

## **SUBJECT VERB AGREEMENT**

Subjects and verbs must agree in number.

If the subject is singular, the verb must be singular too.

Example: She writes every day.

If the subject is plural, the verb must also be plural.

Example: They write every day.

Sometimes, however, it seems a bit more complicated than this.

When the subject of the sentence is composed of two or more nouns or pronouns connected by and, use a plural verb.

Example: The student and the committee members write every day.

Example: The percentage of students who called in sick and the number of students who were marked as truant are proportional to the students' degree of seniority.

When there is one subject and more than one verb, the verbs throughout the sentence must agree with the subject.

Example: Interviews are one way to collect data and allow researchers to gain an in-depth understanding of participants.

Example: Writing is a skill that takes a good deal of practice and is a requirement of most online classes.

When a phrase comes between the subject and the verb, remember that the verb still agrees with the subject, not the noun or pronoun in the phrase following the subject of the sentence.

Example: The people who pursue a PhD degree are few.

Example: The student, as well as the committee members, is excited.

Example: The student with all the Master's degrees is very motivated.

Example: Strategies that the teacher uses to encourage classroom participation include using small groups and clarifying expectations.

Example: The focus of the interviews was nine purposively selected participants.

When two or more singular nouns or pronouns are connected by or or nor, use a singular verb.

Example: The chairperson or the CEO approves the proposal before proceeding.

When a compound subject contains both a singular and a plural noun or pronoun joined by or or nor, the verb should agree with the part of the subject that is closest to the verb. This is also called the rule of proximity.

Example: The student or the committee members write every day.

Example: The committee members or the student writes every day.

The words each, each one, either, neither, everyone, everybody, anyone, anybody, nobody, somebody, someone, and no one are singular and require a singular verb.

Example: Each of these ideas is good.

Example: Everybody sometimes questions subject-verb agreement rules.

Example: Nobody writes without making errors.

Example: Either answer is correct.

Noncount nouns take a singular verb.

Example: A lot of money is donated to the charity every year.

Example: News is on the radio every day.

Example: Hockey is a popular sport in Minnesota.

Example: Diabetes affects many people around the world.

Example: The information obtained from the business owners was relevant to include in the study.

Nouns such as scissors, shorts, jeans, and tweezers require plural verbs. There are two parts to each of these.

Example: The scissors are in the drawer.

Example: His jeans are too tight.

Example: Her shorts are very comfortable.

In sentences beginning with there is or there are, the subject follows the verb. Since there is not the subject, the verb agrees with what follows.

Example: There is a book.

Example: There are many books.

Collective nouns are words that imply more than one person but are considered singular and take a singular verb. Some examples are group, team, committee, family, and class.

Example: The group meets every week.

Example: The committee agrees on the quality of the writing.

However, the plural verb is used if the focus is on the individuals in the group. This is much less common.

Example: The committee participate in various volunteer activities in their private lives.

## **MISPLACED MODIFIERS**

A misplaced modifier is a word, phrase, or clause that does not clearly relate to what it is intended to modify. In other words, a misplaced modifier makes the meaning of a sentence ambiguous or wrong.

## Examples of Misplaced Modifiers

Here are some examples of misplaced modifiers (shaded):

Andrew told us after the holiday he intends to stop drinking.

(In this example, it is not clear whether Andrew made this statement after the holiday or whether he intends to stop drinking after the holiday.)

Running quickly improves your health.

(In this example, it is not clear if quickly modifies running or improves.)

We will not sell paraffin to anyone in glass bottles.

(Often, like in this example, common sense tells us what the writer meant. Clearly, this is about paraffin in glass bottles not people in glass bottles. However, placing your modifier too far away from the thing being modified will do little to showcase your writing skills.)

## Misplaced Modifiers Can Change the Meaning

Sometimes, a misplaced modifier is not a mistake. It just leads to an unintended meaning. Look at these sentences:

He lost nearly \$5,000 in Las Vegas.

(This means he lost just under \$5,000.)

He nearly lost \$5,000 in Las Vegas.

(Here, we don't know how much he lost. He might have lost nothing at all.) These examples demonstrate that a modifier needs to be near whatever it's modifying.

## How to Avoid a Misplaced Modifier

You can avoid a misplaced modifier by placing your modifier alongside whatever it's modifying. For example:

Jack can hear Jill when she whispers clearly. (x)

(As the intended meaning is that Jack can clearly hear Jill's whispers, this is a misplaced modifier. It can be corrected by moving the modifier next to the word it is meant to modify.) Here is a correct version for the intended meaning:

Jack can clearly hear Jill when she whispers. (✓)

If the meaning were Jack can hear Jill's clear whispers, then the first version would be correct:

Jack can hear Jill when she whispers clearly. (✓)

Probably the most famous example of a misplaced modifier is not a misplaced modifier at all. Look at this well-known joke by Groucho Marx:

One morning I shot an elephant in my pyjamas. How he got into my pajamas I'll never know. (Groucho Marx)

This is not a misplaced modifier because the elephant was actually in his pyjamas.

### Types of Misplaced Modifiers

There are three types of misplaced modifiers:

(1) Those that modify the wrong thing.

He only eats ice-cream. (x)

He eats only ice-cream. (✓)

These are the classic misplaced modifiers. This error occurs quite often with the word only.

Read more about misplacing limiting modifiers (e.g., only).

(2) Those that could feasibly modify either of two things in the sentence.

Talking quickly annoys people. (x)

These are more commonly called squinting modifiers.

(3) Those that modify nothing.

Having read your letter, my dog will be taken to the vet for a test. (x)

Having read your letter, I will take my dog to the vet for a test. (✓)

These are more commonly called dangling modifiers.

## **ARTICLES**

What is an article?

Articles (a, an, the) are determiners or noun markers that function to specify if the noun is general or specific in its reference. Often the article chosen depends on if the writer and the reader understand the reference of the noun.

The articles 'a and an' are indefinite articles. They are used with a singular countable noun when the noun referred to is nonspecific or generic.

The article 'the' is a definite article. It is used to show specific reference and can be used with both singular and plural nouns and with both countable and uncountable nouns.

Many languages do not use articles (a, an, and the), or if they do exist, the way they are used may be different than in English. Multilingual writers often find article usage to be one of the most difficult concepts to learn. Although there are some rules about article usage to help, there are also quite a few exceptions. Therefore, learning to use articles accurately takes a long time. To master article usage, it is necessary to do a great deal of reading, notice how articles are used in published texts, and take notes that can apply back to your own writing.

## **PREPOSITIONS**

Prepositions are words which begin prepositional phrases.

A prepositional phrase is a group of words containing a preposition, a noun or pronoun object of the preposition, and any modifiers of the object.

A preposition sits in front of (is “pre-positioned” before) its object.

The following words are the most commonly used prepositions:

about

below

excepting

off

toward

above

beneath

for

on

under

across

beside(s)

from

onto

underneath

after

between

in

out

until

## **REDUNDANCIES**

In English usage, redundancy is usually defined as the use of two or more words that say the same thing, but we also use the term to refer to any expression in which a modifier’s meaning is contained in the word it modifies (e.g., early beginnings, merge together—many more are listed below). Think of redundancies as word overflows.

This list is far from complete, and we're developing it organically (i.e., adding redundancies as they come up in our work) rather than compiling the list by stealing from other online sources, which would be too easy. If you feel strongly that any redundancy should be added here, please comment.

Actual fact

Added bonus: A bonus is by definition something added.

Adequate enough: One or the other will work.

After having

Arm's reach: reach or arm's length.

Blatantly obvious: Things that are blatant are obvious.

Blend together

[Adjective]-born: e.g., Brazilian-born, Texan-born. Make it Brazil-born or Texas-born (or Brazilian or Texan).

Browse through: To browse is to look through something, so through is already contained in its meaning.

But yet: As conjunctions (but not as adverbs), but and yet are synonyms.

### **Listening** - Suggestions for improving your listening skills

Before you listen

Think about the topic of the text you are going to listen to. What do you already know about it?

What could possibly be the content of the text? Which words come to mind that you already know? Which words would you want to look up?

If you have to do a task on the listening text, check whether you have understood the task correctly.

Think about what type of text you are going to listen to. What do you know about this type of text?

Relax and make yourself ready to pay attention to the listening text.

While you are listening

It is not necessary to understand every single word. Try to ignore those words that you think are less important anyway.

If there are words or issues that you don't understand, use your general knowledge as well as the context to find out the meaning.

If you still don't understand something, use a dictionary to look up the words or ask someone else for help.

Focus on key words and facts.

Take notes to support your memory.

Intonation and stress of the speakers can help you to understand what you hear.

Try to think ahead. What might happen next? What might the speakers say, which words might they use?

After listening

Think about the text again. Have you understood the main points?

Remember the speculations you made before you listened. Did they come true?

Review your notes.

Check whether you have completed your task correctly.

Have you had any problems while listening? Do you have any problems now to complete your task? Identify your problems and ask someone for help.

Listen again to difficult passages.

**Reading Comprehension**

Passage 1

Political education has many connotations. It may be defined as the preparation of a citizen to take well informed, responsible and sustained action for participation in the national struggle in order to achieve the socio-economic objectives of the country. The predominant socio- economic objectives in India are the abolition of poverty and the creation of a modern democratic, secular



and socialist society in place of the present traditional, feudal, hierarchical and in egalitarian one. Under the colonial rule, the Congress leaders argued that political education was an important part of education and refused to accept the official view that education and politics should not be mixed with one another. But when they came to power in 1947 they almost adopted the British policy and began to talk of education being **defiled** by politics. ‘Hands off education’ was the call to political parties. But in spite of it, political infiltration into the educational system has greatly increased in the sense that different political parties vie with each other to capture the mind of teachers and students. The wise academicians wanted political support, without political interference. What we have actually received is infinite political interference with little genuine political support. This interference with the educational system by political parties for their own ulterior motives is no political education at all and with the all-round growth of elitism, it is hardly a matter for surprise that real political education within the school system (which really means the creation of a commitment to social transformation) has been even weaker than in the pre-independence period.

During that time only, the struggle for freedom came to an end and the major non- formal agency of political education disappeared. The press played a major role by providing some political education. But it did not utilize the opportunity to the full and the strangle hold of vested interests continued to dominate it. The same can be said of political parties as well as of other institutions and agencies outside the school system which can be expected to provide political education. After analyzing all these things, it appears that we have made no progress in genuine political education in the post-independence period and have even slid back in some respects. For instance, the education system has become even more elite-oriented. Patriotism has become the first casualty. The father of the nation gave us the courage to oppose government when it was wrong, in a disciplined fashion and on basic principles. Today, we have even lost the courage to fight on basic issues in a disciplined manner because agitational and anarchic politics for individual, group or party aggrandizement has become common. In the recent times the education system continues to support domination of the privileged groups and domestication of the under- privileged ones. The situation will not change unless we take vigorous steps to provide genuine political education on an adequate scale. This is one of the major educational reforms we need, and if it is not carried out, mere linear expansion of the existing system of formal education will only support the status quo and **hamper** radical social transformation.

1. Which word is nearly opposite in meaning as “defile” as used in the passage?

- A. Disparage
- B. forgery
- C. degenerate
- D. sanctify

2. According to the passage, what should be the main purpose of political education?

- A. To champion the cause of elitism
- B. To bring qualitative change in the entire education system
- C. To create an egalitarian society
- D. To prepare the young generation with high intellectual acumen.

3. How has politics been related to educational institutions after independence?

- A. Although they got political support but there was no interference of politics.
- B. It is clear that they got almost no political support as well as political interference.
- C. They got political support at the cost of political interference.
- D. There was substantial interference without political support.

4. Based on the passage, which is the major drawback of the present education system?

- A. The education system mainly represents the oppressed sections of the society.
- B. The present education system promotes the domination of the privileged few.
- C. It is based on the British model of education.
- D. It is highly hierarchical and egalitarian in nature.

5. Which is the most opposite in meaning to the word 'hamper' as used in the passage?

- A. Accelerate
- B. envision
- C. foster
- D. initiate

Answers

1) D      2) C      3) D      4) B      5) C

Fill in the blanks with suitable prepositions.

Johnson was going \_\_\_on\_\_\_ a vacation and Naomi was \_\_\_about\_\_\_ to join him. I wanted to meet them \_\_\_before\_\_\_ my marriage. He said he was travelling \_\_\_towards/to\_\_\_ Hampi. Naomi will accompany him \_\_\_from\_\_\_ Bangalore. I was \_\_\_under\_\_\_ the impression that Johnson

and Naomi would get married \_before\_\_\_\_\_ me. It was \_\_on\_\_ a cold winter morning, that I came \_across\_\_\_\_\_ Naomi, she was sitting \_beside\_\_\_\_\_ an old man and laughing with him.