

84 instant tips towards perfecting grammar

Tip 1: A simple, direct sentence would definitely be better than a twisted account of things. In case two sentences are grammatically correct, choose the one which expresses the central idea in a clearer manner.

Tip 2: A verb should agree with the subject in number. A pronoun should agree with the antecedent noun in number

Tip 3: Find the true subject in a sentence and not the intermediate pseudo subjects while ensuring agreement with the verb. Example: The person with six fingers **has** requested for a room.

Tip 4: Where there is an 'and' there should be a plural verb.

Tip 5: Phrases implying addition (along with, with, together with, besides, including, as well as, etc.) do not alter the status of the main subject. Example: (Ram, along with his friends, is going to the party.

Tip 6: If the subject is made up of two parts, unequal in number, the verb takes the form of the part closer to it. Example: Not only the secretary but also the tenants have agreed to vote in favour of the bill. OR Not only have the tenants but also the secretary has agreed to vote in favour of the bill.

Tip 7: Two singular subjects connected by either, neither, or would result into a singular verb form. Example: Neither Salman nor Aamir has agreed to host the show.

Tip 8: There are a few nouns that look plural but essentially mean one thing. Example: tactics, electronics, news, etc. These will take singular verbs.

Tip 9: The verbs which connect the subject to the rest of the sentence (called linking verbs) agree with the subject and not the rest of the sentence. Example: Your plans for the wedding sound nice.

Tip 10: The nouns which have no singular form always take a plural verb. Examples: proceeds, goods, ashes, credentials, etc.

Tip 11: Collective nouns which have no plural form but are always used in a plural sense always take a plural verb. Examples: alphabet, poultry, cattle, offspring, etc. To get this sense, understand the subject phrase completely. It will always be an indicator if the sense of the subject is singular or plural.

Tip 12: Collective nouns that have no plural form and are always used in a singular sense always take a singular verb. Examples: hair, tissue, furniture, abuse, poetry, prose, etc.

Tip 13: Collective nouns wherein the group acts as one are considered to be singular. Example: The jury has agreed to review its decision.

Tip 14: Collective nouns wherein the group does not act as one are considered to be plural. Example: The audience were not happy with the verdict.

Tip 15: In case of organizations/teams, even if there is an additive in the name (and), it should be singular although, if the action suggests that a group of individuals took an action, it should be plural in form. Example: Mumbai Indians is one of most balanced outfits in the IPL. Mehta & Sons have decided to no longer be a part of the deal.

Tip 16: A noun that expresses an amount be it in terms of time, money, etc. is considered singular. Example: 100 meters is enough to figure out the fastest runner on the planet. Three months is enough time to prepare for CAT.

Tip 17: A part of the whole (ratios, majority, minority, etc.) will take a verb dependent on the nature of the whole. Example: Two-thirds of the interested students have turned up. A part of the office is closed.

Tip 18: If there is a phrase 'The number' in the sentence, it will take a singular verb, if there is a phrase 'A number' in the sentence, it will take a plural verb. Example: A number of students are missing from the class. The number of aspirants taking CAT has gone up in the last few years.

Tip 19: In case of the phrase 'One of', the verb usage depends completely on the phrase following 'one of'. You have to ask the question 'Who?' or 'What?' to the verb and you should be sorted. Example: One of my dresses is missing from the cabinet. He is one of those who believe in the importance of hard work.

Tip 20: Relative pronouns (that, which, who) will take on the verb form of the subject that these pronouns refer to. This is similar to the case of 'One of'.

Tip 21: *Each, every, either, neither* are always singular when they start the sentence. If they come in between, they will have an accompanying plural verb. Example: Each of you is expected to do well in CAT. Ten grams each of tea and cinnamon were required to make the potion.

Tip 22: *All, any, more, most, some* will depend on the phrase following *of*. If it is singular, the verb will take a singular form, if it is plural the verb will take a plural form.

Tip 23: The titles of publications are always singular

Tip 24: *Anybody, everybody, nobody, somebody* are always used in a singular context. Example: The state boys figure I'm too close to you to be what somebody calls 'objective'.

Tip 25: *Anything, everything, nothing something* are always used in a singular context. Example: There isn't anything precious about this situation with Dulce.

Tip 26: *Anyone, everyone, no one, someone* are always used in a singular context. Example: Someone has to stand up and be counted during these times.

Tip 27: 'That' precedes a part of the sentence which cannot be done away with. 'Which' precedes a part of the sentence which is simply another bit of information and so, the sentence won't be affected even if the phrase is done away with. 'Which' is usually preceded by a comma whereas that is a continuation of the original subject. Example: Gems that sparkle often elicit forgiveness. Diamonds, which are expensive, often elicit forgiveness.

Tip 28: *Myself, yourself, himself, herself, itself, etc.* cannot come when there is an 'and' in between. Example: Tony and myself went for the party. (Incorrect usage)

Tip 29: If there is the pronoun 'one' that is used in a sentence, it should be followed by 'one' and should not take the gender specific form of 'his' or 'her'. Example: While analyzing a mock, one should understand one's strengths and weaknesses.

Tip 30: 'The same' is not a pronoun. Example: Take some of this medicine and give the same to your brother. (Incorrect usage)

Tip 31: *Each other* always refers to two persons. Example: Will and Berta are happy in each other's company.

Tip 32: *One another* always refers to more than two persons. Example: We should always respect one another.

Tip 33: *Either/neither* is used to indicate one of the two people. Example: Either you or your neighbor would be benefitted by this product.

Tip 34: *Any/none* is used to indicate one of more than two people. Example: Any of you cowards want to test their strength with me?

Tip 35: Whenever there is an alternative scenario that you wished for or are visualizing, use 'were' irrespective of the status of the subject. Example: If I were the Prime Minister, I would encourage women empowerment. If wishes were horses, beggars would ride.

Tip 36: *Shall* is used when there is a simple indication of a future action. Example: I shall go to the office tomorrow.

Tip 37: *Should* is the past tense of shall and is used in a similar context. Example: I should have stayed back a bit longer yesterday.

Tip 38: *Will* indicates more of determination, intent, or desire to ensure that a future event would take place. Example: I will destroy all my enemies.

Tip 39: *Would* is the past tense of will and is used in a similar context. Example: I would have won the match yesterday if I had batted on for another couple of overs.

Tip 40: Comparative form is used only while comparing two individuals. Example: Ramesh is taller than Suresh. Rohit is more intelligent than Mohit.

Tip 41: Comparative form can also be used if you are comparing one object with any of the remaining objects. Example: Rohit is more intelligent than any other student in the class.

Tip 42: When two qualities of the same individual are being compared, always use a 'more' instead of the comparative form. Example: John is more smart than handsome. (Correct usage)

Tip 43: Superlative form is used only when there are more than two entities being compared. Example: Three were given to the Elves; immortal, wisest and fairest of all beings.

Tip 44: Few adjectives can never be compared. Example: square, perfect, unique, round, etc. There cannot be a more square object compared to another and so on.

Tip 45: Double comparatives and superlatives are a complete no-no. Example: He is the most cleverest person I know of. (Incorrect usage)

Tip 46: *Few/Fewer* is always used in case of numerical attributes. Example: There are fewer girls in IIM A compared to IIM B.

Tip 47: *Less/Lesser* is always used in case of abstract attributes. Example: The more you sweat in peace, the less you bleed in war.

Tip 48: *Elder/eldest* is used for members of the same family. Example: Shruti is the eldest of her three sisters.

Tip 49: *Older/oldest* is used for persons outside the family. Example: Shruti is the oldest employee of the organization.

Tip 50: *Hardly* and *scarcely* already carry a negative connotation and so, should not be accompanied by a negative. Example: There is hardly any need for him to study that hard. (Correct usage)

Tip 51: 'All of' will always be preceded by a pronoun. Example: All of you raise your hands up in the air.

Tip 52: *Among* is used when there are more than two entities. Example: Among all of Berta's daughters, Judith is the wisest.

Tip 53: *Between* is used when there are exactly two entities. Example: When it comes to choosing between tennis and cricket, I have a soft corner for the former.

Tip 54: *At* is used for a smaller, specific place while *in* is used for larger towns or cities. Example: She stays in Delhi. She studies at the University of Delhi.

Tip 55: *In* always refers to the position of an object within a group, *into* refers to motion from a particular place to another while *in to* refers to the motion undertaken by a person to fulfill a particular reason. Example: There are four kings in a standard pack of cards. Hands shoved backwards into his back pockets, he took slow deliberate steps, as if he had something on his mind. Josh had come in to my room for a quick discussion on the proposal.

Tip 56: *Besides* means in addition to, *beside* means by the side of. Example: I don't want to go anywhere besides India. The nightstand is beside the bed.

Tip 57: *On* and *upon* are interchangeable, *up on* essentially indicates a position and is preceded by a noun clause. Example: The leaves are scattered upon the grass. He propped up on his elbow as soon as he heard the news.

Tip 58: *Senior, junior, prior, superior, inferior, preference, preferable* are always followed by 'to' and not 'than'. Example: He is superior to most of his colleagues. (Correct usage)

Tip 59: 'A' and 'an' are used in case of singular nouns only; 'a' is used when the singular noun does not begin with a vowel sound (not necessarily a vowel) and 'an' is used when the singular noun begins with a vowel sound. Example: A university (the sound is 'you' and so, it will be preceded by an 'A')

Tip 60: Nouns that are uncountable do not take an article (a, an, the). Example: Mankind was born on earth. It was never meant to die here.

Tip 61: 'The' is used when the entities are one of a kind. The United Kingdom, The Prime Minister, The sun, etc.

Tip 62: Whenever a superlative is used when the subject is a common noun, it is preceded by a 'the'. Example: This is the most helpful document that I have referred to.

Tip 63: Whenever 'only' is followed by a noun, it is preceded by a 'the'. Example: The only thing standing between you and your goal is the story you keep telling yourself as to why you can't achieve it.

Tip 64: Prominent buildings, institutions, individuals, organizations are preceded by a 'the'. Example: The Burj Khalifa, The World Trade Center, The Taj Mahal, The National Democratic Alliance, etc.

Tip 65: Books not beginning with the name of individual/verb in the title are preceded by a 'The' if it is not there in the title of the book. So, The Bible, The Geeta, The Koran, The Autobiography of Chetan Bhagat are correct but The Imagining India, The Macbeth are incorrect usages.

Tip 66: Whenever you are using an individual to represent the entire class, you use a 'the'. Example: The peacock is the most beautiful bird. The earliest bird gets the worm.

Tip 67: Whenever a proper/material/abstract noun is used as a common noun, we use a 'the'. Example: Brian Lara is the Tendulkar of the West Indian team. The ring of power has a will of its own.

Tip 68: Simple present tense is used when the event indicates either a universal truth, or a habit that occur in the present but not at the precise moment. Also, present tenses are used to indicate scheduled events (the high tide is at 3.39 pm, the Summer Slam is on the 23rd of August 2015). It can also be used in case of fictional past events or while communicating a past action as it occurred.

Tip 69: The present perfect tense indicates either that an action was completed at some point in the past or that the action extends to the present. The form is 'has + past participle of verb'. Example: Rooney has scored in all the matches against Liverpool.

Tip 70: Present progressive tense is used when an activity is still going on at the present moment (Students are reading this document) or sometimes when it will be happening in the future (He is moving to Delhi in December).

Tip 71: Past perfect tense is used in the form of 'had + past participle of the verb' to denote an event that had been completed (rather perfected) in the past. Example: He had taken his pills when I went to meet him.

Tip 72: Past progressive tense indicates an activity that was going on at some point in time in the past. Example: He was still having his breakfast when I left for office.

Tip 73: Future perfect tense is used in the form of 'will + have + past participle of the verb' and indicates an event that will have been completed at a future point in time. Example: He will have finished his homework by the time I reach home.

Tip 74: Future progressive tense is used when an activity would be going on at a future point in time. The construct is 'will + be + present participle of a verb'. Example: He will be travelling when I reach home.

Tip 75: No sooner is always completed using a 'than' in the second part of the sentence. Example: No sooner had I stepped out, than it started raining.

Tip 76: When the sentence starts with a negative correlative, there should be a helping verb (do, does, did, etc.) before the subject is entered. Example: Hardly had he stepped out when it started raining.

Tip 77: *Before, after, when, while, till* are not followed by a verb when they indicate a future event. Example: Before it gets dark, she would have reached home. (Correct)
Before it would get dark, she would have reached home. (Incorrect)

Tip 78: *Until* conveys an element of time (before a certain event happened) and *unless* conveys a condition (before certain additional information was provided). Example: Buzz believed he was the actual Lightyear until he saw the commercial on television. I will not be able to answer your question unless you teach me the topic.

Tip 79: *Since* always tells the starting point of an event that has been continuing till the present whereas *For* tells us the duration for which the event has been continuing till the present moment. Example: Since his childhood, Bob has been a brilliant student. He has been the president of the club for the last ten years now.

Tip 80: *On* suggests contact with another entity. *Over* indicates some gap between the entity and the one beneath. Example: Place the books on the shelf. The plane went over the sea.

Tip 81: When describing an activity carried on by different groups, the second person (you) should come before the third person (he/she/it) which in turn should come before the first person (I). Example: You, She and I should go to Spain once. The secret of this recipe lies between you and me. He is taller than I.

Tip 82: To understand the difference between *who* and *whom*, substitute the word by either he/she and him/her and see which one works the best. Example: He who laughs last laughs best. (Cover the 'who' and replace it by a 'he' and a 'him'. He laughs vs. Him laughs should reveal it to you which one is the better choice – 'He' in this case and so, 'Who')

Tip 83: *Due to/caused by* cannot be used to start a sentence. Example: Due to extremely unavoidable circumstances, the lecture has been called off today. (Incorrect usage)

Tip 84: Verbs pertaining to parallel ideas or the parallel ideas themselves that are conveyed in a sentence should follow the same tense throughout. Example: He enjoys running, playing video games and collecting stamps. (Correct usage) He enjoys running, playing video games and to collect stamps. (Incorrect usage)

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