

13 Sentence Improvement



Sentence improvement or correction is part of verbal ability questions asked in competitive exams. It involves a sentence that requires some grammatical or vocabulary-related improvement in a phrase or a word or in several phrases or words. The sentence needs to be modified to make it grammatically correct and easy to understand. There are some basic grammar rules which are very important to understand sentence improvement questions. These are as follows:

1. Subject-Verb agreement

The verb in a sentence must always be in accordance with the subject.

Understand With Example



- They both should either be singular or plural.
For example—She is reading a novel (singular), Girls are reading the novels (plural)
- If the subject is a collective noun, the verb takes a singular form. There are exceptions to this rule.
For example—The group is doing a dance and (not) the group are doing dances.
- If the subjects are connected by “AND”: they require a plural verb.
For example—Gold and diamond are precious metals and (not) gold and diamond is precious metal.
- If subjects are connected by “OR”, a singular verb is used.
For example—You can give the parcel to my mother or my brother.
- All sentences that begin with EACH, EVERYONE, and ANYONE will have a

singular verb.

For example—Anyone can do this task.

- Whenever there is a comparison made using THAN or AS, the objective form of the pronoun is used.

For example—I am as intelligent as she is. She is faster than I am.

2. Numbering error

This is the error of writing the same thing twice which does not add to the meaning of the sentence but makes it difficult to understand. Such mistakes indicate a lack of knowledge of verbal ability.

Understand With Example



- He returned back from California.
- He lives in close proximity to my place.
The correct way of writing these sentences is:
 - He returned from California. (here “back” is redundant).
 - He lives in proximity to my place. (here “close” is redundant).



Here is a list of common redundant errors to watch out for.

Absolutely certain	Cease and desist	Few in number	Manually by hand	Return back
Actual fact	Chase after	First and foremost	May possibly	Revert back
Added bonus	Collaborate together	First began	Merge together	Rough estimation
Adequate enough	Compete with each other	Follow after	New innovations	Same identical
Advance forward	Completely finished	Foreign imports	One and same	Sequential order
Advance warning	Continue on	Forever and ever	Orbit around	Since the time when
Ask a question	Crisis situation	Free gift	Past experience	Spell out in detail
At the present time	Current status quo	General public	Past history	Still remains
ATM machine	Current trend	Hence why	Past record	Sudden explosion
Bald headed	Definite decision	Hurry up	Personal opinion	Sum total
Basic necessities	Difficult dilemma	In my personal opinion	Plan ahead	Summarise briefly
Biography of her life	Direct confrontation	In spite of the fact that	Plus in addition	The reason is because
Black darkness	Drop down	In the event that	Postpone until later	The reason why
Blatantly obvious	During the course of	Interestingly enough	Progress forward	Therapeutic treatment
Blend together	Each and every	Invited guests	Protest against	Toxic poison



Brief moment	End result	Join together	Raise up	Unexpected surprise
Browse through	Enter in	Little baby	Regular routine	Unintentional mistake
Burning fire	Exactly the same	Longer in length	Repeat again	Usual custom
But yet	False pretence	Major breakthrough	Retreat back	Various different

3. Modifier error

Another common error is to leave a participle without a subject.

For example:

seating on the gate, a scorpion stung him. Here the usage of “seating” for a scorpion is wrong. The correct formation should be: While he was sitting on the gate, a scorpion stung him.

Some types of modifier errors are:

a. Misplaced modifier

For example—Nina wore the hat on her head, which she brought yesterday.

Here it seems that she bought the head yesterday (due to the formation of the sentence).

Thus, the correct formation would be: Nina wore the hat which she bought yesterday, on her head.

b. Dangling modifier

For example—Waiting for the bus guano fell on my shoe.

Here it seems that the guano was waiting for the bus!

Thus, the correct formation is—While I was waiting for the bus, guano fell on my shoe.

4. Comparisons

Comparisons should always be made between two similar things.

For example—The literacy rate in Kerala is greater than any other city in India.

The correct comparison here would be the literacy rate in both places. So, the correct formation would be—The literacy rate in Kerala is greater than that of any other city in India.

Some rules are as follows:

a. When a comparative degree is used, the thing being compared must be excluded from the rest.

For example:

Correct—He is braver than any other man living is correct but the sentence.

Incorrect—He is braver than any man living.

b. In a superlative degree, the thing being compared is included.

For example :

Correct—Mother Teresa is the kindest of all women.

Incorrect—Mother Teresa is kindest than all

5. Parallelism

Parallelism relates to the structure of the sentence. Different phrases or words performing the same function should be used in the same format.

For example:

other women.



INCORRECT SENTENCE	CORRECT SENTENCE
1. She likes football and running.	1. She likes playing football and running or She likes to play football and to run.
2. Helen likes to paint, draw, and sketching.	2. Helen likes to paint, draw and sketch or, Helen likes painting, drawing, or sketching.
3. The visit to the chapel was beautiful, moved, and inspired.	3. The visit to the chapel was beautiful, moving, and inspiring.
4. She likes listening but to talk.	4. She likes listening but not talking or She likes to listen but not to talk.

6. Error in diction

A diction error refers to an error in the choice of words or phrases. Some idioms

may also occur in a sentence in the wrong manner.

A common pair of words and phrases that are often confused are:

Accept It is a verb that means “to receive something willingly.” For example: I accept this proposal on behalf of my company.	Expect It is a verb that means “to leave out or exclude.” For example: All of you can leave except Alan.
Adapt It means to change something to suit your needs or change yourselves according to something. It means to change something to suit your needs or change yourselves according to something. For example: Meera struggled to adapt to the demanding work culture of the corporate world.	Adopt It means to take over something. For example: She adopted Christianity after moving to Spain.
Affect It is a verb that means “to produce an effect upon”. For example: His possessiveness affected my mental health and sense of self-worth.	Effect It is a noun that means “a change that results when something is done or something happens”. For example: Rising global temperatures had an effect on ice caps in the poles.



Argue against It means to speak in a manner to highlight the negative aspects of something. For example: She argued against the topic in the debate.	Argue with It means to speak in favour of something. For example: she argued with the topic in the debate.
Few It is equivalent to something negligible. For example: Few people understand Sanskrit in modern times.	A few It is equivalent to some. For example: A few people believe in the idea of community ownership.
Few Used for countable nouns. For example: there are few oranges in the basket and (not) there are less oranges in the basket.	Less Used for uncountable nouns. For example: there is less water in the well and (not) there is few waters in the well.
Imply It means to hint at something without directly saying it. For example: He implied that Elena was in trouble, but he would not tell why.	Infer It means to deduce something that has not been stated directly. For example: I inferred that she was shaken from the expression on her face.
Its It is a possessive pronoun that means “belonging to it”. For example: Chester is obsessed with the painting because of its mysterious aura.	It’s It is a contraction of “it is”. For example: I should study for my test as it’s just two days away.
Later It is an adverb that means after a particular time or any time after the present. For example: She said she would meet me later.	Latter It is an adjective that means occurring at or near the end of an activity. For example: Kate and Nia will come tomorrow. The latter will not have lunch as she has some errands to run.
Lay To lay means to put in place. For example: She laid out her outfit on the bed. The past tense of lay is “laid”.	Lie To lie means to recline. For example: Perhaps I should lie down. The past tense of lie is “lay”
Little It refers to hardly any quantity. For example: there is little hope for recovery in his case.	A little It refers to a small quantity. For example: be a little wise and talk to him.
Lose It is always used as a verb. For example: Dahlia was careful not to lose her ticket.	Loose It is usually used as an adjective. For example: the tape was really loose.

**Than**

It is used for comparisons. For example: She is faster than shelly.

Then

It is used to indicate time or sequence. For example: Anna finished the test and then took a nap.

That

It is used to restrict the content of the sentence. For example: I really like that dress you wore.

Which

It is used to further specify, identify or distinguish a particular thing. For example: It is the empty space that makes this bowl useful.

Your

It is used to indicate possessiveness. It is not a contraction. For example: are these your glasses?

You're

It is a contraction of the phrase "you are". For example: I think you're the perfect person for the job.

Hotkeys

Identify the concept applied in the sentence. In general, one or two rules usually apply in such questions.

- Look out for time indicators (before, during, after, etc.)
- The non-underlined part may help you to understand the error. Pay attention to it.
- Try reading the options in your mind once. The correct answer will sound correct when read, others will not.

SOLVED EXAMPLES

Directions: Choose the most appropriate option that would improve the underlined part of the sentence. If there is no improvement, choose option D.

1. The gripping tale had its beginning more than fifty years ago.
- A. Initiated
 - B. Was started
 - C. Began
 - D. No improvement needed

Here the correct answer is option B as it makes a grammatically correct sentence.

2. Sincere people do not rest until they have reached perfection in their work.
- A. They had achieved
 - B. They have achieved
 - C. They had reached
 - D. No improvement needed

Here the correct answer is option B as perfection is something which needs to be "achieved" not "reached".

3. You are an engineer, aren't you?
- A. Are
 - B. Wasn't
 - C. Isn't
 - D. No improvement needed

Here the correct answer is option D as the word "aren't" is correct here because this is a rhetorical question where this word is usually used.

4. I usually did not take sugar in my tea.

- A. Do not takes
- B. Do not take
- C. Will not take
- D. No improvement needed

Here the correct answer is option B as “do not take” is simple present tense and is appropriate to be used with the subject “I” which is singular.

5. The bike that I bought was difficult to use.

- A. Was inconvenient
- B. Was convenient
- C. Was manageable
- D. No improvement needed

Here the correct answer is option A as “inconvenient” means something that is difficult to use.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

Directions: Choose the most appropriate option that would improve the underlined part of the sentence. If there is no improvement, choose option D.

1. Unless some systematic changes is made, the future generations will bear the brunt of the inefficiencies of the system.

- A. Unless some systematic changes are made
- B. Unless some systematic changes will be made
- C. Unless some systematic changes have been made
- D. No improvement needed.

2. The winter season of the parliament will begin in a few days.

- A. Mission
- B. Recession
- C. Session
- D. No improvement needed

3. The movie which you recommended, was really very good.

- A. Than
- B. That
- C. The one which
- D. No improvement needed

4. There is generally agreed that inbred children are more prone to diseases than those who are not inbred.

- A. It
- B. Which
- C. Than
- D. No improvement needed

5. Thieves steal Hondas and Toyotas from the 1990s more than other models because they can chop them up and sell them for parts that are worth more than the car.

- A. More than other models because they can chop them up and sell them for parts that are worth more than the car
- B. More than they steal other models because they can chop them up and sell them for parts that are worth more than the car
- C. More than they do other models because they can dismantle the cars and sell the parts that are worth more than the car
- D. No improvement needed.

6. NASA reports that ancient observers took note of solar eclipses at least as far back as 2500 BC, as evidenced by surviving records from ancient Babylon and China

- A. As evidenced by survived records from
- B. As is evident by surviving records from
- C. As the surviving records show the evidence of
- D. No improvement needed



7. When the hockey team reached the hotel, he dropped off his luggage there.
A. She dropped off her luggage.
B. They dropped off there luggage
C. They dropped off their luggage
D. No improvement needed
8. I can't hardly believe what Anna told me.
A. Can't believe
B. Can hardly believe
C. Either A or B is correct
D. No improvement needed.
9. The characters in this extremely modern version of Shakespeare's Macbeth shall no longer be believable.
A. Are
B. Is
C. Will
D. No improvement required.
10. Each of the compartments contains several litres of water.
A. Contained
B. Contain
C. Is Containing
D. No improvement required
11. You can take Harry with you. He enjoys gardening and play in the sun.
A. Playing in the sun
B. Played in the sun
C. To play in the sun
D. No improvement needed.
12. For dinner, we like lamb chops and to boil Brussels sprouts.
A. Like fried lamb chops
B. To fry lamb chops
C. Fried lamb chops.
D. No improvement needed.
13. Public transit such as buses or a train can help reduce air pollution.
A. Or trains
B. Or many trains
C. Or several trains
D. No improvement needed
14. Cherry does nothing but read that book all day. She is very taken by the writing style of it's author
A. It is
B. Its
C. The
D. No improvement needed
15. The existence of god is still a contentious question.
A. Was still a contentious question.
B. Will still be a contentious question.
C. Shall still be a contentious question.
D. No improvement needed
16. Your salary being dependent on the quality of your work.
A. Depends upon
B. Going to depend
C. Is dependable
D. No improvement needed
17. She did not report him as she was fear of losing her job.
A. Fearful of
B. Afraid of
C. Had been afraid of
D. No improvement needed
18. After 15 years, Seema is finally stationed in Kolkata, who is her birthplace.
A. That is
B. There is her
C. Which is
D. No improvement needed
19. We were nervous as we was the next to present.
A. Who
B. Where
C. Were
D. No improvement needed
20. Occupied with a lot of work, he could not make it to his daughter's birthday on time.
A. Occupying
B. While occupied
C. Occupation



- D. No improvement needed
21. He is a wise man, which knows when to speak up.
A. Who
B. What
C. When
D. No improvement needed
22. Every of the applications must be approved by the head of HR.
A. Each one of the
B. Each of the
C. Every one of the
D. No improvement needed
23. The firm have asked for the names of all employees working on the project.
A. Is asking
B. Was asked that
C. Has
D. No improvement needed
24. Considerate the traffic, it is better to leave for the station an hour early.
A. Considerate of
B. Considering
C. While considerate of
D. No improvement needed
25. He was determined for completing the task before the due date.
A. For completion
B. About completed
C. To complete
D. No improvement needed

SOLUTIONS

1. (A) is correct as the verb ARE refers to the subject SYSTEMATIC CHANGES. Both are plural. Option B is wrong as it uses the verb of future tense and C is wrong as it uses the verb of past tense. Option D is irrelevant.
2. (C) is correct as the word SESSION is the most logically appropriate word here as it refers to the meeting of the parliament. Options A and B are wrong as the words mentioned have different meanings from what is needed in the context.
3. (B) is correct as THAT is used to denote THE RECOMMENDED MOVIE. Option A is wrong as “than” is used for comparison and no comparison is being made here. Option C is wrong as “the one which” cannot be used with the words “you recommended”
4. (A) is correct as the word IT is appropriate to refer to the subject DISEASES AMONG INBRED CHILDREN (as per subject-verb agreement) Option C is wrong as “than” is used for comparison and option B is wrong as “which” refers to a particular thing and cannot be used at the start of a sentence.
5. (C) is correct as the phrase THEY DO refers to the subjects THIEVES doing the other models, the word DISMANTLE is a replacement for the word CHOP. Options A and B lack on the same grounds as they use inappropriate words.
6. (B) is correct as the phrase AS IS EVIDENT is in accordance with the verb REPORTS as both are in the present tense. Options A and C are grammatically incorrect as they mention verbs in the past tense and incorrect sequence respectively.
7. (C) is correct as the verbs THEY and THERE ARE used for the subject THE HOCKEY TEAM which is plural. Options A and B are grammatically incorrect as the words “she” and “they” are used wrongly.
8. (C) is correct as either option A or option B are grammatically correct. Both cannot be



used together. Can't and hardly are double negatives and it is grammatically incorrect to use them together.

9. **(A)** is correct as the verb ARE would come for the subject THE CHARACTERS as per subject-verb agreement. Options B and C are grammatically incorrect as the verb "is" singular is used in place of the plural verb "characters" and "will" is in future tense and cannot be used with "be" respectively.
10. **(B)** is correct as the verb CONTAIN would be appropriate with the subject EACH, as per subject-verb agreement. Options A and C are grammatically incorrect as they used verbs in past and present continuous tense respectively.
11. **(A)** is correct as the phrase PLAYING IN THE SUN is the only option that goes correctly with the word GARDENING. (According to the concept of parallelism). Options B and C are eliminated as they are not parallel with the word GARDENING. (As per parallelism).
12. **(B)** is correct as the phrase TO FRY LAMB CHOPS is the only option that goes correctly with the phrase TO BOIL BRUSSELS SPROUTS. (According to the concept of parallelism). Options A and C are eliminated as they are not parallel with the phrase TO BOIL BRUSSELS SPROUTS (as per parallelism).
13. **(A)** is correct as the word TRAINS is correct according to the concept of parallelism. Since the word BUSES is used thus TRAINS would be correct instead of TRAIN. Options B and C are eliminated as they are not parallel with the word BUSES (as per parallelism).
14. **(B)** is correct as the word IT'S will be replaced by ITS which denotes possessiveness.

After this, the phrase will mean "the writing style belonging to the author" which is both grammatically and factually correct. Options A and C are grammatically incorrect as "it is" is a pronoun and "the" cannot be used to refer to the author of the particular book she is reading respectively.

15. **(D)** is correct as there is no need for any improvement in the sentence. The verb IS is correct for the subject of the question of the existence of God. Options A, B, and C are grammatically incorrect as "will still" is not the proper usage, "shall still" is wrong in the context of the question, and "was still" is not correct in the context of the question.
16. **(A)** is the correct answer as it is in the present tense. Option B is wrong as the word "is" is absent in the option. Option C is wrong as "dependable" is in the past tense. Option D is irrelevant.
17. **(B)** is the correct answer as "afraid" is the action of being fearful. Option A is wrong as "fearful" is the feeling and not action. Option C is wrong as "had been" is in the past tense. Option D is irrelevant.
18. **(C)** is the correct answer as "which" is used to refer to the place Hyderabad. Option A is wrong as "that" is very restrictive in nature. Option B is wrong as "there is" cannot be used at the start of a clause. Option D is irrelevant.
19. **(C)** is the correct answer as "we" is a plural subject hence the verb "were" used is also plural. Option A is wrong as "who" is not a verb. Option B is wrong as "where" is not a verb. Option D is irrelevant.
20. **(D)** is the correct answer as "occupied with" is correct usage option A is wrong as "occupying" is in present continuous tense.

Option B is wrong as “while occupying” cannot be used the word “with”. Option C is wrong as “occupation” refers to a job and not occupation with work.

21. (A) is the correct answer as “who” is used to refer to a person. Option B is wrong as “what” refers to a thing or place and not a person. Option C is wrong as “when” refers to time not a person. Option D is irrelevant.

22. (B) is the correct answer as “applications” are countable so the word used must be “each”. Option A is wrong as the usage of “each one” is redundant. Option C is wrong as “every one: is redundant. Option D is irrelevant.

23. (C) is the correct answer as the “firm” is plural so the verb used will be singular. Option A is wrong as it is using the verb in the present continuous tense. Option B is wrong as the verb is in the past tense. Option D is irrelevant.

24. (B) is the correct answer as the “considering” in present continuous tense. Option A is wrong as it is in the past tense. Option C is wrong as it is past tense. Option D is irrelevant.

25. (C) is the correct answer as “to complete” is in present tense. Option A is wrong as it is in the past tense. Option B is wrong as it is past tense. Option D is irrelevant.

