

CONCEPT NOTES-VERBAL ABILITY

SENTENCE CORRECTION

Sentence correction/Error Spotting is the most important and scoring area in the verbal ability portion. Thus, it forms a critical part of the competitive exams. Generally two or three questions are asked in this type. A sentence with a portion underlined is given; one has to pick up the right option, which is grammatically correct. If no change is required then option 1, same as the underlined part, is the answer.

There are a few types of questions asked under this section and these are as follows:

1. Subject-verb agreement
2. Modifiers
3. Parallelism
4. Pronoun reference error
5. Diction
6. Redundancy

A brief definition of each type with an example is given below:

1. **Subject – verb agreement:** In any sentence, the verb should agree with the subject in person as well as in number. In other words if subject is singular then verb should also be singular and if subject is plural then verb should also be plural.

For example „he plays“ and they play“. There are two important tricks to correct these types of question and these are „F.S.R“ i.e. first or farthest subject rule and second is 'N.S.R' i.e. „nearest subject rule“.

„Not only the principal but also the teachers (is/are) playing“. In this example the correct form of the verb is „are“ as it is based on nearest subject rule.

„The Principal, as well as the teachers, (is/are) playing“. In this example the correct form of the verb here will be „is“ as the question is based on F.S.R or the first subject rule.

2. **Modifier:** It can be a word or phrase which is used to modify any other word or a phrase.

In this the parts of speech that are considered „modifiers“ are:

- a. '*Adjectives*' as they are used to modify either nouns or pronouns.
- b. '*Adverbs*' as they are used to modify adjectives, adverbs, and verbs

Example: Chic and smart, the travel agency could not help admiring the model's clothes.

In the above sentence, chic and smart seem to refer to Travel Agency, though they were meant to refer to the Model's clothes.

The correct sentence would be:

The travel agency could not help admiring the model's chic and smart clothes.

- c. '*Participles*' as they are used to modify nouns.

Example: Walking down the road, my hat flew off.

In the above sentence, it seems as if the hat was walking down the road and it flew, thus we need to specify who was walking down the road.

The correct sentence should be:

While walking down the road, my hat flew off.

3. **Parallelism:** If a sentence expresses many ideas that are similar to each other, they should be presented in parallel constructions i.e. they should be in the same grammatical form.

Example: He desired to make a lot of money and that he might earn a good reputation.

In the above example the sentence presents two same ideas but the grammatical form is different.

Therefore the correct sentence should be:

He desired to make a lot of money and to earn a good reputation.

4. **Pronoun reference error:** A pronoun is a word used to stand for (or take the place of) a noun.

A pronoun should refer clearly to one, clear, unmistakable noun coming before the pronoun. This noun is called the pronoun's antecedent.

Unfortunately, it is very easy to create a sentence that uses a pronoun WITHOUT a clear, unmistakable noun antecedent.

Example: The minister met the manager and he recognized him.

In this sentence "he" is neither referring to the minister nor the manager, hence the sentence can be corrected in two ways:

In this sentence,

The minister met the manager who recognized him.

The minister met the manager and recognized him.

5. **Diction:** An incorrect choice of words makes the sentence erroneous. The mistakes could be in the usage of simple words - later and latter, its and it's, lie and lay, and the like. There can be confusion in words that sound alike - adapt and adept, principal and principle, affront and confront etc. The only way to tackle these is to know the meanings of these words.

6. **Redundancy:** Avoid needless repetition of a fact or an idea Example: We shall combine the three departments into one.

In this sentence it has been written combine the three departments into one, but whenever things are combined, we always get one thing only. Thus the correct sentence is:

We shall combine the three departments.

"The whole secret of a successful life is to find out what is one's destiny to do, and then do it."

ANSWER KEY

Directions: Look at the bold part of each sentence. Below each sentence are given possible substitutions for the underlined part. Choose the one which is better than the underlined part.

1. He was very tired as he **is working** since 6 O' clock in the morning

- A. he was working B. he had been working **C. he has been working** D. he will be working

Answer: C

Explanation: Present perfect tense should be used

2. The girl **to who** I sold my car was very honest

- A. to who I sell **B. to whom I sold** C. to who I sold D. to whom I sell

Answer: B

Explanation: To+Whom

3. The teacher **told Alice** to skim the chapter one more time

- A. invited Alice **B. asked Alice** C. ordered Alice D. said to Alice

Answer: B

Explanation: Asked is more specific than told.

4. Young men and women should **get habit to** waking up early in the morning

- A. used** B. trained C. prepared D. practice

Answer: A

Explanation: Get habit is incorrect. „Get used to“ is correct.

5. The small girl does whatever her mother **was done**.

- A. has did B. do C. had done **D. does**

Answer: D

Explanation: Entire sentence should be in present tense.

6. The population of China is **higher than that of all other country** in the world.

- A. higher than all other B. higher than all other
C. greatest than all **D. higher than that of any other**

Answer: D

Explanation: All other countries would become superlative. Since we are comparing one country with any other country we use higher.

7. The performances at the event were rather **worst than I had expected**.

- A. bad than I wished B. worse than expectation
C. worse than I had expected D. No correction required

Answer: C

Explanation: Comparative degree of bad is worse. Hence „worse“ should be used here and not „worst“.

8. The singer stood quietly **for few moments** before the performance

- A. for moments B. for few times **C. for a few moments** D. No correction required

Answer: C

Explanation: For few moments is incorrect phrase.

9. She has the courage **to rise from** the occasion and win the medal for the country

- A. to rise to** B. to rise C. to rise against D. no improvement required

Answer: A

Explanation: Idiom is “rise to” the occasion.

10. Later the coach became unpopular as he tried to **lord it on** the players.

- A. lord over B. lord C. lord on **D. lord it over**

Answer: D

Explanation: Later the coach became unpopular as he tried to lord it over the players.

Meaning : To lord it over means to assume airs of importance and authority.

11. For a few days, the new teacher lectured **across the heads** of the students.

- A. on the heads B. over the heads **C. over the head** D. through the heads of

Answer: B

Explanation: For a few days the new teacher lectured over the heads of the students.

Meaning: When something goes over someone's head, it means that person hasn't understood anything.

12. In addition **to enhanced their** reputations through strategic use of philanthropy, companies are sponsoring social initiatives to open new markets.

- A. of enhancing their reputation B. to having enhance their reputation
C. to enhancing their reputation D. to have their reputation enhancing

Answer: C

Explanation: After the phrase "In addition to" always use ing verb. .

13. The police has **so far succeeded in recovering** only a part of the stolen property.

- A. thus far succeeded for recovery B. so far succeeded in recovery of
C. so far succeeded to recover **D. No correction required**

Answer: E

14. My hair **stood off ends** when I saw the horrible sight.

- A. stood at ends **B. stood on ends** C. stood to ends D. stands on ends

Answer: B

Explanation: It's an idiom meaning to make someone frightened.

15. **The long or short of it** is that I do not want to deal with that new firm

- A. The long and short of it** B. The long and short for it
C. The long or short for it D. The shot and long for it

Answer: A

Explanation: It's an idiom meaning to tell someone something briefly without giving details.

16. Can you tell me **why did you not speak** the truth?

- A. why did not you speak B. that why did you not speak
C. why you did not speak D. why did you not spoke

Answer: C

Explanation: In indirect questions, the verb (did not) comes after the subject (you).

17. The moment the manager came to know fraudulent action of his assistant, **he order immediately dismissed him**

- A. immediately ordered his dismissed **B. ordered his immediate dismissal**
C. immediately order dismissal of his D. ordered for immediately dismissal of him

Answer: B

Explanation: Ordered+ noun

18. **If I would have** realised the nature of job earlier, I would not have accepted it.

- A. If I have had B. In case I would have C. Had I been **D. Had I**

Answer: D

Explanation: Rules with the conditional "IF". If and would are never written together. Answer is Had I or it can also be If I had.

19. They continued to work in the field **despite of the heavy rains.**

A. even though there is heavy rain

B. although heavily rains

C. in spite the heavy rains

D. even though it rained heavily

Answer: D

Explanation: After despite we cannot use "of". We say despite heavy rains or in spite of heavy rains. Since these 2 options aren't available as answer choices, we opt for D.

20. As there was no time, the remaining items **were deferred into** the next meeting.

A. are deferred till

B. were deferred till

C. were deferred to

D. had deferred with

Answer: B

Explanation: It is an idiom meaning postpone

Directions: The sentences given below are divided into three parts (A), (B) and (C). One of these parts may contain an error. You have to indicate that part as your answer. If there is no error, mark (D) as your answer.

21. (A)We discussed about the problem so thoroughly (B) on the eve of the examination (C) that I found it very easy to work it out. (D)No error.

a) (A)

b) (B)

c) (C)

d) No Error

Answer: B

Explanation: We discussed the problem so thoroughly

22. (A)An Indian ship (B)laden with merchandise (C) got drowned in the Pacific Ocean. (D)No error.

a) (A)

b) (B)

c) (C)

d) No Error

Answer: C

Explanation: sank in the Pacific Ocean

23. (A)I could not put up in a hotel (B)because the boarding and lodging charges (C) were exorbitant. (D) No error.

a) (A)

b) (B)

c) (C)

d) No Error

Answer: A

Explanation: 'I could not put up at a hotel'

24. (A)A lot of travel delay is caused (B)due to the inefficiency and lack of good management (C)on behalf of the railways. (D)No error.

a) (A)

b) (B)

c) (C)

d) No Error

Answer: C

Explanation: on the part of the railways

25. (A)One of the members (B)expressed doubt if (C)the Minister was an atheist. (D)No error.

a) (A)

b) (B)

c) (C)

d) No Error

Answer: B

Explanation: expressed doubt that

26. (A)Do the roses in your garden smell (B)more sweetly (C)than those in ours? (D)No error.

a) (A)

b) (B)

c) (C)

d) No Error

Answer: B

Explanation: Sweeter

27. (A)He was sure (B)that he should (C)win the Prize. (D)No error.

a) (A)

b) (B)

c) (C)

d) No Error

Answer: B

Explanation: Would

28. (A)He fell from a running train (B)and would have died (C)if the villagers did not get him admitted in the nearby hospital immediately. (D)No error.

- a) (A) b) (B) c) (C) d) No Error

Answer: C

Explanation: if the villagers had not got him immediately admitted to a nearby hospital

29. (A)While luminaries of the dance world (B)have a dearth of opportunities to display their art (C)upcoming dancers suffer from an unfortunate lack of exposure. (D)No error.

- a) (A) b) (B) c) (C) d) (D)

Answer: B

Explanation: have no dearth of opportunities to display their art

30. (A)One of the most effective (B)solutions is that she should work on Sunday (C)and complete the assignment. (D)No error.

- a) (A) b) (B) c) (D) d) (E)

Answer: D

Explanation: No error

Directions: Look at the underlined part of each sentence. Below each sentence are given possible substitutions for the underlined part. Choose the one that is correct. The first option is always same as the underlined part. Hence choose option A if you think no change is required.

31. The people of the ancient Assyrian Empire were renowned warriors, although they also crafted some of the best-preserved ancient art.

- A. were renowned warriors, although they also crafted**
B. had been renowned warriors, although they also crafted
C. were renowned warriors, and also crafted
D. was renowned warriors, although they also crafted

Solution:

Option(A) is correct

The subject (people, which is plural) must agree with the verb (were, which is plural).

The two verbs (were and crafted) should be in the same tense since both happened at the same time in the past.

B. had been renowned is improperly constructed in the past perfect tense, implying that the Assyrian Empire stopped being known as renowned warriors before its people crafted well-preserved art

C. The comma improperly splits the sentence, creating a comma splice

D. The subject (people, which is plural) does not agree with the verb (was, which is singular)

32. Among the litany of threats that many Israelis face, the potential for a nuclear-armed Iran is perhaps the more scary, as this scenario could engulf the region in a violent war. This would likely result in historically unseen amounts of destruction, even for a region whose history is marred by perennial violence.

- A. perhaps the more B. perhaps the most C. Possibly, perhaps the most D. possibly the greatest**

Solution:

Option(B) is correct

The superlative form most scary must be used instead of the comparative form more scary since the author is indicating that among all the threats, a specific threat is the most scary. This is also the reason we are using most scary as superlative degree instead of scariest.

A. more must be replaced by most as the superlative form (most) must be used since the author is not comparing threats but stating that a single threat is the scariest

B. The superlative form is correctly used

C. Although the superlative form is correctly used, this choice makes the sentence unduly long; the phrase possibly, perhaps is awkward and not idiomatically correct

D. While a superlative is used, the sentence is exceedingly awkward as the phrase possibly the greatest scary is not idiomatic

33. Despite being thousands of years old, the writing of Augustine of Hippo has inspired and captivated countless individuals, fundamentally because they convey the moving inner-journey of man searching for the divine in a lucid and compelling fashion.

- A. because they convey the moving inner-journey
- B. due to the fact that it conveys the moving inner-journey
- C. because of their conveying the moving inner-journey
- D. because it conveys the moving inner-journey**

Solution:

Option(D) is correct. The subject of the sentence (*the writing*, which is singular) does not agree with the pronoun (*they*, which is plural and needs to be replaced by the singular *it*). It is important to avoid wordy or unduly long phrases such as *due to the fact that* or *for the reason that* and instead use a shorter word like *because*.

- A. The subject of the sentence (*the writing*, which is singular) does not agree with the pronoun (*they*, which is plural)
- B. *due to the fact that* is wordy and can be replaced by *because*
- C. the pronoun *their*, which is plural, does not agree with the subject *the writing*, which is singular; the phrase is awkward and long
- D. the subject of the sentence (*the writing*) agrees with the pronoun (*it*); *because* is concise**

34. On Discovery channel last night they showed an informative program about new innovations in medical imaging, which you would have found interesting.

- A. they showed an informative program about new innovations in medical imaging, which you would have found interesting.
- B. they showed an informative program about innovations in medical imaging, which you would have found interesting.
- C. they showed an informative program about innovations in medical imaging, that you would have found interesting.
- D. there was an informative program about innovations in medical imaging, a program you would have found interesting.**

Solution:

Option(D) is correct

They is incorrect when talking of the television channel. New is redundant. And which must have a clear antecedent. Only answer D corrects all these problems.

35. During the worst years of the Great Depression, America faced tremendous challenges as unemployment topped 25%. Many historians credit the New Deal and the World War II industrial complex for propelling America out of the depression and into a then-unparalleled time of economic prosperity

- A. for propelling
- B. with having propelled
- C. as propelling
- D. with propelling**

Solution:

Option(D) is correct

The current sentence uses the incorrect idiom to credit x ... for y. The correct idiom is to credit x ... with y

- A. to credit x ... for y is not the correct idiom
- B. having propelled is not the proper verb tense and should be replaced with propelling
- C. to credit x ... as y is not the correct idiom
- D. to credit x ... with y is the correct idiom; propelling instead of having propelled is also correct**

36. In the engineering sector at the moment there are no jobs for those without experience, which makes it difficult for we recent graduates to get started on our careers.

- A. at the moment there are no jobs for those without experience, which makes it difficult for we
- B. at the moment there are no jobs for those without experience, which makes it difficult for us
- C. there are no jobs at the moment for those without experience, a fact that makes it difficult for us**
- D. there are no jobs at the moment for those without experience, which makes it difficult for us

Solution:

Option(C) is correct

The object us is required after the preposition for. "Which" requires a clear antecedent. Only C corrects both problems.

37. After working for two hours, the essay started to take shape, and he began to hope that he might finish before the deadline.

A. After working for two hours, the essay started to take shape, and he began to hope

B. When the essay started to take shape after he had worked on it for two hours, he began to hope

C. When the essay started to take shape after he had worked on it for two hours, he begun to hope

D. When the essay started to take shape after working on it for two hours, he began to hope

Solution:

Option(B) is correct

Answers A and E start with a dangling modifier. Answer C uses begun instead of began and D is unclear because we do not know who is working.

38. World War II, which resulted in the death of over 70 million individuals, proved to be the deadliest conflict in human history, claiming nearly twice as many lives than would be killed in World War I.

A. lives than would be killed in World War I

B. lives as would World War I

C. lives than those who were killed in World War I

D. lives as World War I

Solution:

Option(D) is correct

There are two main problems with the original sentence.

(1) The original sentence contains an improper idiom. The idiom as many x than is not idiomatically correct and should be replaced by the idiomatically correct phrase as many x as.

(2) would be killed in World War I is illogical as it is in the future tense, implying that World War I occurred after World War II. The phrase could be made significantly more concise using as many lives as World War I. The words would be killed in or were killed in are not necessary and should be omitted.

A. The idiom as many ... than is incorrect; the use of the future tense causes the sentence to illogically imply that World War I occurred after World War II

B. The use of the future tense causes the sentence to illogically imply that World War I occurred after World War II

C. The idiom as many ... than is incorrect; those who were killed in is awkward and unnecessary

D. The correct idiom is used (as many ... as); the sentence correctly implies that World War II occurred after World War I; the unnecessary phrase were killed in is omitted

39. If the gardener would sow the seeds in the greenhouse rather than the garden, he might get a better display of flowers.

A. If the gardener would sow the seeds in the greenhouse rather than the garden

B. If the gardener sowed the seeds in the greenhouse rather than the garden

C. If the gardener would sow the seeds in the greenhouse rather than in the garden

D. If the gardener were to sow the seeds in the greenhouse rather than in the garden

Solution:

Option(D) is correct

The conditional clause (the "if" clause) does not require would. Also we should write "inthe garden" to be parallel to "in the greenhouse".

40. According to a recent study, financial problems, together with their serious ramifications, ranks as one of the high causes of marital stress in America.

A. ranks as one of the high causes of marital stress in America

B. rank as one of the leading causes of marital stress in America

C. rank as one of the most high causes of marital stress in America

D. ranks as one of the leading causes of marital stress in America

Solution:

Option(B) is correct

There are two main problems with the original sentence.

(1) The subject of this sentence (financial problems) is plural and does not agree with the verb (ranks), which is singular. Do not be thrown off by the appositive between the subject and verb that is designed to confuse you.

(2) The phrase rank as one of the high causes is not idiomatically correct. Instead, items rank as one of the leading causes.

A. The subject (which is plural) and verb (which is singular) do not agree; ranks as one of the high causes is awkward and unidiomatic

B. This sentence correctly uses a plural verb with its plural subject; the concise and idiomatically correct phrase rank as one of the leading causes is used

C. The phrase rank as one of the most high causes is awkward, unidiomatic, and redundant (the words most and high convey the same idea)

D. The subject (which is plural) and verb (which is singular) do not agree

"The whole secret of a successful life is to find out what is one's destiny to do, and then do it."