date etc.) and *for* implies period of time.

- (a) *Since* indicates point of time with present perfect or perfect continuous tense.  
 (b) *From* indicates point of time with all other tenses.  
 (c) *For* indicates period of time with present perfect or perfect continuous tense.

For example:

I have done nothing *since* yesterday.  
 She has been ill *since* last Friday.  
 She will go to school *from* today.  
 He commenced work *from* 30th January.  
 I have not seen him *for* a long time.

**Rule 71** *As long as/while/until*: *As long as* and *while* are used to express the duration of an action, whereas *until* is used to express the time before an action takes place (see also Rule 65).

*As long as* you remain in the office, you will get no rest. (not *until*)  
 Wait here *until* I come. (not *as long as*)  
*While* I am sitting here, you can work on it. (not *as long as* or *until*)

**Rule 72** *On/over*: *On* suggests contact with something; *over* suggests a higher position without actual contact.

Keep this book *on* the table.  
 Place this cup *on* the table.  
 Keep the umbrella *over* your head.

**Rule 73** *You, he/she, I*: When pronouns having different persons are used, the second person (you) should come first, then the third person (he or she) and last of all the first person (I).

You, he and I should try to visit Sri Lanka. (not *I, you and he*)  
 It is between you and me. (not *me and you*)

**Rule 74** *Who and whom*: To determine correct usage of *who* or *whom* cover the beginning of the sentence, including *who* or *whom* and read what is left, inserting *he* or *him*. If *he* sounds right use *who*; if *him* sounds right use *whom*.

It was he *whom* we chose to be our captain.  
 (We chose *him* to be captain; so use *whom*)  
 It was he *who* we thought would win the prize.  
 (We thought *he* would win the prize; so use *who*)

**Rule 75** Prepositions are not required after such words as: attack, accompany, discuss, emphasize, fear, join, request, resist, pervade, precede, violate, reach, shirk, resemble, recommend, etc.

They attacked the enemy. (not *on* the enemy)  
 She resembles her mother. (not *with* or *to* her mother)  
 I have ordered the book. (not *for* the book)  
 One should not fear death. (not *from* death)  
 You can request him. (not request *to*)

**Rule 76** Do not use *that* with words like how, whether, why, what, where, when, whom, whose, which, etc.

Nothing can be said *that* when he is expected to arrive. (*incorrect*)  
 Nothing can be said when he is expected to arrive. (*correct*)  
 He could not explain *that* why he was late. (*incorrect*)  
 He could not explain why he was late. (*correct*)  
 It is difficult to say *that* whether he will succeed. (*incorrect*)  
 It is difficult to say whether he will succeed. (*correct*)  
 In the above sentences *that* is not required. However, *as to* can be used. For example:  
 He could not explain *as to* why he was late.

**Rule 77** *Due to/caused by*: *Due to* and *caused by* introduce adjective phrases and should modify nouns. These words must be properly related to some noun or pronoun and *should not be used to begin a sentence*.

Her success is due to her hard work. (modifies *success*)  
 His failure was caused by his laziness. (modifies *failure*)

These words should not be used to begin a sentence. For example:

Due to workers' strike, the factory remained closed. (*incorrect*)

Because of the workers' strike, the factory remained closed. (*correct*)

**Rule 78** *Because of/on account of/so that/in order that*

- (a) *Because of* and *on account of* introduce adverbial phrases and should modify verbs.  
He resigned *because of* ill-health. (modifies *resigned*)  
She resigned *on account of* ill-health. (modifies *resigned*)
- (b) To express a cause or reason use *because of* and to express purpose use *in order that* or *so that*.  
Men work *so that* they may earn living. (not *because*)  
He missed his class *because* he overslept. (not *in order that/so that*)
- (c) Do not use *because* and *reason of* together.  
The *reason* why he missed his class was *because* he overslept. (*incorrect*)  
The *reason* why he missed his class was *that* he overslept. (*correct*)

**Rule 79** Express parallel ideas in parallel form.

- (a) Adjectives should be paralleled by adjectives, nouns by nouns, subordinate clauses by subordinate clauses, etc.  
This generator is inexpensive, noiseless and it is easily operated. (*incorrect*)  
This generator is inexpensive, noiseless and easily operated. (*correct*)  
This course is challenging and an inspiration. (*incorrect*)  
This course is challenging and inspiring. (*correct*)
- (b) Correlative conjunctions (either ... or, neither ... nor, not only ... but also etc.) should be followed by elements in parallel form.  
She is *not only* proficient in desk work but also in marketing. (*incorrect*)  
She is *proficient not only* in desk work but also in marketing. (*correct*)  
I have written *both to* their branch office and Head Office. (*incorrect*)  
I have written *to both* their branch office and Head Office. (*correct*)  
He would neither study at home nor *would* he go to school. (*incorrect*)  
He would neither study at home *nor* go to school. (*correct*)

## Avoid Redundancies

**Rule 80** Redundancy refers to the use of more words than necessary to make a statement. Redundancy is moderate formality and is restricted almost completely to indicating an excess caused by tautology: *redundant* phrases like 'essential requisite' or 'fundamental basis'. It may also mean use of unnecessary adjectives or words that needlessly make the sentence a sort of re-statement by using unwanted words. These type of errors are often seen in written English communication and are not desirable in grammatically correct sentences.

Notice below that the words in brackets contribute nothing to the meaning. Avoid such wordiness or redundancy in your written communication:

(important or basic) essentials  
in (the city of) Ludhiana  
co-operated (together)  
as a (usual) rule  
(true) facts  
blue (in colour)  
small (in size)  
ten (in number)

### Examples

1. The Prime Minister's explanation represented a consensus *of opinion*.  
In this sentence the words 'of opinion' is not required and is an example of redundancy or wordiness.

2. Shanti said that she stayed for a short period *of time* in the hospital.  
In this sentence 'of time' is not needed because the 'period' signifies it.
3. Shri DK Oswal, our Chairman-cum-Managing Director has *returned back* from his European tour only this morning.  
In this sentence, one word is sufficient, either *returned* or *back*.
4. To revise the rules of grammar *refer back* to Chapter II of this book.  
In this sentence, the usage 'refer' is sufficient and there is no need to add 'back' in this sentence.
5. He has been warned not to *repeat* this mistake *again*.  
In this sentence the word 'again' is redundant and should be avoided.
6. In today's meeting I saw the whole scene *with my own eyes* and was surprised to see the discipline of the members.  
In this sentence, there is no need to add the words 'with my own eyes'.
7. I saw a *widow woman* standing at the gate of our Church in the morning; she probably had some trouble.  
In this sentence 'woman' is not required.
8. I saw six *different kinds* of washing machines in the showroom.  
In this sentence, there is no need to add 'different' because the word 'kinds' implies the meaning.

