



IIT Madras
ONLINE DEGREE

COMMON ERRORS IN ENGLISH - PART 2

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- Some sentences with a very common type of errors are given below.

1)

- a. Some boys of Rajendra Hostel is making all the noise.*
- b. Only one of the six scheduled trains are running late this morning.*
- c. Only one of the requested items were delivered late.*
- d. The entire team with all its star players have been found guilty of doping.*
- e. We ordered six copies of this book, but it is yet to be delivered.*

- f. Puurna's collection of old folk songs are likely to be published soon.*
- g. All excepting one sailor was stranded on the island.*

- All sentences above are ungrammatical because of non-agreement of the verbs in them with their subjects.

ACTIVITY 1

- You can re-write these sentences removing all the errors, and then check them with the answers given below.

ANSWERS

Activity 1:

- a. Some boys of Rajendra Hostel are making all the noise.
- b. Only one of the six scheduled trains is running late this morning.
- c. Only one of the requested items was delivered late.
- d. The entire team with all its star players has been found guilty of doping.
- e. We ordered six copies of this book, but they are yet to be delivered.
- f. Puurna's collection of old folk songs is likely to be published soon.

- In all of the sentences above, verb does not agree with the number of the subject. Here verb is influenced by the noun nearby, and is wrongly assigned the same number as that of the noun near it.
- In 1.a, the subject is “boys”, not the “hostel”. Since “boys” is a noun in plural number, the verb here also must be so.
- In 1.b, on the other hand, the subject of the sentence, “one of the trains”, happens to be in the singular number. Therefore, the verb must also be in the singular number, saying “... is running...”.

- The case in 1.c and 1.d is also the same. But in 1.e, the subject is in plural number, so the correct pronoun here is “they” and the correct verb here is “are”, together making the clause “... they are...”.
- In 1.f, the noun, “collection”, is in the singular number, and, therefore the appropriate verb is “is”, rather “are”.

- Since we know about the phrase, structure now, we should look at the head of the phrase. Regardless of how many modifiers there are, it is always the head to which the verb agrees in number. So find the head. Look at the following sentences,

2)

- The Geography Master was absent.*
- The boys of the First A had leisure between three and three-forty-five on Wednesday.*
- The noise that they make, sitting on their benches and swinging their legs, gets on his nerves.*
- No one, except Rajam and Mani, was there.*
- Trucks full of water are now brought to cities from the villages.*

- In a noun + noun combination, ordinarily the second noun is the head. See the following for example:

History Teacher, State Department, Home Minister, House Wife, Cinema Hall, etc.

- But in a noun phrase created with a preposition, it is a noun before the preposition that is usually the head.

Inspector of Police, Captain of Guards, House of Cards, Head of Department, Secretary to the Director, etc.

ACTIVITY 2

- In all of the sentences given in 2. Above, find the head of the noun, also called the subject of the sentence. Just underline the particular word which you think works like the head of the noun phrase, and the subject of the sentence. Compare your work with the answers given below.

ANSWERS

Activity 2:

- a. The Geography Master was absent.
- b. The boys of the First A had leisure between three and three-forty-five on Wednesday.
- c. The noise that they make, sitting on their benches and swinging their legs, gets on his nerves.
- d. No one, except Rajam and Mani, was there.
- e. Trucks full of water are now brought to cities from the villages.

ACTIVITY 3

- Fill in the blanks in the following sentences using the given verb in the present tense and in appropriate number. Check your work with the answers given below.

Every night after the meal, with his head on his granny's lap, nestling close to her things Swaminathan ----- (feel) very snug and safe in the faint atmosphere of cardamom and cloves. 'Oh, granny!' he ----- (cry) ecstatically, 'you don't know what a great fellow Rajam is.' He ----- (tell) her the story of the first enmity between Rajam and Mani and the subsequent friendship. (Do) Granny ----- (know), Rajam has a real police dress,' ----- (say) Swaminathan. 'Is it? What ----- (do) he want a police dress for?' asked granny. 'His father is the Police Superintendent.

He is the master of every policeman here.' Granny is impressed. She says that it must be a tremendous office indeed. She then ----- (recount) the days when her husband, Swaminathan's grandfather, has been a powerful Sub-Magistrate, in which office he ----- (make) the police force tremble before him, and the fiercest dacoits of the place flee. Swaminathan ----- (wait) impatiently for her to finish the story. But she ---- (go) on, rambled, confused, mixed up various incidents that took place at different times. That will do, granny,' he said ungraciously. 'Let me tell you something about Rajam. ----- (Do) you know how many marks he ----- (get) in Arithmetic?' 'He ----- (get) all the marks, ----- (does) he, child?' ----- (ask) granny.

ANSWERS

Activity 3:

Every night after the meal, with his head on his granny's lap, nestling close to her things Swaminathan **feels** very snug and safe in the faint atmosphere of cardamom and cloves. 'Oh, granny!' he **cries** ecstatically, 'you don't know what a great fellow Rajam is.' He **tells** her the story of the first enmity between Rajam and Mani and the subsequent friendship. **Does** Granny **know**, Rajam has a real police dress,' **says** Swaminathan. 'Is it? What **does** he want a police dress for?' asked granny. 'His father is the Police Superintendent. He is the master of every policeman here.' Granny is impressed. She says that it must be a tremendous office indeed.

- She then **recounts** the days when her husband, Swaminathan's grandfather, was a powerful Sub-Magistrate, in which office he made the police force tremble before him, and the fiercest dacoits of the place fled. Swaminathan **waits** impatiently for her to finish the story. But she **goes** on, rambled, confused, mixed up various incidents that took place at different times. 'That will do, granny,' he said ungraciously. 'Let me tell you something about Rajam. **Do** you know how many marks he **gets** in Arithmetic?' 'He **gets** all the marks, **does** he, child?' **asks** granny.

Thank you!