

Aptitude Advanced

Sentence Correction Rule Book I

eBook 01

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Chapter 1: Introduction to Sentence Correction

1.1 Introduction:

The Sentence Correction section tests your knowledge of written English grammar. This section gives you a sentence that may contain errors in grammar or usage. You must select the answer that best corrects the sentence.

The questions will require you to be familiar with the stylistic, grammatical rules of standard written English and to demonstrate your ability to improve incorrect or ineffective expressions.

This section tests two aspects:

A. Correct Expression: A correct sentence is grammatically correct and structurally sound. It conforms to all the rules of standard written English such as:

- Subject-verb agreement
- Subject Pronoun Agreement
- Verb tense consistency,
- Modifier reference and position,
- Parallel construction

B. Effective Expression: It should express an idea or relationship clearly and concisely, as well as grammatically. Ensure you abide by the following

- No superfluous words or unnecessarily complicated expressions.
- Use of proper diction
- Use of correct idiomatic phrases

1.2 Relevance in entrance tests

Generally, 3-4 questions are asked from Grammar and Sentence correction section in the verbal component of the test. The questions could be asked in fill in the blank format or correct the underlined portion of the sentence or find the sentence which is grammatically correct. Basically, these questions expect you to check for grammar rules and usage.

1.3 Skills required

Your ability to identify sentences that are grammatically incorrect

- a. For this, you need to assimilate basic grammar and sentence correction rules
- b. Sometimes your ear can alert you to some answer choices that are hopelessly awkward, and it's not worth

the time to dissect them grammatically in order to pinpoint exactly what's wrong. I do, however, caution against relying on your ear too much.

C. Practise few questions every day.

D. Solve questions under a time limit. The entrance tests are time bound and you should not spend too much time on one question.

1.4 Format of questions asked

Format 1

Directions: Which of phrases given below each sentence should replace the phrase printed in bold type to make the grammatically correct?

If the sentence is correct as it is, mark 'd' as the answer.

1.The long or short of it is that I do not want to deal with that new firm.

- A. The long and short of it
- B. The long and short for it
- C. The long or short for it
- D. No correction required

2. Most of the Indian workers are **as healthy as, if not healthier than**, British workers.

- A. as if healthy as not healthier
- B. healthier but not as healthy
- C. as healthy, if not healthier
- D. No correction required

Format 2

Directions: Choose the correct options for the given blanks.

1. You would _____ surprised to get this letter.

- A. doubtless be somewhat
- B. doubtlessly be somewhat
- C. somewhat doubtlessly be
- D. doubtlessly somewhat be

2. If you had been a little more proactive, this golden opportunity would not have _____

- A. Escaped your fingers
- B. Slipped through your fingers
- B. Slipped through your head

D. Escaped your hands

Format 3

Directions: Part of the given sentence is underlined.

Choose the answer choice which is the best version of the underlined part.

1. It ought to be her with whom you share your secrets, not me.

- A. her with whom you share your secrets, not me
- B. her with whom you share your secrets, not I.
- C. she with whom you share your secrets, not me.
- D. she with whom you share your secrets, not I.
- E. her with who you share your secrets, not me.

Chapter 2: Sentence Correction Rules- I (Correct Expression)

2.1 Subject-Verb Agreement

A very common error generally asked in Sentence correction revolves around the agreement between the subject of a sentence and the verb. The subject and verb must agree in number, that is, a plural verb must have a plural subject and a singular verb must have a singular subject.

A flock of birds, flying south for the winter, **was** above us.

Incorrect: My group of fourth graders **are** so well behaved.

↑
Singular

↑
Plural

Correct: My group of fourth graders **is** so well behaved.

A. When the subject and verb are separated

Find the subject and verb and make sure they agree.

Ignore the words in-between because they do not affect agreement.

Incorrect: The characters in Shakespeare's Twelfth Night **lives** in a world that has been turned upside-down.

Correct: The characters in Shakespeare's Twelfth Night **live** in a world that has been turned upside-down.

B. If the subjects are joined by “nor” or “or,”

- the verb agrees with the closer subject (the last one)

Incorrect: Neither Simran's neighbours nor her husband agree with her decision.

Correct: Neither Simran's neighbours nor her husband agrees with her decision.

C. Indefinite pronouns

Single indefinite pronoun: e.g., anyone, anybody, each, either, none

They use singular verbs.

Plural indefinite pronouns: both, few, many, several

They use plural verbs.

All, any, most, and some depend on the situation.

They can be either singular or plural.

Incorrect: Each of Sylvia Plath’s “bee poems” **uses** the theme of beekeeping to express aspects of the human condition.

Correct: Each of Sylvia Plath’s “bee poems” **use** the theme of beekeeping to express aspects of the human condition.

D. Collective nouns

These are nouns that are singular in form, but plural in meaning. Examples: band, minority, majority, class, community, dozen, family, public, team.

When they act as one entity, use a singular verb.

When they do separate things, use a plural verb, BUT it is easier to reword the sentence. For example, write “the members of the team” instead of “the team.”

Incorrect: The majority of English majors read Conrad’s Heart of Darkness while at university.

Correct: The majority of English majors **reads** Conrad’s Heart of Darkness while at university.

E.Plural nouns that are singular in meaning

Some plural nouns take singular verbs, for example, athletics, economics, politics, news, mumps, and measles.

Incorrect: Politics are an issue in R. K. Narayan's The Man-eater of Malgudi.

Correct: Politics is an issue in R. K. Narayan's The Man-eater of Malgudi.

2.2 Subject Pronoun Agreement

An antecedent is a word for which a pronoun stands.
(*ante* = "before")

The pronoun must agree with its antecedent in number.

Rule: A singular pronoun must replace a singular noun; a plural pronoun must replace a plural noun.

- A. A phrase or clause between the subject and verb does not change the number of the antecedent.

The jar of lima beans sits on its shelf.

↑ ↑ ↑

Singular Prepositional Singular
Phrase
All of the jewellery has lost **its** glow.

Singular	Prepositional Phrase	Singular
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B. Indefinite pronouns as antecedents

- Singular indefinite pronoun antecedents take singular pronoun referents.
- Each, neither, one, no one, everyone, someone, anybody, nobody etc. are singular.

Each of the students was carrying his book.

Singular Prepositional Singular
Phrase

Plural indefinite pronoun antecedents require plural referents.

PLURAL: *several, few, both, many*

Both do a good job in **their** office.



Plural



Singular

- Some indefinite pronouns that are modified by a prepositional phrase may be either singular or plural.

Either Singular Or Plural: *some, any, none, all, most*

- C. When the object of the preposition is uncountable—
- —use a singular referent pronoun.

Some of the sugar fell out of **its** bag.

Sugar is *uncountable*; therefore, the sentence has
a singular referent pronoun.

All of the jewellery has lost **its** glow.

Jewellery is *uncountable*; therefore, the sentence
has a singular referent pronoun.

- D. When the object of the preposition is countable —
- —Use a plural referent pronoun.

Some of the books fell out of **their** bag.

Books are countable. Therefore, the sentence has a plural referent pronoun.

All of the jewels have lost **their** glow.

Jewels are countable; therefore, the sentence has a plural referent pronoun.

- E. With compound subjects joined by *or/nor*, the referent pronoun agrees with the antecedent closer to the pronoun.

Neither the **boy** nor the **girls** did **their** jobs.

↑ ↑ ↑
Singular plural plural

Neither the **girl** nor the **boy** did **his** job.

↑ ↑ ↑
plural-singular singular

- F. Every or Many a before a noun or a series of nouns requires a singular referent.

Every cow, pig and horse had lost **its** life in the tsunami.

↑ ↑
Singular Singular

Many a girl wishes that she could act like Alia Bhatt.

↑

↑

singular

singular

- G. The number of vs A number of before a subject:
The number of is singular.

The number of students offering his or her help in charity functions is increasing every year.

A number of volunteers are offering their help.
A number of is plural.

2.3 Misplaced Modifiers

Misplaced Modifiers (and Dangling Participles) Modifiers are phrases that modify another part of the sentence. In order to be correct, the modifying phrase must be as close as possible to what it modifies.

- A. **Misplaced phrases** may cause a sentence to sound awkward and may create a meaning that does not make sense.

To fix the errors and clarify the meaning, put the phrases *next to* the noun they are supposed to modify.

Incorrect: The dealer sold the Toyota car to the buyer with leather seat covers.

Correct: The dealer sold the Toyota car with leather seat covers to the buyer.

Incorrect: They saw a fence behind the house made up of barbed wires.

Correct: They saw a fence made up of barbed wires behind the house.

Incorrect: The waiter served bread to the old lady that was well buttered.

Correct: The waiter served bread that was well buttered to the old lady.

Incorrect: Hrithik piled all the clothes in the hamper that he had worn.

Correct: Hrithik piled all the clothes that he had worn in the hamper.

B. Dangling Modifiers

A **dangling modifier** is a phrase or clause that is not clearly and logically related to the word or words it modifies (i.e. is placed next to).

Note:

- Unlike a misplaced modifier, a dangling modifier cannot be corrected by simply moving it to a different place in a sentence.
- In most cases, the dangling modifier appears at the beginning of the sentence, although it can also come at the end.

Sometimes the dangling modifier error occurs because the sentence fails to specify anything to which the modifier can refer.

Incorrect: Looking towards the west, a boat-shaped cloud stirred up the dust.

This sentence does not specify **who** is *looking toward the west*. In fact, there is nothing at all in the sentence to which the modifying phrase *looking toward the west* can logically refer. Since the modifier, *looking toward the west*, is sitting next to *the funnel-shaped cloud*, the sentence suggests that the **cloud** is doing the looking.

Correct: Looking towards the west, I saw a boat-shaped cloud stir up the dust.

Incorrect: When nine years old, my mother enrolled in medical school.

Correct: When I was nine years old, my mother enrolled in medical school.

How to correct dangling modifiers

Dangling modifiers may be corrected in two general ways.

Correction Method #1

1. Leave the modifier as it is.
2. Change the main part of the sentence so that it **begins** with the term **actually modified**.
3. This change will put the modifier **next to** the term it modifies.

2.4 Tenses

While the tenses in a sentence do not have to be the same, they must relate to each other in a way that makes the sequence of actions clear to the reader. The term sequence of tenses refers to the rules which govern how we alter verb tenses to make clear that all events, past, present or future, are not simultaneous.

Keep tenses consistent within sentences.

A. Do not change tenses when there is no time change for the action.

Incorrect: During the movie, John **got up** and **drops** his wallet.

Correct: During the movie, John **got up** and **dropped** his wallet.

Since there is no indication that the actions happened apart from one another, there is no reason to shift the tense of the second verb.

Incorrect: When Mary **walks** into the room everyone **will stare**.

Correct: When Mary **walks** into the room everyone **stares**.

The above sentence means that Mary walks into a room at times. The action is habitual present. The second action happens when the first one does. Therefore, the second verb should be present as well.

B. Change tense only when there is a need to do so.
Usually, the timing of actions within a sentence will dictate when the tense must change.

Incorrect: He reached out for the sandwich after he ate 2 pieces of pizza.

Correct: He reached out for the sandwich after he had eaten 2 pieces of pizza.

The second action took place in the past; the first action occurred before the past action. Therefore, the first action requires the past perfect tense (had + verb).

2.5 Parallelism

Sentence elements that are alike in function should also be alike in construction. These elements should be in the same grammatical form so that they are parallel.

Here are few parallelism rules.

A. Use parallel structure with elements joined by coordinating conjunctions.

Incorrect: The product and what it's potential(is/ are) a great help to me.

Correct: The product and its potential are a great help to me.

B. Use parallel structure with elements in lists or in a series.

Incorrect: He liked swimming, dancing and to read.

Parallel Parallel not parallel

Correct: He liked swimming, dancing and reading.

C. Use parallel structure with elements being compared. (X is more than / better than Y)

Incorrect: I like investing in shares better than to save in banks

Correct: I like investing in shares better than saving in banks.

D. Use parallel structure with elements joined by a correlative conjunction.

Incorrect: He not only likes coffee but also tea.

Correct: He likes not only coffee but also tea.

Correct: He not only likes coffee but also like tea.

Clues to identifying an error of parallelism are:

- Items in a list.
- Long phrases or clauses connected by a conjunction

Faulty Comparisons Frequently a sentence with a comparison will appear at first glance to be correct but will actually compare two or more elements which are not expressed in similar form.

Incorrect: The judge of the baking contest liked the pastry Sally made better than Bob.

In this sentence, the judge is evaluating the comparative merits of Sally's pastry and Bob himself. Put it in another way; he is comparing Sally's pastry to Bob, rather than comparing Sally's pastry to Bob's pastry.

Correct: The judge of the baking contest liked Sally's pastry better than Bob's.

2.6 Faulty Comparison

Any comparison between two or more items must have three characteristics:

- A. Completeness
- B. Consistency
- C. Clarity

A. Completeness

At least two items are needed for comparison.

Incorrect: He ran so fast

The above example is incomplete: He ran so fast that what happened?

Correct: He ran so fast that he broke the record

B. Consistency

Items being compared must have a basis in similarity; in other words, the basis of comparison must be logical.

Incorrect: The pickup of my car is better than Shahrukh

The example, given above, compares 'pick up' of my car to Shahrukh

Correct: The pickup of my car is better than that of Shahrukh's car.

C. Clarity

Incorrect: Jacqueline always gave her sister more affection than her brother.

In this example, the meaning is unclear. The sentence could mean Jacqueline gave her sister more affection than she gave her brother.

OR

Jacqueline gave her sister more affection than her brother gave to her sister.

Correct: Jacqueline always gave her sister more affection than she gave to her brother.

OR

Jacqueline always gave her sister more affection than her brother did.

Clues are: Key words such as 'than, like, unlike, as, compared to, more than, and less than' should alert you to check what is being compared in the sentence