**Spotting Errors - Tips**

Even those of us who are well-versed with English end up making the silliest of errors in grammar. It is a very natural tendency but error-spotting is not an art that one can’t master. It is just a matter of swearing by some guidelines and practice!

1. Certain nouns possess a singular form but still represent plurality and thus, take a plural verb when used in a sentence.

E.g. Cattle, peasantry, people, clergy, police.

Thus,

* The Police has come (Incorrect)
* The Police have come (Correct)

1. Certain nouns always take the plural verb because their form is always plural.

E.g. Scissors, trousers, spectacles, thanks, premises.

Thus,

* The scissors is kept on the table. (Incorrect)
* The scissors are kept on the table. (Correct)

1. When a number is followed by a noun denoting measure, length, money, number or weight, the form of the nouns does not change so long as they are followed by another noun or pronoun.

E.g. Million, pair, metre, year, dozen, foot, head.

Thus,

* This is a nine-metres cloth. (Incorrect)
* This is a nine-metre cloth. (Correct)

1. When a number is followed by a noun denoting measure, length, money, number or weight, but these are not followed by another noun or pronoun, then they take the plural form.  
   E.g. Million, pair, metre, year, dozen, foot, head.

Thus,

* This sari is nine yard long. (Incorrect)
* This sari is nine yards long. (Correct)

1. Certain nouns, especially of the collective category, are used as singular when they specify a unit.

E.g. Public, team, committee, government, audience, orchestra, company, jury.

Thus,

* The public were unanimous in their opinion. (Incorrect)
* The public was unanimous in its opinion. (Correct)

1. Certain nouns, especially of the collective category, are used in plural when they specify a difference of opinion or class.  
   E.g. Public, team, committee, government, audience, orchestra, company, jury.

Thus,

* The jury was divided in its opinion. (Incorrect)
* The jury were divided in their opinion. (Correct)

1. If the pronoun ‘one’ is used, it must be maintained throughout the sentence.

Thus,

* One must respect his elders.  (Incorrect)
* One must respect one’s elders. (Correct)

1. ‘One of’is always followed by noun in the plural form.

Thus,

* She is one of the least important person in the office. (Incorrect)
* She is one of the least important people in the office. (Correct)

1. Only ‘than’ should be used after ‘no other’  
   Thus,

* I like no other movie but Titanic. (Incorrect)
* I like no other movie than Titanic. (Correct)

1. After the word ‘Know’, ‘how, ‘what’ or ‘when’ should be used before using the infinitive.

Thus,

* I know to speak English. (Incorrect)
* I know how to speak English. (Correct)

1. If the verb indicates a purpose, an infinitive must be used and if the verb indicates a cause, a gerund must be used.

Thus,

* He went to the mall for watching a movie. (Incorrect)
* He went to the mall to watch a movie. (Correct)
* He was suspended to show indiscipline. (Incorrect)
* He was suspended for showing indiscipline.(Correct)

1. ’As’ is not used with verbs like ‘appointed’, ‘elected’ , ‘considered’, ‘called’ but it is used with the word ‘regard’.

Thus,

* He was elected as Secretary of the organisation. (Incorrect)
* He was elected Secretary of the organisation. (Correct)
* I regard Sahil my best friend. (Incorrect)
* I regard Sahil as my best friend. (Correct)

1. . Adverbs should not be confused for adjectives. An adjective describes the characteristic of the subject while an adverb describes the action of the verb.

Thus,

* The horse looked beautifully. (Incorrect)
* The horse looked beautiful. (Correct)

1. Question tags are always the opposite of the sentence which means that if the sentence is positive, the question tag is negative and vice versa.

Thus,

* You were dancing, were you? (Incorrect)
* You were dancing, weren’t you? (Correct)

1. A pronoun after ‘like’, ‘unlike’ and ‘let’ takes an objective case.

Thus,

* You will never find a woman like she. (Incorrect)
* You will never find a woman like her. (Correct)
* Let I do it. (Incorrect)
* Let me do it. (Correct)

1. The relative pronoun ‘that’is used instead of ‘who’ or ‘which’ after adjectives in the superlative degree.

Thus,

* This is the best which she could do. (Incorrect)
* This is the best that she could do. (Correct)

1. To show equality ‘as’is used both before and after the adjective.

Thus,

* I can run as fast, if not faster than you. (Incorrect)
* I can run as fast as, if not faster than you. (Correct)

1. Even though‘More than one’indicates a plural sense, it agrees with a singular noun and takes a singular verb.

Thus,

* More than one students completed their project. (Incorrect)
* More than one student completed his project. (Correct)

1. ‘Scarcely’and ‘hardly’ are followed by ‘when’ and not by ‘than’.

Thus,

* Hardly had the teacher left the room than the pupils started enjoying. (Incorrect)
* Hardly had the teacher left the room when the pupils started enjoying. (Correct)

1. ‘Lest’must be followed by ‘should’ or by nothing at all .

Thus,

* Work hard lest you will fail. (Incorrect)
* Work hard lest you should fail. (Correct)
* Work hard lest you fail. (Correct)

1. ‘Unless’ expresses a condition and is always used in the negative sense. Thus ‘not’ is never used with ‘unless’.

Thus,

* Unless you do not work hard, you will not excel in the examination. (Incorrect)
* Unless you work hard, you will not excel in the examination. (Correct)

1. ‘When’denotes a general sense and ‘while’ implies a time duration of doing something.

Thus,

* When learning how to sing, technique is of utmost importance. (Incorrect)
* While learning how to sing, technique is of utmost importance. (Correct)

1. Some nouns always use a singular verb.

Eg: Advice, scenery, stationery, mathematics, news

* Mathematics are a difficult subject. (Incorrect)
* Mathematics is a difficult subject. (Correct)

1. The verb and pronoun in case of two nouns joined by ‘either…or’ or ‘neither… nor’ or by ‘or’ take the form of the latter noun.

* Either my father or my sister will use their credit card. (Incorrect)
* Either my father or my sister will use her credit card. (Correct)

1. When there are two nouns joined by a preposition like ‘with’ or ‘along with’, the verb and pronoun take the form of the main (first) noun.

* Mansi, along with her students, were on their way to the movies. (Incorrect)
* Mansi, along with her students, was on her way to the movies. (Correct)

1. If the plural subject indicates a definite amount or quantity taken as a

whole, it takes the verb in the singular form.

* Eighty kilometres are a good distance.( Incorrect)
* Eighty kilometres is a good distance. (Correct)

1. When two singular nouns are joined by ‘and’ are preceded by ‘each’ or ‘every’ the pronoun used is singular.

* Each man and each boy must be rewarded for their good deeds. ( Incorrect)
* Each man and each boy must be rewarded for his good deeds. (Correct)

1. ‘No sooner’ is always followed by ‘than’.

* No sooner had the bell rung when the students started leaving the classroom. (Incorrect)
* No sooner had the bell rung than the students started leaving the room.( Correct)

1. ‘No sooner’ is always followed by ‘does/do’ or ‘has/have’ in the present tense and by ‘did’ or ‘had’ in the past tense.

* No sooner are the boys marching than the whistle blows. (Incorrect)
* No sooner do the boys march than the whistle blows.( Correct)

1. .‘A great many’ is always followed by a plural noun and a plural verb.

* A great many invention has been declared successful. (Incorrect)
* A great many inventions have been declared successful. (Correct)

1. ‘Some’ is used in affirmative sentences to express quantity or degree. ‘Any’ is to be used in negative or interrogative sentences.

* I shall buy some books. (Correct)
* I shall not buy any books. (Correct)
* Have you bought any books? (Correct)

But ‘some’ might be used in interrogative sentences which are requests.

* Will you please give me some water? (Correct)

1. ‘Since’ indicates a point of time and ‘for’ stands for the length of time.

* He has been reading the book since three hours. (Incorrect)
* He has been reading the book for three hours. (Correct)
* It has been raining heavily for Monday. (Incorrect)
* It has been raining heavily since Monday. (Correct)

1. When we use ‘everybody’ ‘everyone’, ‘anybody’, and ‘each’ the pronoun of the masculine or the feminine gender is used with respect to the content.

* I shall be willing to help each of the girls in her practice. (Correct)

But when the gender is not mentioned, we use the pronoun of the masculine gender.

* Anyone can do this job if he tries. (Correct)
* Each of the boys in the class has finished their tasks. (Incorrect)
* Each of the boys in the class has finished his task. (Correct)

1. When pronouns of different persons are to be used together in a sentence, the sequence of persons should be as follows: second person + third + first person in a normal sentence.

* Raju, I and you have finished the work. (Incorrect)
* You, Raju and I have finished our studies. (Correct)

1. ‘Older’ refers to persons as well as things and is usually followed by ‘than’.

* Raju is elder than all other boys of this class. (Incorrect)
* Raju is older than all other boys of this class. (Correct)

‘Elder’ is used for members of the family.

* Suyash is my older brother. (Incorrect)
* Suyash is my elder brother. (Correct)

1. ‘Than’ is used in the comparative degree usually , but with words like superior, inferior, senior, junior, prior, anterior, posterior and prefer ‘to’ is used.

* Gandhi is preferred than Nehru. (Incorrect)
* Gandhi is preferred to Nehru. (Correct)

1. ‘Many a’ is always followed by the singular verb.

* Many a man were influenced by the speech. (Incorrect)
* Many a man was influenced by the speech. (Correct)

1. .The singular verb is used when the subject is “the number of”.

* The number of buildings are very low. (Incorrect)
* The number of buildings is very low. (Correct)

1. .‘Since’, ‘because’, ‘as’, ‘for ‘are often used alternatively, however there is a difference in their degree. Stronger cases use ‘since’ and ‘because’ and ‘as’ and ‘for’ are used in weak cases.

* I respect him as he is the best teacher. (Incorrect)
* I respect him because he is the best teacher. (Correct)

1. A pronoun is sometimes incorrectly used where it is not required at all. Eliminate the redundant ones.

* He, being an M.A., he is over qualified for the position. (Incorrect)
* He, being an M.A., is over qualified for the position. (Correct)

1. The relative pronoun ‘that’ is used instead of ‘who’ or ‘which’ after adjectives in the superlative degree.

* This is the best which the doctors could do. (Incorrect)
* This is the best that the doctors could do. (Correct)

1. When ‘as if’ is used in the sense of pretension, ‘were’ is used in all cases, even with third person singular.

* She behaves as if she was a queen. (Incorrect)
* She behaves as if she were a queen. (Correct)

1. Pronouns joined by ‘and/or/but’ are in the same case.

* He and me are friends. (Incorrect)
* He and I are friends. (Correct)