

## Remedial English

It is important for us to use the right words and phrases to ensure we no longer succumb to incorrect or wrong language practices. The below pointers will guide you to the right usage of the English Language.

### 1. Word Class

#### To identify a Noun

- Articles usually precede nouns making reference to them. (Helps in a context – ex, Close passage)  
Ex: **The** \_information\_\_on the board is unclear.
- Nouns usually end with tion, sion, ment, ance/ence, ty etc  
Ex: commission, honesty, information, advancement, countenance, innocence
- Nouns are subjects and objects in a sentence and therefore answer the question what?  
Raj has a \_fascination\_\_for all things electrical . Raj has a what?
- One word can have more than 2 or 3 noun forms.  
Ex: promoter, promotion, promotability, promotiveness – all these 4 words are noun forms of the verb Promote.

#### To identify an adverb

- Adverbs usually end with the suffix 'ly' which is attached to the adjective. It explains to what extent the action takes place and with what frequency.  
Ex: Determinedly, offensively, intentionally, and fascinatingly.  
They finished the project **exhaustedly** with many elements **sloppily** completed.

#### To identify an adjective

- Adjectives are describing words describing the noun. They usually end with ful, ive, able, ible, nal,  
Ex: Comfortable, exhaustive, promotional, helpful,  
This chair is **comfortable**.
- Some adjectives take up the past tense or the continuous verb tense form.  
For ex: I had an **exhausting** day.  
He struggled against a **determined** enemy.
- One word can have more than 2 or 3 adjective forms  
For ex: Exhaustive, exhaustible, exhausted, exhausting – all these 4 words are adjective forms of the verb exhaust.

## 2. Conjunctions

Connecting words. Connects two parts of speech or two clauses.

### Difference between as and because

As can also mean like, in the same way - for example, "She watched him as a cat watches a mouse".

- As is used to mean because, but it is also used when two events happen at the same time.  
In "I must stop now as I have to go out." it means *because*, but in "She watched him as the train passed close to his house." it doesn't mean because.
- in or to the same degree  
She was as cool *as* a cucumber
- Because.  
The vase was smashed *as* Jenny knocked it over. ( obvious reason)  
I went to bed early *as* I was exhausted.
- even though  
Improbable *as* it seems, it's true

### **Because :**

The reason is critical - I lost my job because of her

It answers the question why? - I can't come because I'm busy

### Difference between But and However

'However' takes the meaning of nevertheless in a sentence whereas 'but' is a conjunction between two sentences and takes up the meaning of although and is used to stress contradiction between two halves of the sentence.

Ex: We waited for him for a long time but he did not turn up.

We were supposed to go the party last night; however, it was called off much to our surprise.

As 'but' is generally used as a conjunction, a sentence should not begin with 'but'.

However is followed by a semicolon, comma or full stop in a sentence.

The book is expensive; however, it's worth it.

### Difference between except, unless and until

- Except brings in the meaning of other than or exclusion  
For ex: They didn't open their mouths except to complain.  
An admission fee is charged, but children are excepted.
- Unless brings in the meaning of except on the condition that or except under the circumstances that  
For ex: We'll be there at nine, unless the train is late.

They'll sell it unless he hears otherwise.

- Until refers to upto the time that or when

For ex: We walked until it got dark

I lived with my parents until I was 18.

### 3. Prepositions – Review the doc on “Preposition meaning and usage” available in the Learn Section under English.

- **In, At and On** are prepositions of time and place showing the time and date of events, activities and situations and positions of people, places and things.

**At** three o'clock/ **At** the cinema – Specific time and place

**in** June/ **In** the shop – Time period – for seasons, months, years, enclosed areas, cities, states, countries.

**on** Monday / **On** the wall – On a day or On that date and touching the surface of something.

- **For & Since** – explain how long an event, activity or situation has continued

I am going to study abroad **for** 4 years – for+ a period of time

I have been sick **since** last night – since + a point of time + past tense

- **During & While** – explain a period of time in which an event, activity or situation took place.

I used to watch a lot of movies **during** my school days – during + a noun or phrase.

**While** I was listening to music I finished my assignment – while + sub+ verb

- **Before & After** – explain accurately the timing of an event, activity or situation.

Let me finish **before** you say anything.

I will go through the material **after** the session.

- **By, Until and Till** – describe a time limit for commencement or completion of an activity.

Please be there **by** 10a.m

I lived with my parents **until** I was 18.

**From-----to/till** – defines the beginning and end of a period of time, present, past or future

I work **from** 1:00 p.m **to** 09:00 p.m one week in a month.

### 4. Pronouns

- A **reflexive pronoun** is a special kind of **pronoun** that is usually used when the object of a sentence is the same as the subject. So a sentence should not ideally begin with a reflexive pronoun

For ex: Myself Rani – Incorrect

I'm Rani – Correct

**I** am teaching **myself** to play the piano.

Be careful with that knife. **You** might cut **yourself**.

- Relative Pronouns

Difference between that and which

Use *which* (surrounded by commas) if a group of words adds information. Use *that* if it limits the set of things you're talking about. In other words, if you remove which the meaning of the sentence will still remain intact but if you remove 'that', there will be something amiss.

Classes that are held on Wednesdays are in building 206.

Leap years, which have 366 days, contain an extra day in February.

Refer to the video – Pronouns under the Learn – English section for personal pronouns and their object forms.

## 5. Articles

- We do not use the definite article with
  - a) General words like life, flowers etc
  - b) Names of persons on the singular, relatives
  - c) Public buildings, institutions, means of transport (indefinite)
  - d) Names of countries in the singular, summits of mountains, continents, towns
  - e) Single islands
  - f) Parks, lakes, streets
  - g) months, days of the week (indefinite)
- We use the definite article
  - a) General words ( definite)
  - b) Family names in the plural
  - c) Public buildings, institutions, means of transport (definite)
  - d) names of countries in the plural; mountain ranges; regions groups of islands
  - e) name with of-phrase; oceans; seas; rivers. For ex: the Statue of Liberty, The Nile etc
  - f) months, days of the week (definite)

Differences between the definite and the indefinite article

a) First vs Subsequent Rule: The general rule states that the first mention of a noun is indefinite and all subsequent references to this noun are definite and take *the*.

- **A** man is walking down a road. There is a dog with **the** man.

Three **special groups of nouns** are considered definite in reference even if they have not been mentioned in the preceding sentence or clause.

The first group consists of nouns which refer to **shared knowledge of the situation or context**. For example, in Canada you can say

- The Prime Minister will arrive tomorrow  
because there is only one Prime Minister in Canada, and so it is clear to whom you are referring. Similarly, if there is only one hospital in the town, you can say
- He's been working in *the* hospital for two years.  
But you couldn't say this in Toronto, where there are many hospitals. You would have to name the particular hospital in your first reference to it:  
He's been working at Toronto General Hospital for two years. He says *the* hospital is in a FINANCIAL mess.

The second group consists of nouns referring to **unique objects**:

e.g., the sun/the earth/the Pope/the sky/the equator

**Superlative adjectives and unique adjectives** form the third group. Because there can be only one of these (only one of a series can be the tallest or the best or the first), they take the definite article:

- Mexico City is *the* most populous city in the world.  
I enjoyed the first part, but I was disappointed at *the* end.  
She is the principal researcher.

b) To refer to a form of entertainment in general, use the definite article:

I enjoy seeing *the* ballet.

To refer to a particular event, use the indefinite article:

I saw *a* good movie last night.

c) Use the definite article to refer to the whole transport system, rather than to an individual vehicle:

How long does it take on *the* bus?

The subway is quicker.

[if you use the construction "by PLUS means of transport," there is no article: I go by subway].

d) Certain nouns refer to either a place/object or to an activity.

When they refer to an activity, do **not** use the definite article:

Activity

I go to *bed* at 11 o'clock.

Object

Don't jump on *the bed*.

Activity

She went to *school* for many years.

Object

The school was too small.

Activity

Many families eat dinner together.

Object

The dinner was delicious.

Activity

I shower before *breakfast*.

Object

The breakfast was delicious.

Activity

They are at church.

Object

The church is very old.

Activity

She is in class.

Object

The class is in Room 102.

## 6. Noun Numbers

- "the number" is a singular collective noun.

"The number of applicants is steadily increasing."

"A number," on the other hand, is a plural form:

"There are several students in the lobby. A number are here to see the president."

- The word following the phrase one of the (as an object of the preposition *of*) will always be plural.

One of the reasons we do this is that it rains a lot in spring.

One of the students in this room is responsible.

## 7. Tenses

When it comes to Tenses watch out for signal words in the context

- For the Simple Present these are adverbs of frequency: always, often, usually, sometimes, seldom, never

Other phrases of time can occur, like: every day, every week, every year, on Mondays, after school

- For the Simple Past these are expressions of time in the past.

Yesterday, last weekend/week/year, a month ago, in 2002.

## 8. Modal Verbs

- Modal Verbs are always followed by the base form of the verb meaning the 1st verb form.

He **could do** it ( Do,did, done)

He **may not make** it ( make, made, made)

- Difference between may and might

May may have more percentage of possibility than might

May is more likely and might is less likely but this is a flexible rule.

I may go to the movie/ I might go the movie

May is used for permission

May I be excused?/ May I help you with your luggage?

Use Might in the past tense

I might have been sleeping when you called – used in statements where things could have happened but didn't

- Difference between shall and should

Shall – a requirement that is mandatory// an obligation

Used by laws and regulations

Something that will take place in the future – We shall arrive tomorrow

An order, promise, requirement – You shall leave now// He shall answer for his misdeeds

Suggestions – Shall we go out for dinner

Asking advice – Where shall we meet?

Offering to help – Shall I shut the door?

Should – ( past tense of shall)

A guideline or a recommendation

You should brush your teeth after every meal

You should not do that

People with high cholesterol should eat low fat foods.

Someone is knocking the door, shall I answer it ? - Offer

Someone is knocking the door, should I answer it? – asking advice

I shall go now – A decision

I should go now – suggestion to oneself.

You shall do what I tell you – Command/ Order

You should do what I tell you – Strong advice

## 9. Degree of Comparison

Do not use more along with a comparative adjective formed with *-er* nor use *most* along with a superlative adjective formed with *-est* (e.g., do not write that something is more heavier or most heaviest).

For ex: My sister is the most tallest in our family – Incorrect

My sister is the tallest in our family - Correct

I can run more faster than you – Incorrect

I can run faster than you – Correct

## 10. Among and Between

Conventional :

Between – used for choices involving two items

Among – Used for choices that involve more than two items

Appropriate: Between can also be used for more than two choices when you are referring to **distinct individual items**.

For ex: The differences between English, Chinese and Arabic are significant.

I'm trying to decide between the green shirt, the blue shirt and the black shirt.

On the other hand use among when you are talking about things that aren't distinct items or individuals.

For ex: I'm trying to decide among these shirts

The differences among languages are significant.

Also use among to talk about a group of people



Fear spread among the hostages

Between – reciprocal arrangements – one member to another member

Among – collective arrangements – with all members involved

### 11. Difference between on and onto

On refers to a location, onto refers more to a movement from one place to another. For ex: The pen is on the table not onto the table. he got onto the table..On can also be used here

On and onto are used interchangeably in many sentences but their meaning is not always the same.

Another meaning of onto is being fully aware or informed about - for ex: The police are **onto** the Robber's plans. Not accurate with 'on' here

### 12. Between you and me or Between you and I

Between you and me is the right phrase

Used when you want someone to keep your opinion a secret

For ex: Between you and me, I think John got fired because he's completely incompetent.

### 13. Difference between say, tell and speak

Tell means you give information to a person.

Tell/Told are always followed by a person.

Tell me about the movie. Did you like it?

I told you not to eat ice cream before dinner.

With say, you can

a) Say something – Francis says he's not coming

b) Say that (something) – I said that the new website design was great

c) Say (something) to (a person) – What did he say to you when you failed the exam?

d) "(something)" a person said – "Nice to meet you", Hari said.

He said me that he had to leave – X

He told me that he had to leave.

You can speak with someone and speak to someone, you can also say talk to and talk with

Don't use "talk" with languages.

I don't talk Chinese – X

I don't speak Chinese.

#### 14.It's (high) time Form

It's (high) time + past tense expresses that something should have been done and that it is already a bit late.

It's time you started exercising.

It's high time you bought a car

It's time + present tense expresses that the right time has arrived for something and we are still in time.

It's time to eat/sleep

It's time to go

#### 15.Relate to or Relate with

Relate means To narrate /tell; to establish a connection between; to bring into a logical or natural association.

So relate with is incorrect in most contexts as 'with' is a preposition used as a function word to indicate accompanying detail or condition and the expression 'relate with' expresses redundancy.

I relate to you on the other hand is accurate-

to understand, accept, or feel kinship with someone or something

For relationship, to indicate a connection or to sympathize – use 'relate to'

For ex:

I have an interesting story to relate to you

The kids need a teacher who can relate to them

You're looking for a job? I can relate to that!.

#### 16.Responsible to vs Responsible for

Responsible for - ownership position - you own the task you are responsible for - being responsible for something or getting something done. You can also be responsible for someone when you are charged with taking care of them.

Responsible to - submissive position - you are answerable to, you have an obligation to - For ex: A politician is responsible to the people who elected him. (responsible to someone.)