



# IIT Madras

ONLINE DEGREE

**English – I (Basic English)**  
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**Lecture No. 49**  
**Know Your Sentence**

Hello all. I welcome you to this module, and today's module is titled know your sentence. So, in this module, we are going to solve a few questions on Adjectives, Articles and Prepositions. Let us get started.

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The slide is titled 'ADJECTIVES' and features a large, faint watermark of the Indian Institute of Technology Madras logo in the background. In the top right corner, there is a small logo for 'IIT Madras ONLINE DEGREE'. The slide lists three common adjective mistakes with their corrections. Handwritten red ink annotations are present: 'origin' and 'color' are written above 'French' in mistake #2, and 'age' is written above 'old' in the same sentence. A red checkmark is placed at the end of the correction for mistake #2. A small video inset in the bottom right corner shows a woman speaking.

**ADJECTIVES**

1. **Common Adjective Mistake #1:** I'm not interesting in the movie.  
**Correction:** I'm not interested in the movie.

2. **Common Adjective Mistake #2:** That is a French white old house.  
**Correction:** That is <sup>an</sup> old white French house.  
(Determiner, opinion, size, age, shape, color, origin, material and purpose)

3. **Common Adjective Mistakes #3:** He's more stronger than his opponent.  
**Correction:** He's stronger than his opponent.

So, we will first look at a few common mistakes that we make in using adjectives in a sentence. So, let us check the first sentence 'I am not interesting in the movie', and that is a wrong usage, the right sentence is, 'I am not interested in the movie'. Let us check the explanation. Why is it interested and not interesting? So, many adjectives are formed by adding 'ed' and 'ing' to a verb.

So, when an adjective ends with 'ing', it describes the effect of a thing or a person. Likewise, when an adjective ends with 'ed', it describes how the person feels. In the example above the movie is a thing that does not interest you. Therefore, the movie is not interesting to you. In other words, you are not interested in the movie. I hope I made that clear. The next sentence is, 'That is a French white, old house'. So, the right answer is, 'That is an old white French house'.

Why is that so? Because this is the order that we must follow when you have multiple descriptions about a noun. So, house is the noun here and these adjectives when you have multiple adjectives in front of a noun to describe that noun; you follow this order, that is you first place determiner, then opinion then size, then age, then shape, color, origin, material and purpose.

So, therefore, see, all we have 'an' which is a determiner, then we have old, which is an opinion, or we can also get it as the age old, well it is an old house. Then you have white, which is the color, then you have French, which is the origin and then you have the noun. So, this is how you describe it. So, this is the order in which you describe a noun. Whereas, if you see the first sentence, what they have done is French is origin. White is colour. Old is someone's opinion or you can also say age. And then you have the noun. So, this is the wrong order. This is not the right order.

This is the order that we must follow. The next sentence is, 'He is most stronger than his opponent'. What is the right sentence? What is the right usage? 'He is stronger than his opponent'. Why is that so? Because you do not add more or less to a comparative degree. In previous classes or modules, you would have already learned about adjectives and its comparative degrees; you have comparative degree and superlative degree, the various degrees of adjectives. You must have learned that.

So by now, you should know that you do not compare a comparative degree, so you do not say more stronger or less stronger. So, if you want to use more, make sure that you do not use a comparative degree or a superlative degree in front of that. I mean after that. So, you either say more strong, or you say stronger because stronger means more strong. So, let me repeat that point. Again, the explanation is that you do not add more or less to comparative degrees. So, you either say more strong or stronger, but not more stronger. So, if you use 'more stronger' that will be around usage. I hope I made that clear. Now, the next sentence.

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## ADJECTIVES



4. Common Adjective Mistakes #4: You're the most perfect person I've ever seen.

Correction: You're the perfect person I've seen.

Here are some examples of absolute adjectives:

Supreme, Wonderful, Horrible, Brilliant, Final, Obvious, Unique, Absolute, Complete, Ideal, Preferable, Dead etc.

5. Common Adjective Mistakes #5: Which is the shortest of these two routes?

Correction: Which is the shorter of these two routes?



'You are the most perfect person I have ever seen'. What is the right usage? 'You are the perfect person I have seen'. Why? Because some adjectives are complete and absolute by itself. So, you do not have to compare it again. Or there is no further degree to that. So, we call such adjectives, absolute or non-gradable adjectives. So, you cannot add any words to intensify or grade them further, because they are already in their superlative degrees.

And what are the examples of such words? So, 'perfect' is one such example. There are a few more examples. Please make a note of that. Supreme, wonderful, horrible, brilliant, final obvious, unique, absolute complete, ideal, preferable, dead, etc. So, with these words, you do not add most in front of that. Why? Because it is already in its superlative degree. It is already in its absolute form. So, I hope I made that clear.

The fifth sentence is, 'Which is the shortest of these two routes?' What is the right answer? What is the right sentence, 'which is the shorter of these two routes?' Why? Because when comparing two things, you do not use a superlative degree, but instead, you use a comparative degree. So, for 'short', the comparative degree shorter and superlative degree is shortest. So, when there is when there are two things, you use a comparative degree that is shorter and not shortest. So, therefore, the right answer is, 'which is the shorter of these two routes?'

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## PRACTISE EXERCISE

Can you fix the following adjective errors?

1. The pizza today tastes more better than it did yesterday.
2. That's the most impossible challenge yet.
3. Your voice is very unique.
4. I want a simplistic life away from the busy city.
5. He walked into a pole because he was distracted by a(n) \_\_\_\_ dog. Choose the right option.  
adorable, tiny, brown  
tiny, adorable, brown  
tiny, brown, adorable



So now, to make sure that you have understood the concepts I am giving you a small practice exercise, can you fix the following adjective errors? The first one is, 'The pizza today tastes more better than it did yesterday'. That is the second is 'that is the most impossible challenge yet.' Third, sentence is 'Your voice is very unique.' Fourth sentence is, 'I want a simplistic life away from the busy city'. Fifth sentence is, 'He walked into a pole because he is distracted by a or an --- dog. Choose the right option. Adorable, Tiny, Brown; Tiny, Adorable, Brown; Tiny, Brown, Adorable. So, pause the video work on this, and then I will show you the answer. So, you can check it with yours.

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## ANSWERS

1. The pizza today tastes better than it did yesterday.
2. That's an impossible challenge.
3. Your voice is unique.
4. I want a simple life away from the busy city.
5. Adorably, tiny, brown



You can check it with yours. If you have any doubts, please feel free to post your queries in the discussion forum we will be more than happy to help you with that.

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## PREPOSITIONS

1. **Common Preposition Mistake #1** : My birthday is on July!  
**Correction:** My birthday is in July!
2. **Common Preposition Mistake #2** : Ram often goes out in the night.  
**Correction:** Ram often goes out at night.
3. **Common Preposition Mistake #3** : I've been working for this company since three years.  
**Correction:** I've been working for this company for three years.



Now, the next section, so we are going to discuss a few common mistakes. That second language learners of English often make when they use prepositions in a sentence. So, the first sentence is 'My birthday is on July?' Well, the right answer is 'my birthday is in July'. Why? Because for days and dates in English language, you always use a preposition 'on'. For example, 'it is my birthday on June second.' So, when you are using a specific date, let us say second of June, then you add 'on' before the before the date. Because they have been specific there. So, it is to use 'on'.

Whereas, if you are little vague about it, like for instance, it is in June. So, you are only specifying you are not specifying it is just referring to the month. So, in that case, you use 'in'. So, here the right answer is my birthday is 'in July' and not 'on July'. However, if you want to say that my birthday is on second of July, you use the preposition 'on'.

If you are going to use the date you are going to add 'on' before the date and it is not in you do not say My birthday is in second of July. But you say. My birthday is on the second of July. I hope I made that clear. The second sentence is 'Ram often goes out in the night.' The correct sentence is, 'Ram often goes out at night.' Well, people wake up in the morning. Go shopping in the afternoon. Meet their families in the evening. But things happen at night. You can use in the morning, in the afternoon, in the evening, but you do not say in the night, but you say at night. I hope I made that clear.

The next sentence is 'I have been working for this company since three years' and the right sentence is 'I have been working for this company for three years.' So, to describe periods of time the preposition 'for' is usually used you can still use since to describe the specific time. For example, 'I have lived in Boston since March'. But here you are not being specific right. So, and particularly when you are going to refer to a time period., then you use 'for' instead of 'since'. We can use we can also say another example is 'we have not talked since our last meeting.'

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## PREPOSITIONS



4. Common Preposition Mistake #4 : Ram is married with Sita.

Correction: Ram is married to Sita.

5. Common Preposition Mistake # 5 : Where is my phone at?

Correction: Where is my phone?

6. Common Preposition Mistake # 6 : She looked like she was tired.

Correction: She looked as though she was tired.






The next sentence is 'Ram is married with Sita.' what is the right sentence? 'Ram is married to Sita.' So, if people have plans to get married, the preposition 'to' will be used. For example, 'my friend Lena is getting married to Anil next month.' However, you just marry someone. Example. 'Geeta is marrying her fitness coach.' You do not say 'Gita is married with her fitness coach.' What is the right sentence there? 'Geeta is marrying her fitness coach.' And 'Lina is getting married to Anil.'

The next sentence is 'Where is my phone at?' What is the right answer? What is the right sentence? 'Where is my phone?' So, it is considered poor grammar to end a sentence with a preposition. So, while this point has been argued at length, since it may sound better to end a sentence with a preposition, in some cases, it is still considered grammatically incorrect. So, the golden rule is that you do not end a sentence with a preposition. So that is generally considered poor grammar.

The next sentence is, 'She looked like she was tired.' And what is the right answer? Or what is the right sentence? 'She looked as though she was tired.'; So, using the phrase like very liberally will make your writing sound very sloppy. So, instead, you may use pronouns such as, as say for as though. So, instead of using she looked like she was tired you may use, she looked as though she was tired.

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## PREPOSITIONS

6. Common Preposition Mistake # 6 : They arrived to the school.  
Correction: They arrived at the school.

7. Common Preposition Mistake # 7 : We went at the mall.  
Correction: We went to the mall.

8. Common Preposition Mistake # 8 : Incorrect: I am afraid sharks.  
Correction: I am afraid of sharks.





The next sentence is 'they arrived to the school.' The right answer is 'they arrived at the school.' So, 'arrived' is always followed by the preposition 'at'. You say 'arrived at' you do not say 'arrived to'. Similarly, seventh sentence if you see it is, 'We went at the mall.' What is the right answer? Or what is the right sentence 'we went to the mall.' So, went is followed by 'to', you do not say went at you say went to. So, you say arrive at and went to.

So, misusing the word 'at' and 'to' is another preposition error that happens very frequently. At refers to where things are and to describes another location. So, mixing these two up can result in a very confusing sentence. I hope I made that clear, both 6 and 7. So, the eighth question is, 'I am afraid sharks' and the right sentence is, 'I am afraid of sharks.'

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**PREPOSITIONS**

9. Common Preposition Mistake # 9 : I made sure to study my exam.  
Correction: I made sure to study for my exam

10. Common Preposition Mistake # 10: I slept before run  
Correction: I slept before running.

*P -> V+ing*

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Similarly, we will check the next sentence as well, and then I will give you the explanation. The ninth sentence is 'I made sure to study my exam.' What is the right sentence 'I made sure to study for my exam. So, in the previous question, and this question from this, one can say that prepositions most often follow a noun or a pronoun to create a cohesive sentence. However, there are exceptions that also require a preposition in order to make sense.

For example, you say afraid of, love of, concern for, study for, and worry about. If you do not follow these with a preposition, your sentence will sound very absurd and may not make any sense. The tenth sentence is 'I slept before run.' And what is the right sentence? 'I slept before

running.' Right one of the less common errors people make when using a preposition is following it with a verb.

If you follow a preposition with a verb, it must have an 'ing' added to it at the end. So, therefore, you do not say I slept before run. You say I slept before running. So, the verb here is 'run', and the preposition is 'before' so after the preposition before the verb ran comes, right. So, this is the verb; this is the preposition. So, if preposition is followed by a verb, it will have 'ing' form. I mean it must be used in its 'ing' form. Therefore, you say I slept before running and not I slept before run.

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**PRACTISE EXERCISE**

Can you fix the following prepositional errors?

1. For her daughter's birthday, she made a(n) \_\_\_\_\_ doll house.  
cute, wooden, yellow  
wooden, yellow, cute  
cute, yellow, wooden
2. His car is superior **than** mine.
3. John was just **on** time to catch the taxi.
4. Meet the board members **in** the office.
5. The player died **from** leukemia.

So, now comes a quick practice exercise. So, from so far, whatever we have learned from both adjectives and articles, I have framed five questions. Please answer them, pause the video answer them, and then I will show you the answers. So, the first question is 'For her daughter's birthday she made a or an ----- doll house.' Option A, cute wooden yellow. Option B, wooden, yellow, cute. Option C, cute, yellow, wooden.

The second sentence is, 'His car is superior than mine.' The third sentence is 'John was just on time to catch the taxi.' The fourth sentence is, 'Meet the board members in the office.' The fifth sentence is, 'The player died from leukemia.' Work on these questions, pause the video.

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## ANSWERS

1. Cute, yellow, wooden
2. His car is superior **to** mine.
3. John was just **in** time to catch the taxi.
4. Meet the board members **at** the office.
5. The player died **of** leukemia.



Now the right answer is cute, yellow, wooden. His car is superior to mine. You do not say superior than but superior to. John was just 'in' time, you do not say 'on' time here. Meet the board members at the office. We had discussed a similar question. When we use 'at' in a sentence yes we have discussed. The player died of leukaemia, you do not say died from. So, if you have any doubts and if you need explanations to these, please put your raise your doubts in the discussion forum, and I will be more than happy to clear them.

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## ARTICLES

1. **Common Article Mistake # 1:** I am doctor specialised in neurology.

**Correction:** I am a doctor specialised in neurology.

**Rule:** Always put a/an before a singular, common noun.

2. **Common Article Mistake # 2:** Ravi studies at an university.

**Correction:** Ravi studies at a university.

**Rule:** Use a before consonant sounds, an before vowel sounds

3. **Common Article Mistake # 3:** Savithri has best voice I have ever heard.

**Correction:** Savithri has the best voice I have ever heard.

**Rule:** Always put the before superlative degrees.



Let us now go to the section on Articles. So, the first question or the first sentence is 'I am Doctor specialized in neurology.' What is the right sentence? 'I am a doctor specialized in

neurology.' What is the rule? Why is that so? There is a rule, and the rule says always put 'a' or 'an' before a singular common noun. So, doctor is a singular common noun and therefore, you cannot say 'I am doctor', 'I am teacher.' You say 'I am a teacher' or you say 'I am a doctor.' So, this is the rule this is important. Always put 'a' or 'an' before a singular common noun.

Now the second sentence 'Ravi studies at an university.' What is the right answer? Or what is the right sentence? 'Ravi studies at a university.' Why so, because you always use a before a consonant sound and, an before a vowel sound. So here, please do not go by the vowel letters. So, if you go by vowel letters, you will get confused you will. So, the general rule you know that we have studied in schools school is to see if the word starts with AEIOU if that is the case you use an before that, but that is not that is not the right way to look at it.

Because if you go by that rule then 'an' is supposed to precede University. But that is wrong. Here you need to make a distinction between vowel sound and consonant sound. So, here University what is the first sound of the word university? It is not. O, it is U. y, y, is the sound. So y, is a consonant sound. It is not a vowel sound. So, 'an' follows 'an' comes before vowel sounds, and 'a' comes before consonant sounds. And because University starts with the consonant sound y you use 'a'. It is a university and not an university. I hope I made that clear.

The next sentence is 'Savithri has best voice I have ever heard.' What is the right sentence? 'Savithri has the best voice I have heard.' Why? Why? Because you should always put the before the superlative degree. So, therefore. See what is the superlative degree here? Best, Good, Better best, these are the two degrees. So, best is a superlative degree here. So, you should put the before the superlative degree. So, therefore you say Savithri has the best voice I have heard and not Savithri has best voice I have ever heard. I hope I made that clear.

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## ARTICLES

4. **Common Article Mistake # 4:** I need ~~a~~ advice from you about joining yoga class. *uncountable noun* *need idea x*
- Correction:** I need advice from you about joining yoga class.
- Rule:** Do not put a or an before uncountable nouns. (Idea- countable; advice- uncountable)
5. **Common Article Mistake # 5:** The ~~teachers~~ should not punish their students. *need an idea ✓*
- Correction:** Teachers should not punish their students.
- Rule:** Use no article when generalizing with plurals.



The next sentence is 'I need advice from you about joining yoga class.' What is the right sentence? 'I need advice from you about joining yoga class.' Why? Because advice is a uncountable noun. What is an uncountable noun? Something that cannot be counted so advice cannot be counted and in English, it is classified under uncountable nouns. So, you do not use 'a' before an uncountable noun. So, therefore, you say I need advice from you about joining yoga class. Do not put 'a' or 'an' before uncountable nouns; this is the rule.

However, one important point that I want you to note is that 'idea' is considered countable in English language. 'Advice' is classified as uncountable, whereas 'idea' is classified into countable nouns. Therefore, you may say I need an idea. You do not say; I need idea. Need idea will be wrong, whereas need an idea will be the right sentence. So, keep that in mind.

The next sentence is 'the teachers should not punish their students.' And what is the right sentence? 'Teachers should not punish their students. So, when you generalize plurals, make sure that you use no article. So, you are generalizing here, so, therefore, you do not use this article, the so you are generalizing you are talking about teachers as a collective union. So, teachers should not punish their students. You do not say 'the teachers should not punish their students.' Here you are generalizing the plural. You do not use an article before generalizing plurals.

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## ARTICLES



6. Common Article Mistake # 6: Mount Everest is the highest mountain in the world.

**Correction:** The Mount Everest is the highest mountain in the world.

**Rule:** Use *the* with oceans, rivers, valleys, deserts, mountain ranges, points on globe

**Note :** Do not use *the* with the following places:

1. I'm going home. ✓
2. She's at work. ✓
3. He's in jail. ✓
4. My kids went to bed. ✓
5. My brother is in high school. ✓
6. My sister is in college. ✓



The next sentence is 'Mount Everest is the highest mountain in the world.' What is the right sentence? 'The Mount Everest is the highest mountain in the world.' Why? Because you use 'the' with oceans, rivers, valleys, deserts, mountain ranges and points on globe. But please make a note of this that you should not use the with the following places. I am going home; you do not say I am going to the home. I am going she is at work.

You do not say she is at the work. He is in the jail. You do not say he is in the jail. It is a very common error. He is in the jail. You do not say that. He is in jail. My kids went to bed. You do not say my kids went to the bed. My brother is in high school. You do not say my brother is in the high school. My sister is in college. So, remember these words homework, jail, bed, high school, college, you do not use the in front of these places.

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## ARTICLES

**Note:** Use the with the following places:

I went to the bank.

Let's go to the movies.

He gets home from the office around 7.

My grandfather is in the hospital.

I'll stop by the post office after lunch.

I got a taxi to the airport.

I'll pick you up at the train station.

We're waiting at the bus stop.

We took my son to the doctor.

I'm going to the dentist this afternoon.



Great. Now, now make a note of the places where you should use the compulsorily. Now, make a note of the words where you should use the. I went to the bank. Let us go to the movies. He gets home from the office around 7. My grandparents is in the hospital. I will stop by the post office after lunch. I got a taxi to the airport. I will pick you up at the train station. We are waiting at the bus stop. He took my son to the doctor. I am going to the dentist this afternoon. So, you use 'the' in front of bank, movies, office, hospital, post office, airport, train station, bus stop, doctor, dentist. Please make a note of this.

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## PRACTISE EXERCISE

Can you fix the following errors?

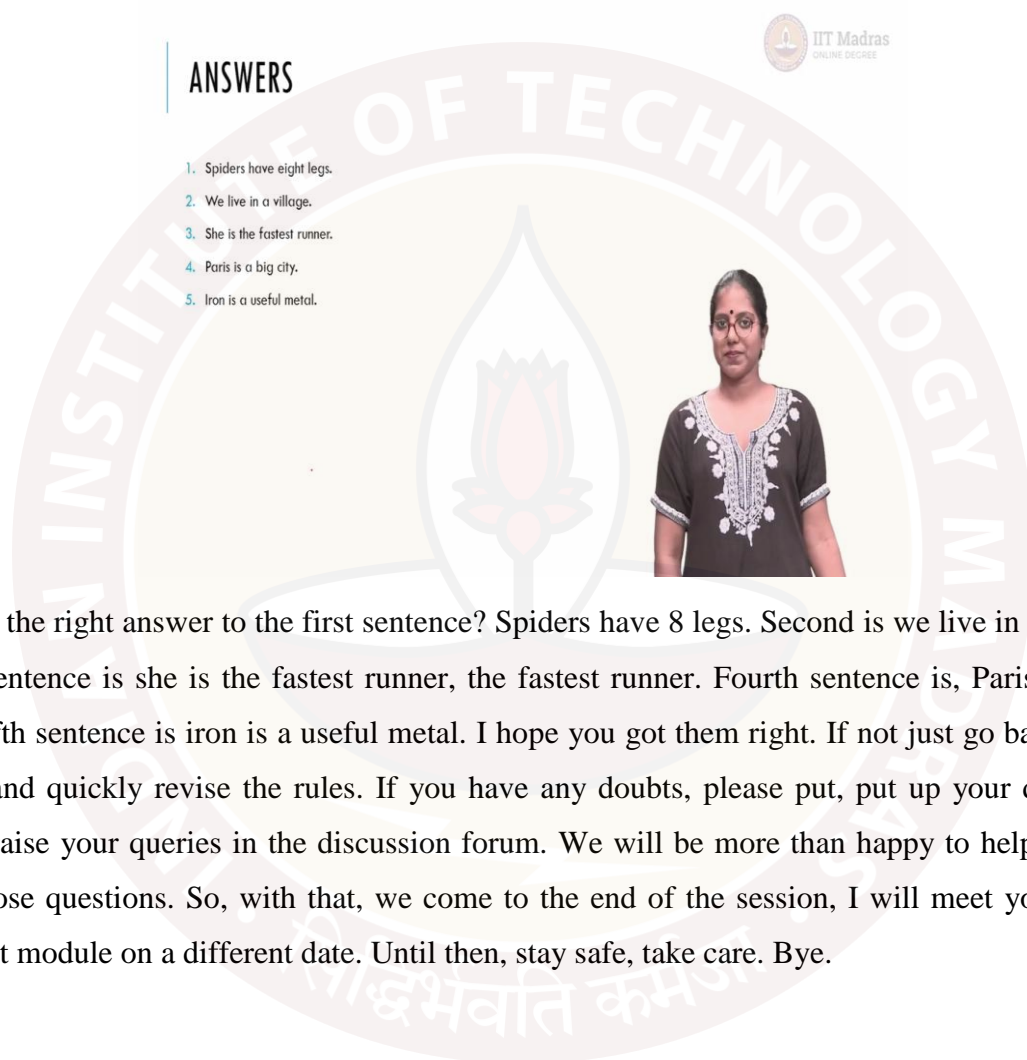
1. The spiders have eight legs.
2. We live in village.
3. She is fastest runner.
4. The Paris is a big city.
5. The iron is a useful metal.





Now, from what we have learned. Let us quickly do a practice exercise. Can you fix the following errors? First sentence is 'The spiders have 8 legs.' Second, 'we live in village.' Third, 'She is fastest runner.' Fourth, 'The Paris is a big city' Fifth, 'the iron is a useful metal.' Pause the video, work on these sentences, and I will show you the answers.

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**ANSWERS**

1. Spiders have eight legs.
2. We live in a village.
3. She is the fastest runner.
4. Paris is a big city.
5. Iron is a useful metal.

What is the right answer to the first sentence? Spiders have 8 legs. Second is we live in a village. Third sentence is she is the fastest runner, the fastest runner. Fourth sentence is, Paris is a big city. Fifth sentence is iron is a useful metal. I hope you got them right. If not just go back to the basics and quickly revise the rules. If you have any doubts, please put, put up your doubts or please raise your queries in the discussion forum. We will be more than happy to help you out with those questions. So, with that, we come to the end of the session, I will meet you with a different module on a different date. Until then, stay safe, take care. Bye.