Sentence Correction Basic Rules

1. There should be a main subject and a main verb, which should agree in plurality.
2. If the main subject is connected by any additive other than "and", it is still singular.
3. If "either … or", "neither … or" or "or" are used, then the verb has to agree with the word closest to it. If just "either" or "neither" are used, then they are singular.
    a. Either John or his friends are coming for dinner.
    b. Neither John's friends nor John is coming for dinner.
4. Collective nouns are always singular.
5. Indefinite pronouns ("each", "every") are usually singular. If SANAM(Some, any, none, all, more/most) pronouns are used:
    a. None is singular
    b. SANAM <of> means use the plurality of the word after "of"
        a. Some of his friends are coming for dinner.
6. "The" number is singular, while "a" number is plural.
7. If the construction goes "one of the" who/that … use a plural verb. The noun should be followed by who or that for this sentence to hold good. If the sentence just has "one of the" then its most likely singular.
8. List of tenses:
    a. Simple present – Permanent situations
    b. Simple past – Describe an event that happened at a specific time in the past
    c. Simple future – Uses "will" or "be going to" where "will" is voluntary, and "be going to" refers to a plan of action.
    d. Present Perfect – Used to denote an event that happened at an unspecified time before the present : [Has/Have] + Present Participle
    e. Past Perfect - Used to denote the event that happened in the far past when referring to two things that happened in the past. The near past event is referred to using the simple tense: [Had] + Past Participle
    f. Present Perfect Continuous – Used to denote something that started in the past and has continued into the present : [Has/Have] + Been + Present participle
    g. Past Perfect Continuous – Denote something that started in the past and continued till some other time in the past : [Had] + Been + Past Participle
9. Between simple and perfect tenses – choose the simple for the nearer event and the perfect for the one that happened before.

10. Between simple and continuous tenses – try to avoid continuous tenses unless the action is ongoing.

11. Has had refers to the present perfect tense and had had refers to the past perfect.

12. If … then construction

    a. Present tense --- "will" verb

    b. Past tense --- "would" verb

    c. Future Tense --- "would have" verb

13. A pronoun should refer back to a specific noun and should agree in number with the noun that it replaces. To check, substitute the noun back into the place of the pronoun and check if it makes sense.

14. When you have "it, its, they, them or their" its most likely a pronoun error.

15. "That" describes an essential clause, while "which" refers to a non-essential clause. "Which" can only be used in the following situations:

    a. It follows a comma

    b. It describes the word that comes IMMEDIATELY before it.

16. If the answer to the question is I, he or she, then use "who" and if the answer is me, him or her, then use "whom"

17. Try to use "do so" whenever you're stuck between "do it" and "do so"

18. The modifier should be placed as close to the word it describes as possible. This is especially true of participial phrases or adjectival modifiers.

19. When parallelism is employed in a sentence, all the words must take the same tense, and be in the same form.

20. Correlative conjunctions in parallelism: Same grammatical element

    a. Not only … but also

    b. No sooner … than

    c. Either … or

    d. Both … and

    e. Neither … nor

21. Compared items must be logically and grammatically similar.

22. Comparative terms are used between two terms and superlative terms are used for more than two terms.

23. "Like" is used to compare nouns and "as" is used for all other comparisons (clauses, and so on)

24. The subjunctive mood represents either a hypothetical situation or a situation where a suggestion or demand is made. In this case the words "were" and "would" are used even if the subject is singular.

25. "Whether" is used to introduce alternatives while "if" only indicates conditional construction.

26. "Like" is used to indicate similarity while "such as" is used for indicating examples.

27. "Compared with" is used to actually compare two things, while "compared to" is used to liken something to something that is usually not comparable to the thing being likened.

28. "Due to" means "caused by". If the "due to" is replaced with "caused by" and it doesn't make any sense stick to "because of" or "for"

29. "Less" is used for unquantifiable things, while "fewer" is used for quantifiable things. Similarly "farther" is used for quantifiable things while "further" is used for unquantifiable things.

30. Agree to "verb" and agree with "noun".

31. Will is future, would is past.

32. "Between" two things and "Among" many things.

33. "Rather than" indicates preference. "Instead" indicates replacement.

34. Two independent clauses should be separated by comma and FANBOYS (For, And, Nor, But, Or, Yet, So) or by a semicolon.

35. In parallel structures, you can have two participles, one ending with –ing and the other ending with –ed. It is still grammatically correct.

36. "This" replaces singular nouns, while "those" replaces plural nouns.

37. "So … that" is right, and "so … as to" is also right.

38. Avoid redundant construction.

39. Avoid passive voice as much as possible.

40. You need the word "that" after any reporting verb.