

Aptitude Advanced

Basic Grammar Rules Part I

eBook 02

Chapter 1: Basic Grammar Rules - 1

1.1 Rules for Usage of Nouns

1. The following nouns are used in the same form, whether singular or plural:

Deer, sheep, fish, apparatus, yoke

2. The following nouns are singular in form but are used as plurals:

Progeny, alphabet, swine, poultry, cattle, peasantry, artillery, police, company, infantry, clergy, gentry, people

3. The following nouns are plural in form. Their form is not changed whether these are used as singular or plural:

odds, spectacles, alms, tidings, trousers, intestines, annals, tongs, riches, credentials, proceeds, scissors, gymnastics, environs, measles, gallows, assets, breeches, wages, auspices

4. The following nouns are plural in form but are used as singulars:

physics, economics, innings, news, mathematics, statistics

5. The following nouns are not changed into plural nor are preceded by an article of indefiniteness (a or an) bread, mischief, business, advice, language, hair, furniture, poetry, information, scenery
6. Material nouns like brick, stone, marble, iron, wood are not changed into plurals when they denote a mass of matter:
7. When a noun serves the purpose of an adjective in a compound word (a word made up of two nouns), it is not changed into the plural form.
a ten-rupee note; four-mile race, five-man delegation
8. Possessive case of a noun (nouns with 's) is used:
(a) with living things.

For example: Mohan's cap, Ram's school, sister's right.

Incorrect: This room's carpet must be changed.

Correct: The carpet of this room must be changed.
(Room is a lifeless thing)

(b) with personified things. For example: Fortune's wheel, Nature's laws, Fate's doing etc.

(c) with time or weight or space. For example: Day's work, Minute's rest, Night's journey.

(d) for objects with dignity. For example: the Court's order.

(e) in some phrases like "out of harm's way", "at his wit's end."

10. When two nouns are joined by 'and' apostrophe 's' ('s) is added to both if we want to denote the possession of both and to last if we denote joint possession.

Incorrect: Suzy's and Juicy's father was present.

Correct. Suzy and Juicy's father was present.

11. Sometimes's is wrongly put in place of a preposition.

Incorrect: This author's book is not good. (Book possessed by this author).

Correct: The book of this author is not good. (Book written by this author)

12. Double possessives should not be used.

Incorrect: My mother's brother's daughter came.

Correct: The daughter of the brother of my mother came.

13. In the case of "somebody else", "everyone else", "anybody else", "anyone else" etc., 's is put after else.

Incorrect: This is somebody's else job.

Correct: This is somebody else's job.

1.2 Rules for Usage of Verbs

There are three periods in which any work can be done
Present, Past, Future.

I. The Present Tense

Clearly there are four forms of the Present Tense.

- a) Present Indefinite, e.g. "*He works hard*"
- b) Present Continuous, e.g. "*He is working hard*"
- c) Present Perfect, e.g. "*He has worked hard*"
- d) Present Perfect Continuous, e.g. "*He has been working hard*".

- a) Present Indefinite Tense is used in the following cases.
1. Whenever there is a customary or habitual activity seen as a whole, e.g. "*He always greets me.*"
 2. For expressing a general truth, e.g. "*The sun rises in the east.*"
 3. When we speak of a person or an event, which occupies a significant place in history, e.g. "*Kalidas is the greatest writer of Sanskrit plays.*"
 4. When we refer to an author's writing, e.g. Shakespeare, in one his plays, says that "*Life is a tale told by an idiot*"
 5. If a subordinate adverbial clause begins with any of the following words.

When, whenever, until, till, as soon as, before, after, as long as, if, unless future tense is replaced by present indefinite tense, e.g. "*I will ask him when he meets me.*"

b) The Present Continuous Tense

In this case IS, ARE, AM are followed by first form of the verb + ING, e.g. "am going", "is doing." It is used:

1. When action is in progress, e.g. *"I am listening to you."*
2. When we refer to something happening now but not necessarily at that moment, e.g. *"I am writing an article though I am busy these days."*
3. Sometimes it refers to the future e.g. *"I am leaving tomorrow."*
4. The following verbs are not used in the continuous form:-
see, feel, hear, smell, know, think, understand, suppose, wish, hope, doubt, prefer, remember, forget, seem, belong, possess.

c) The Present Perfect

The Present Perfect is formed by putting past participle of the verb after HAS or HAVE, e.g. "I have already resigned."

The Present Perfect tense is used:

1. to express a recently completed action. Example: He has just returned from Bombay.
2. for such past actions in which time is neither given nor definite. Example: I have read your letter but I do not agree.

3. For actions which occurred in the past and the connection with the present is still maintained.
Example: He has written many poems.
The above given sentence implies that the person is alive and can write poems now also.
4. is used with the words like lately, recently, yet.
Examples: There have been many changes recently. They haven't finished their work yet.
5. is used with a time expression. Examples :
I have smoked since my college days.
He has lived in this house all his life.
6. verbs 'knowing', 'believing', 'understanding' cannot be used in the Present Perfect tense. But we can say:
I have always believed my friends.
I have known him since long.

d) The Present Perfect Continuous

This tense is formed by using Present Perfect of the verb 'to be' + the present participle.

Examples: 1. I have been listening to you.

2. He has been avoiding your company.

It can be used:

1. for the action which began in the past and is still continuing.

Examples: I have been typing for an hour.

I have been exercising since morning.

2. for a repeated action in the simple present perfect.

Example: I have been warning him since morning.

II. The Past Tense

a) The Simple Past Tense

It is formed by adding 'ed' to the infinitive past tense in the regular verb. It can be used:

1. for a past action when the time is given. Example: He left this place yesterday.
2. When the time is asked. Example: When did you visit him?
3. When the action occurred at a definite time though the time is not mentioned. Example: I bought this pen from that shop.
4. For an action whose time is not given but it was during a period of time but now finished. Example: he played cricket for years (does not play now).
5. for a past habit. Example: He always bullied me.

6. Past subjunctive (it has the same form as the simple past tense in all verbs except to be whose past subjunctive is WERE) is used after 'if, 'if any', 'as if', 'as though' or 'wish' to indicate unreality or improbability.

Examples: If we lived on the moon (unreal)

He behaves as if he were my boss.

I wish I were a king. (unreal)

b) The Past Continuous Tense

It is formed by the past tense of the verb 'to be' + the present participle.

Example: *I was helping him in that work.*

This tense is used:

1. a) to indicate gradual development.

Example: I was getting late.

b) for action which began earlier but continued after it. Example: At that time I was examining papers.

c) when time expression is replaced by simple past-tense. Example: When I came he was changing his dress.

d) in descriptions also. Example: He was reading a book, his mother was sleeping and his sister was singing softly to herself when there was a knock at the door.

2. a) in the indirect speech,

Example: Direct: He said, "I am working hard."

Indirect: He told that he was working hard.

- b) in place of future in the past.

Example: He was studying hard for he was taking test in the afternoon

- c) with 'always'.

Example: He was always abusing me. (gives a frequently repeated past action).

3. to indicate a more casual and less deliberate action. Example: I was talking to him the other day.

c) **The Past Perfect Tense**

This tense is formed with 'had' and the past participle of the verb. It is used:

1. for an action which began before the time of speaking in the past and is still continuing or has finished recently.

Example: He was in police uniform; he had been with the police force for five years.

2. When the narrator speaks about an earlier action at a particular point of time in the past.

Example: He had resigned when I contacted him.

3. The past perfect tense is used in the time clauses in the following cases:

a) when we refer to two actions – first is complete before the second one started.

Example: when he had finished his argument, I started my arguments.

b) after is normally followed by perfect tense.

Example: After he had finished his work I called him.

c) verbs of knowing, understanding etc. except when modified by a time expression are not used in past perfect tense in the time clauses.

Example: When I had learnt the work I was confirmed.

4. Past perfect tense is used in indirect speech in the following cases:

a) Present Perfect tense in the direct speech is changed into past perfect tense in indirect speech.

Example:

Direct: *He said, "I have finished the work."*

Indirect: *He told me that he had finished the work.*

b) Simple past tense in the direct speech generally changes into past perfect tense.

Example:

Direct: *He said, "I knew her father."*

Indirect: *He told that he had known her father.*

d) The Past Perfect Continuous

This verb is formed with had been + the present participle, e.g. "had been looking."

It can be used:

1. When the action began before the time of speaking in the past and continued upto that time or stopped just before it. **Example:** He had been working since 3 P.M. so he was exhausted.

2. A repeated action in the past perfect can sometimes be expressed as past perfect continuous.

Example: *He had been trying to meet you.*

III. The Future Tense

a) The Simple Future Tense

- i) Simple future tense is formed by using shall/will + infinitive without 'to'.
- 'Will' & 'Shall' form can be used:
1. to express speaker's opinions, assumptions & speculations about the future. It is accompanied by the verbs like think, know, believe, doubt, suppose, assume, expect, hope, feel, dare-say, wonder etc. and by the adverbs like probably, possibly, perhaps etc. **Example:** I suppose I will win the match. I hope I will succeed. Probably he will come.
 2. For future habitual action. **Examples:** Hens will lay eggs. Birds will build nests.
 3. With clauses of condition, time & purpose. **Examples:** If deny he will abuse me. I am sending this message so that he will be ready.

4. For the future plans. **Examples:** The President will inaugurate this meeting. He will take two months' leave.
5. Won't is used to express negative intention. **Example:** won't meet him today.

ii) 'Going to' form is also used to express future tense. Example: I am going to meet him. (I will meet him).
'Going to' form is used:

1. for the speaker's intention to perform a future action. Intention is pre-mediated, some preparation has been made and is likely to be performed (not definitely). Example: *I am going to speak to the President.*
2. When we refer to the near future. Example: *He is going to make a speech.*
3. to express the speaker's feeling of certainty. Example: *Thick clouds are there; it is going to rain.*

b) The Future Continuous Tense

It is formed with the future tense of the verb "to be" + the present participle.

Example: 'shall be working', 'will be meeting'.

Sometimes present continuous tense is also used for future tense. The difference in the meaning will be:

1. Present continuous tense refers to deliberate future action. Future continuous tense refers to less definite and more casual action.
2. The Present continuous can only be used with a definite time and for near future. Future continuous is used with or without definite time and for the near or distant future.
3. Will + infinitive should be distinguished from future continuous tense,
(a) the former express future with intention and the latter without intention,
(b) will + infinite can express invitation, police request or command but future continuous can have none of these meanings.
4. The future continuous can also be used like other continuous tenses, to express an action which will continue for some time without definite limits.

Example: When I reach there he will be waiting for me.

c) **The Future Perfect**

It is formed with shall/will + perfect infinitive (without to).
Example: *You will have taught for 20 years before you retire.*

It can be used with a time expression.

Example: *I shall have finished by the time you leave.*
(This clearly implies that 'I have not finished.')

d) **The Future Perfect Continuous**

It is formed with will have been + present participle.

Example: *I will have been waiting for my turn for 2 hours.*

1.3 Auxiliary Verbs and Modals

Rules applicable to all auxiliaries:

1. All auxiliaries (except be, have, do) are used in the same form for all persons.
Example: *I can, you can, we can, he can* etc.
2. Auxiliaries are not normally used in the continuous tenses except when it is used in passive voice.

3. Auxiliaries are followed by the infinitive:
- a) be, have, ought, used are followed by an infinitive with to.
Example: *He is to meet you. He has to work hard.*
 - b) do, can, may, must, will, shall are followed by the infinitive without 'to'.
Example: *You may come. You must finish work.*
 - c) Need and Dare take infinitive without 'to', but when conjugated with 'do' they take infinitive with 'to'.
Example: *You dare not oppose me. He did not dare to speak the truth.*

1.4 Subject Verb Agreement

By Agreement we usually mean that the Number (singular/plural) of the Subject must match with the Verb.

This will be clear if you study the following rules carefully.

1. If the sentence has one subject then depending on the number of that subject the verb will be in singular or plural to match the number of subject.
Example: A boy is crying. The boys are crying.

2. If the sentence has two subjects which are joined by “and” then the verb is in Plural.
Example: *A boy and a girl are crying. The boys and girls are crying.*
3. If two singular subjects are joined by ‘neither....nor, either....or’ then the verb is in singular .
Example: *Either a boy or a girl is crying. Neither the boy nor the girl is crying.*
4. If two Plural subjects are joined by ‘neither....nor, either....or’ then the verb is in Plural .
Example: *Either the boys or the girls are crying. Neither the boys nor the girls are crying.*
5. If one singular subject and one plural subject are joined by ‘neither....nor, either....or’ then the verb agrees with the subject nearer to it.
Example: *Either the boy or the girls are crying. Neither the boys nor the girl is crying*
6. When two subjects are joined by “as well as, rather than, more than, as much as,” then the verb agrees with the first subject.
Example: *The boy, as well as the girl, is crying.*

The boy, rather than the girls, is responsible.

7. (One or more/One or two) + Plural Subject +Plural Verb.

Example: *One or more boys are crying*

One or two girls are crying

8. (More than one/Many a) + Singular Subject + Singular Verb.

Example: *More than one boy is crying.*

Many a girl is crying.

9. Any of + Plural Subject +Plural Verb.

Example: *Were any of the boys crying.*

One or two girls are crying.

10. None of + Plural Subject +Singular Verb.

Example: *None of the clothes is dirty.*

None of the money has been found.

1.5 Verbal Idioms and their Usage

1. Come and Go

The king of Japan went on a visit to London while I was there.

The inspector is going to our school tomorrow.

These sentence constructs are incorrect. Movement towards the speakers position is given by 'come' and Movement away from the speaker is given by 'go'. The correct sentence constructs would be

The king of Japan came on a visit to London while I was there.

The inspector is coming to our school tomorrow.

The following idioms 'to go for', 'to go to', 'to go on' are used thus

We *go to a function.* (marriage, party, cinema)

We *go for an activity.* (walk, swim, run)

We *go on a journey or anything involving travel.*(picnic, tour, outing)

He went to Bombay by train last night and should be reaching there this evening.

He went is used only when the person referred to has already *reached his destination*. If he is still *in transit* then we must say

He left for Bombay yesterday and should be reaching there this evening.

2. To Say and To Tell

The verb to say *takes a limited number of objects* which are *this, that, it, something, nothing, everything, a lot, a great deal, little(a few, some, any) words, a word, prayers.*

The difference between *to say* and *to tell* is clearly indicated in the example below.

He said me a story.

He told me a story.

** "said never takes a Personal Object whereas told can take the same".*

The verb said is never used with the infinitive whereas the verb told may be used with the same.

3. To Inform

Informed always takes a direct personal object and is used with 'of, about, or a that'.

His brother informed him the good news.
(Incorrect)

His brother informed him of the good news.
(Correct)

4. To describe, to discuss, to mention

All these **Verbs are Transitive** hence the following sentences are incorrect.

1. He described about his experiences in Spain.
2. They are going to discuss about the matter.
3. Do not mention about the matter to anyone.

In all the three sentences the '*about*' must be dropped to get correct sentences.

5. To order, stress, emphasize

All these **verbs are always transitive**, therefore the following sentences are incorrect.

1. He ordered for a cup of coffee.
2. He stressed on the need for unity.
3. He emphasized on the critical aspects.

In Sentence 1 '*for*' must be dropped. In Sentences 2 and 3 '*on*' must be dropped.

6. The verbs, 'impress, oppress, overwhelm, affect, possess, surround, enclose' can take both 'by' or 'with'

1. I was impressed by (with) his kindness.
2. He was overwhelmed by (with) joy.
3. He was affected by (with) grief at his friend's death.
4. He was possessed by (with) the idea of joining the army.

However the following sentence constructs are incorrect.

5. He impressed me by his kindness.
6. He overwhelmed me by his good manners.

Note: If the doer is the subject (as is the case in sentence 5 and 6) then the above verbs take only 'with'. Otherwise (as is the case in sentence 1, 2, 3 and 4) the verbs can take either 'with or by'.

7. To Comment

He was heard commenting about the subject.

This sentence construct is *incorrect*. You always comment on something never *comment about*.

8. The use of 'Both' and 'Not only.....but'

Examine the following sentences using Both and a Preposition

1. He was fond of both reading and writing poetry.

2. He was fond both of reading and of writing poetry.

The above two sentences are correct sentence constructs using '*both + preposition (of)*'. However the following sentence construct is incorrect.

3. He was fond both of reading and writing poetry.

The same rule applies to Not only.....but

4. He was fond of not only reading but writing poetry as well

5. He was fond not only of reading but of writing poetry as well.

9. Cannibalism

This term is used when *one Preposition swallows another* resulting in a grammatical error.

Examples

Incorrect: The house that he stays in Madras is a small one.

Correct: The house he lives *in*, *in* Madras is a small one.

1.6 Rules of Pronouns

A pronoun is a word used instead of a Noun. It helps us avoid repetition of the noun every time we make a reference to the same noun.

I am young

You are young

He (she, it) is young

We are young

You are young

They are young

All the underlined words are called Personal Pronouns.

Personal Pronouns have three forms.

1. Subject Form - Ask the question 'Who' before the verb.

I (you, we, he, they) ate the apple.

2. Possessive Form - Ask the question 'whose' before the verb.

The Apple is mine(yours, ours, his, theirs).

3. Object Form - Ask the question 'whom/to whom' after the verb

The teacher hates me (you, us, him, them).

The apple belongs to me (you, us, him, them).

Example: Why don't you and me go for a walk?

This sentence construction is incorrect. Here the pronoun takes the Subject form as is indicated by asking the question 'who' before the verb. The correct sentence

is

Why don't you and I take a walk?

For all inanimate objects we use 'it' as the pronoun form.

Example : The desk fell and it split into two.

The baby had its bath.

Note - *'its' as a personal pronoun is often confused with "it's" which means it is.*

The university said its closed for a week.

This sentence construct is incorrect. Here 'its' stands for 'it is' therefore use "it's."

The Possessive Case

The Possessive Case indicates the relation between two nouns placed next to each other, where the first noun denotes possession or ownership.

Example: The king's crown, the boy's book.

Rules for the use of Possessive Case

1. If the noun is singular then we form the Possessive Case by adding an apostrophe and an 's' to the noun as shown in the examples above.
2. When a noun is plural and ends in "s" then the

Possessive Case is formed by adding an apostrophe at the end of the plural form.

Example: horses' tails, girls' school

3. When two Nouns are in Apposition then we put the Possessive Case on the latter.

Example: That is Tagore the poet's house.

4. When one noun follows another with the intention of describing the preceding noun, the noun which follows is said to be in Apposition. In the above example the noun poet describes the noun Tagore.

Rules for Usage of Pronouns

1. A pronoun must invariably gel with its antecedent
 - (i) 'one' must be followed by "one",
 - (ii) "everyone", "anyone" or "nobody" are followed by "his"
 - (iii) if second (you) and third person (he) are used as pronouns following pronoun should be 'you', 'your' etc.,
 - (iv) if first (I) and second (you) person pronouns are used the following pronoun will be "our".

1. Incorrect: One should not forget his work.

Correct: One should not forget one's work.

2. Incorrect: Everyone is in charge of one's job.

Correct: Everyone is in charge of his job.

3. Incorrect: You and he are aware of their duties.

Correct: You and he are aware of your duties.

2. If a pronoun is the complement of *to be*, it should be in the subjective case.

Incorrect: It is him who met me.

Correct: It is he who met me.

3. Let is followed by the objective case of the pronoun.

Incorrect: Let you and he work together on the project.

Correct: Let you and him work together on the project.

4. If a pronoun is the object of a preposition it should be in the objective case.

1. Incorrect: This is between you and I that he is a thief.

Correct: This is between you and me that he is a thief.

2. Incorrect: Besides I none else was there at the function.

Correct: Besides me none else was there at the function.

5. Pronoun who is used when the verb is in active voice.

Incorrect: There are many girls whom we know are flirts.

Correct: There are many girls who we know are flirts.

6. Pronoun whom is used when the verb related to it is in passive voice.

Incorrect: Who are you calling to inform?

Correct: Whom are you calling to inform?

7. If a relative pronoun is used in subjective and objective cases (who, whom) we cannot put one pronoun in place of two.

Incorrect: He met a foreigner who he knew and was a famous singer.

Correct: He met a foreigner whom he knew and who was a famous singer.

8. When a pronoun follows 'than' or as its case is decided by imagining the verb and completing the sentence.

Incorrect: He is better placed than me in all respects.

*Correct: He is better placed than I in all respects.
(The completed sentence needs 'I am').*

Compare the following two sentences:

"You love me more than he."

"You love me more than him."

The first sentence when completed will be "you love me more than he loves me." The second sentence when completed will be "you love me more than you love him."

9. 'the same' should not be used in place of a pronoun.

Incorrect: After finishing this novel return the same to me.

Correct: After finishing this novel return it to me.

10. Pronoun 'IT' comes before the phrase or clause to which it refers whereas 'this' follows the phrase or clause it refers to.

Examples: "It is clear that he is a hypocrite."

"He hurled abuses at me and this was quite annoying."

11. When the following verbs are used reflexively, a reflexive pronoun must be put after them. Enjoy, acquit, absent, avail, resign, over-reach, apply, exert, adapt, assert.

Incorrect: He enjoyed during the plane journey.

Correct: He enjoyed himself during the plane journey.

12. Reflexive pronoun is not used after the following verbs:

Make, lengthen, stop, steal, form, feed, qualify, gather, hide, burst, roll, rest, turn, speed, open, move, bathe, break, keep.

Incorrect: We kept ourselves away from the controversy.

Correct: We kept away from the controversy.

13. We cannot use the reflexive pronoun in place of a noun.

Incorrect: She and myself will work together.

Correct: She and I will work together.

14. 'THAT' is used in preference to WHO and WHICH in the following cases:
- a) after adjectives in the superlative degree, e.g. "This is the finest that we can have"
 - b) after the words like all, same, nothing and only, e.g. "All that glitters is not gold."
 - c) after interrogative pronouns, e.g. who are you that should poke your nose in my affairs?
 - d) after two antecedents one denoting a person and the other a thing or an animal, e.g. the horseman and her dog that came, have gone.
15. After SUCH and SAME pronouns AS or THAT are used.
- "Such a threat as he has given is not good."
"It is the same book that I had rejected."
16. A relative pronoun should be put as close to the noun it refers to, as is possible.
- Incorrect: I went to Peerumal's house who was a great painter.
- Correct: I went to the house of Peerumal who was a great painter.*

17. The nouns like MANNER and WAY should be followed by IN WHICH.
Incorrect: The way we tackled the situation was not desirable.
Correct: The way in which we tackled the situation was not desirable.
18. A noun or pronoun in the possessive case should not be used with an abstract noun.
Incorrect: He cannot bear your separation.
Correct: He cannot bear separation from you.
In the above given example 'separation' is an abstract noun so it should not be preceded by a possessive pronoun 'your'.
19. 'Each other' is used for two and "one another" for more than two.
Incorrect: These seven friends love each other.
Correct: These seven friends love one another.
20. WHAT is equivalent to 'that which' and is used without any antecedent, e.g. in the sentence "What

cannot be cured must be endured” there is no noun before ‘what’.

21. WHOSE should not be used for lifeless things.
Incorrect: This is the tree whose shade you enjoy.
Correct: This is the tree the shade of which you enjoy.

3.7 Adjectives

1. An Adjective is a word, which describes a noun. It tells us more about the noun.

Examples: Ram is a good boy.

Adjectives can be compared and there are three degrees of comparison.

Positive: sweet

Comparative: sweeter

Superlative: sweetest

For most adjectives the comparative is formed by adding ‘er’ to the Positive form, the Superlative is formed by adding ‘est’ to the Positive form, as can be seen in the example of the word *sweet*.

2. *Elder and eldest* are used *only on persons* and usually refer to family members. Also we always say '*elder to*' never elder than.

Older and oldest are used for *both persons and people*.

Also we always say *older than* and never older to.

Examples: He is my *elder* brother. He is *elder to* me.

The mountain is *older than* the tree. He is *older than* me.

3. '*Farther*' means *distant* and '*further*' means *additional*.

Examples: He refused to go any farther.

He made no further remarks.

4. *Nearest* denotes *distance*. *Next on the other hand* denotes *position*

Examples: He rushed to the nearest hospital.

He lives in the next house.

5. *Some and Any*. when the aim is to express quantity or degree we use '*some*' in affirmative sentences. '*Any*' is used in Negative sentences

Examples:

He called some of them home.

He did not call any of them.

Did he call any of them home?

However the following sentence is incorrect.

Will any of you clean up this mess?

If the question is a request or a command then we use 'some'. Therefore the correct sentence would be either:

Will *some* of you clean up this mess?

Will *one of you* clean up this mess?

6. *Each and Every*

Each directs attention towards the *individuals in the group* whereas *Every* directs attention towards *the whole group*.

Examples: Each of the five seats *were* taken up.
Every seat *was* taken up.

Note: *The verb form is plural in the first case and singular in the second.*

7. *Little* means not much; *A little* means some but not much; *The little* means not much but all there is.

Examples: Little is known about the Mayan Civilization. (Little - not much)

A little is known about the Mayan Civilization. (A little - some though not much)

The little that is known about the Mayan civilization is based on speculation. (The little - not much but all that is known)

Same is the case with Few, A few, The few.

There are three degrees of comparison – positive, comparative, and superlative, e.g. good (positive), better (comparative), best (superlative).

1. Single-syllabled adjectives are changed into comparative degree by suffixing ER and into superlative degree by suffixing EST. Generally, MORE and MOST are not used with them.

Incorrect: He is more wiser than his brother.

Correct: He is wiser than his brother. Exception:

When two qualities of a single person or a single thing are compared MORE is used with the first adjective even if it is a single syllabic word.

Incorrect: She is wiser than shrewd.

Correct: She is more wise than shrewd.

2. Double comparatives or superlatives are no longer used though Shakespeare used them.
Incorrect: These shoes are more preferable than those.
Correct: The shoes are preferable to those.
3. The adjectives which give absolute sense do not take MORE or MOST with them.
Incorrect: This belief is more universal than that.
Correct: This belief is universal and the other is not.
The adjective, like universal, are absolute and do not take more or most. Similarly, we cannot say “more parallel” or “more square.”
4. The following adjectives are followed by to and not by than junior, senior, inferior, elder, prefer, preferable, superior.
 1. Incorrect: This piece of cloth is superior than that.
Correct: This piece of cloth is superior to that.
 2. Incorrect: My sister is elder than me.
Correct: My sister is elder to me.

5. Similar things should be compared when we compare two things.
Incorrect: The speed of this car is greater than the old one.
Correct: The speed of this car is greater than that of the old one.
6. When comparative degree is used in the superlative sense we should
- (i) use 'any other' if we are comparing the things or persons of the same group,
 - (ii) use 'any' if the comparison is with things or persons outside the group.
- Incorrect: Bengu is faster than any student of his class.
Correct: Bengu is faster than any other student of his class. (Comparison within the group)
7. If two qualities of a person are mentioned both should be in the same degree of comparison.
Incorrect: Phatik is the most intelligent and hard working person.
Correct: Phatik is the most intelligent and the most hard working person.

8. Article THE must be used with adjectives in the superlative form.
Incorrect: This is tallest peak.
Correct: This is the tallest peak.
9. Article THE is normally not used with the comparative degree, but when there is a parallel increase, article THE is used.
10. If there is a gradual increase, it is generally expressed with two comparatives and NOT with adjectives in the positive degree.
Incorrect: His stand became tough and tough.
Correct: His stand became tougher and tougher.
11. When two adjectives in different degrees of comparison are used in the same sentence both should be complete in itself.
Incorrect: He is as good if not better than his brother.
Correct: He is as good as if not better than his brother.
In the above incorrect sentence, the two adjectives in two different degrees of comparison are – good

(positive degree) and better (comparative degree) The positive degree will be complete if we write AS GOOD AS and comparative degree as BETTER THAN. Otherwise the sentence would imply *as good than* and this is wrong.

12. Comparative degree should be used while comparing two and superlative degree when we compare more than two.

Incorrect: Among the three who is more hard working.

Correct: Among the three who is the most hard working.

13. When THAN or AS is used the verb is repeated after each pronoun or noun..

Incorrect: Ghagru is not as clever as his brother.

Correct: Ghagru is not as clever as his brother is.

Usage of Predicative Adjective

Predicative adjectives are those used in place of a predicate but like other adjectives modifies nouns or pronouns, e.g. "Sheenu's father looked sad" (in this sentence 'sad' is a predicative adjective).

1. In a sentence if we want to modify a noun or a pronoun we must use an adjective and not an adverb.

1. Incorrect: Please do not feel badly about it.

Correct: Please do not feel bad about it.

2. Incorrect: The pudding smells sweetly.

Correct: The pudding smells sweet.

2. **DUE TO** and **PRIOR TO** should be used as predicative adjectives, but when prepositional functions are to be performed 'because of' in place of 'due to' and 'before' in place of 'prior to' should be used.

1. Incorrect: He was delayed due to heavy rush.

Correct: He was delayed because of heavy rush.

2. Incorrect: The delay was because of rains.

Correct: The delay was due to rains.

3. Incorrect: The meet was fixed prior to 15th July.

Correct: The meet was fixed before 15th of July.

3. Verbs of sensation are followed by a predicative adjective, which modifies the noun or pronoun.

Incorrect: The mangoes taste bitterly.

Correct: The mangoes taste bitter.

3.8 Prepositions

Examine the following sentences

1. There is a cow in the field.
2. He is fond of tea.
3. The mouse jumped off the chair.

In sentence 1 the word in shows the relation between two nouns - cow and field.

In sentence 2 the word of shows the relation between the adjective - fond and the noun - tea.

In sentence 3, the word off shows the relation between the verb jumped and the noun chair.

The words *in, of, off* are used as prepositions. *A Preposition is a word placed before a noun or a pronoun to show the relation between the noun and some other noun, adjective or verb.*

Very often the error in a grammar question is the incorrect use of a preposition since we tend to misuse them so often.

1. A preposition is usually placed before its object but sometimes it may follow.

Examples

Here is the watch you were looking for.

That is the boy I was speaking of.

What are you looking at?

2. The prepositions for, from, in, on are often omitted before nouns of place or time.

Examples

We did it last week. I cannot walk a yard. Wait a minute.

3. There are three type of Prepositions
 - a. Simple prepositions: at, by, for, from, in, off, of, on, out, through, till. with, to, up.
 - b. Compound Prepositions: about, above, across, along, amidst, among, amongst, around, before, behind, below, beneath, beside, between, beyond, inside, outside, underneath, within, without.
 - c. Phrase Prepositions: these have to be used in the standard form that has been expressed below. Errors are typically made by using the incorrect phraseology.

according to	in place of	in accordance with
agreeable to	in reference to	in addition to
along with	in regard to	on behalf of
away from	in spite of	in case of
because of	instead of	in comparison to

by dint of	in the event of	in compliance with
by means of	on account of	in consequence of
by reason of	owing to	in course of
by virtue of	with a view to	in favour of
by way of	with an eye to	in front of
conformably to	with reference to	in lieu of
for the sake of	with regard to	in order to

Barring, concerning, considering, during, notwithstanding, pending, regarding, respecting, touching and a few other words are used without any noun or pronoun attached to them.

Examples

Barring rainfall, we should be able to play the match tomorrow.

Concerning yesterday's meeting, there are many rumours in the office.

Pending further orders, you will remain confined to your bedroom.

Prepositions requiring special attention

1. 'In' is used with the name of countries and large cities; 'at' is used when speaking of local places and small cities.
They live at Andheri in Mumbai.
2. 'In' and 'at' are used in speaking of things at rest, to and into are used in speaking of things in motion
He is in bed. He is at the top of his class.
He ran to school. He jumped into the river. The snake crawled into its hole.
3. On is often used for things at rest; upon the things in motion.
He sat on the table. The cat jumped upon the table.
4. Till is used of time and to of place.
I slept till eight o'clock. He walked to the end of the street.
5. With denotes the *instrument* and by the *agent*
He was killed with a knife. He was killed by the police.

6. Since is used before a noun or phrase denoting some point of time, and is preceded by a verb in the perfect tense whereas from is used with the non perfect tense. For is used with a period of time. I have eaten nothing since yesterday. He has been ill since Monday last.
I commenced work from 1st January. He will join college from tomorrow.
He has been ill for five days. He lived in Bombay for ten years.
7. In before a noun denoting a period of time *means at the end of*; within means *before the end of*.
I shall return in an hour. I shall return within an hour.
8. Beside means at the side of, while besides in addition to.
Beside the ungathered rice he lay. Besides being fined, he was also jailed.

Rules for Usage of Prepositions

A. Prepositions of Time

On: It is used for the exact time, e.g., on Monday, on 16th of September.

- In:** is used for seasons, months, years and some parts of the day (except noon and midnight)
- By:** implies upto, e.g. "I will finish this work by evening." (upto evening)
- For:** is used for the duration of action; it is generally used with perfect continuous tense, e.g. "He has been working for four years."
- Since:** is used for point of time, e.g. "He has been visiting this place since Monday."
- From:** is used for the starting point of an action, e.g. "Today I worked from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m."

B. Prepositions of Position

- At:** As a preposition of position it is used for small towns and villages, e.g. "He was born at Naraina village."
- In:** is used when refer to big cities and countries, e.g. "He was born in England."
- Between:** is used when we refer to person, e.g. "What happened between these two I do not know."
- Among:** is used when we refer to more than two, e.g. "Among all the five brothers he is the best."
- Over, Above:** Above means 'higher than' but over means vertically above."
- Incorrect:** This ceiling fan is above the study table.
Correct: *This ceiling fan is over the study table.*

Below, Under: Below means “lower than” whereas under means “vertically below.”

Incorrect: He is sitting under the shade of the tree.

Correct: He is sitting in the shade of the tree

There can be nothing vertically below the shade of the tree. But we can say “He is sitting under the tree.”

Beneath: means lower position; it is used figuratively generally, e.g. “it is beneath my dignity to request you.”

C. Prepositions of Direction

To: is used for exact destination, e.g. “I am going to my office.”

Towards: is used when we refer to direction, e.g. “I am going towards the station.” It means “in the direction of”

Into: refers to the movement towards the interior, e.g. “She jumped into the river.” (not in the river)

At: is used when we want to say ‘face to face with’, e.g.

- (i) “He was sitting at the table” (not on the table)
- (ii) ‘My servant stood at the ticket window (not on the ticket window)
- (iii) I was looking at his photograph (not on his photograph)

For: Sometimes for also denotes directions, e.g. 'he is leaving for Delhi today.'

Against: means 'pressing against', e.g. 'He was standing against the wall when I saw him.'

Off: is used when two things are separated, e.g. "The aeroplane took off at 4 p.m."

From: is used for the point of departure, e.g. "He has come from the club."

3.9 Conjunction

Conjunction is a word that connects sentences, clauses of words.

Rules for Usage of Conjunctions

1. **Than:** The conjunction **than** is used in the following causes –
 - (i) Adverbs or adjectives in the Comparative degree are followed by than e.g. "This building is taller than that."
 - (ii) The phrase no other is followed by than. e.g. "He has no other work than cheating others."
 - (iii) The phrase 'No sooner' must be followed by 'than' because 'sooner' is in the comparative degree. e.g. "No sooner did he leave the room than his friend entered."

2. **That:** The conjunction **that** is NOT used before (a) a sentence in direct narration (b) an interrogative adverb or interrogative pronoun in the indirection narration.

Incorrect : He said that "I am quite happy today."

Correct : He said, "I am quite happy today."

Incorrect : I asked him that how old he was.

Correct : I asked him how old he was.

3. **Since:**

- (i) It is used in the sense of before and after when the sentence is in the Perfect or Perfect Continuous tense. In the second case it must be followed by past tense. e.g. "I have been waiting for you since morning." Or 'No colleague met me since I left the job (Not 'since I had left').
- (ii) *Since* is also used in the sense of because e.g. "Since you are educated I like you."

4. **Unless, if:** Both are used to signify condition but unless means 'if not.' e.g. Unless you work I cannot recommend you for promotion."

5. **Until, Till:** Both refer to time. *Until* means till not. e.g. "I will wait until you come."

6. **Lest:** means ‘that not.’ *Lest* implies negative so ‘not’ is not used with it. Moreover it should be followed by ‘*should*’
Incorrect : Work lest you may not fail. *Correct* :
Work lest you should fail.
7. **Like, As** ‘*Like*’ is placed before a noun or a pronoun to establish similarity. ‘*As*’ is used when the noun or pronoun is followed by a verb. Study the following two sentences:
“I worked as a slave.”
“I worked like a slave.”
The first implies that “I was a slave” whereas the second means that I worked hard and I was not a slave.

Co-relative Conjunctions

These conjunctions go in pairs. Each member of the pair is followed by the same or similar part of speech or having the same function value.

8. **As – As:** This pair is used in affirmative sentences only.
Incorrect: She is not as wise as her brother is.
Correct: She is as wise as her brother is.
9. **So – As:** This pair is used only in negative sentences, e.g. “This is not so costly as the other is.”

10. **Although – yet:** *Although* goes with yet or a comma (,) in the other clause e.g. Although he is poor yet he is honest.
11. **Nothing else – but:** *Nothing else* should be followed by but and not by than. e.g. It is nothing else but hypocrisy.
12. **Whether – or not:** *Whether* in the first clause must be followed by *or not* in the second clause. e.g. “I do not know whether he will come or not.”
13. **Indeed – but:** These co-relative conjunctions are used to emphasize the contrast between the first and the second part of the statement.
Incorrect: He was indeed a popular leader but he could win elections.
Correct: He was indeed a popular leader but he could not win the elections.
In the first sentence there is no contrast so the use of ‘indeed’ and ‘but’ is incorrect.
14. **Hardly – when; Scarcely – when:** If ‘*hardly*’ or ‘*scarcely*’ is used in one clause ‘*when*’ must be used in the second clause. e.g. “Hardly had he entered the room when the bell rang” or “Scarcely had he stepped out when it started raining”.

15. **Such – as; Such – that:** When ‘*such*’ is used for comparison it should be followed by ‘*as*’ and when it is used for emphasis it should be followed by ‘*that*’.
1. Incorrect: It is such an article that I cannot reject.
Correct: It is such an article as I cannot reject.
2. Incorrect: It is such a beautiful dream as I cannot forget.
Correct: It is such a beautiful dream that I cannot forget.
16. **Not only – but also:** While using ‘*not only – but also*’ three things are to be kept in mind
- (i) Verb must agree with the noun or pronoun mentioned second in the sentence.
- (ii) Both ‘*not only*’ and ‘*but also*’ should come before the noun or pronoun they are to modify.
- (iii) The part which is to be emphasized must come after ‘*but also*’.
1. Incorrect: Not only I but also he am to resign.
Correct: Not only I but also he is to resign.
2. Incorrect: He is not only known for bravery but also for kindness.

Correct: He is known for not only bravery but also for kindness.