

03. Verbal English - Comprehensive Textbook

Reference

Module Focus: Complete Grammar Masterclass covering Subject-Verb Agreement, Complete Tense Matrix, Conditional Clauses, Active/Passive Voice, Direct/Indirect Speech, and Exhaustive Error Spotting Rules with Worked Examples for competitive exams (CoCubes, AMCAT, eLitmus, GATE, CAT, Placement Drives).

1. Subject-Verb Agreement (SVA) Rules & Edge Cases

Subject-Verb Agreement requires that a verb must agree with its subject in number (singular/plural) and person (first/second/third).

Rule 1: Rule of Proximity (Or / Nor / Either...or / Neither...nor / Not only...but also)

When two subjects are joined by *or*, *nor*, *either...or*, *neither...nor*, or *not only...but also*, the verb agrees with the subject **closest to it** (the nearest subject). - **Formula:** Subject 1 + *either/neither/or/nor* + Subject 2 (closest) + Verb (matches Subject 2) -  *Incorrect:* Neither the manager nor the employees **was** present at the meeting. -  *Correct:* Neither the manager nor the employees **were** present at the meeting. -  *Incorrect:* Either the students or the teacher **are** responsible for the equipment. -  *Correct:* Either the students or the teacher **is** responsible for the equipment.

Rule 2: Intervening Clauses & Prepositional Phrases (Along with, As well as, etc.)

When a subject is separated from the verb by expressions like *along with*, *as well as*, *together with*, *accompanied by*, *in addition to*, *with*, *like*, *unlike*, *including*, *excluding*, *besides*, the verb agrees with the **FIRST (principal) subject**, ignoring the intervening phrase. - **Formula:** Subject 1 (Main) + *along with / as well as* + Subject 2 + Verb (matches Subject 1) -  *Incorrect:* The captain, along with all his team members, **were** present on the field. -  *Correct:* The captain, along with all his team members, **was** present on the field. -  *Incorrect:* The minister, as well as his advisers, **have** arrived. -  *Correct:* The minister, as well as his advisers, **has** arrived.

Rule 3: Indefinite Pronouns

1. **Always Singular:** *Each, every, everyone, someone, somebody, nobody, anyone, anybody, no one, either, neither, one.*
2.  *Incorrect:* Each of the candidates **have** submitted their resume.
3.  *Correct:* Each of the candidates **has** submitted his/her resume.
4. **Always Plural:** *Both, few, a few, many, several.*
5.  *Correct:* Several of the reports **are** still incomplete.

6. **The SANAM Rule (Variable Pronouns):** *Some, Any, None, All, Most*. The verb depends on whether the noun following **of** is countable (plural verb) or uncountable (singular verb).
7. ☒ **Correct:** Some of the **water is** contaminated. (Uncountable $\rightarrow$ Singular verb)
8. ☒ **Correct:** Some of the **books are** missing. (Countable Plural $\rightarrow$ Plural verb)
9. ☒ **Correct:** None of the **unclaimed money was** recovered. (Uncountable $\rightarrow$ Singular verb)
10. ☒ **Correct:** None of the **students have/has** failed. (Countable $\rightarrow$ Plural preferred in formal grammar, singular acceptable)

Rule 4: Collective Nouns (United vs. Divided Action)

Collective nouns (*committee, jury, team, audience, class, family, crowd, board*) take: - **Singular verb** when the group acts as a single, unified entity. - **Plural verb** when the members of the group act individually or are divided in opinion. - ☒ **Incorrect:** The jury **were** unanimous in its decision. - ☒ **Correct:** The jury **was** unanimous in its decision. (Unified action) - ☒ **Incorrect:** The jury **was** divided in their opinions. - ☒ **Correct:** The jury **were** divided in their opinions. (Divided members)

Rule 5: Quantities, Distances, Money, Time, Measurements

Nouns expressing a specific quantity, sum of money, duration of time, or distance take a **singular verb** when thought of as a single unit or aggregate amount. However, if thought of as individual units, they take a plural verb. - ☒ **Incorrect:** Ten miles **are** a long distance to run on foot. - ☒ **Correct:** Ten miles **is** a long distance to run on foot. (Single distance) - ☒ **Incorrect:** Fifty thousand rupees **were** a huge amount thirty years ago. - ☒ **Correct:** Fifty thousand rupees **was** a huge amount thirty years ago. (Single sum) - ☒ **Correct:** Fifty thousand rupees **were** distributed among the victims. (Individual units of money distributed)

Rule 6: Nouns Plural in Form but Singular in Meaning (and vice versa)

1. **Plural Form, Singular Meaning $\rightarrow$ Singular Verb:** Subjects of study (*Mathematics, Physics, Economics*), diseases (*Measles, Mumps, Diabetes*), news (*News*), games (*Billiards, Darts*), singular titles (*The United States, Gulliver's Travels*).
2. ☒ **Incorrect:** Mathematics **are** a challenging subject.
3. ☒ **Correct:** Mathematics **is** a challenging subject.
4. **Exception:** When branch names refer to specific data or personal skills, they take a plural verb: "*His mathematics are weak.*" (meaning calculation skills).
5. **Singular Form, Plural Meaning $\rightarrow$ Plural Verb:** Nouns like *cattle, poultry, gentry, vermin, people, police, peasantry, folk*.
6. ☒ **Incorrect:** The police **has** caught the thief.
7. ☒ **Correct:** The police **have** caught the thief.
8. ☒ **Incorrect:** Cattle **is** grazing in the field.
9. ☒ **Correct:** Cattle **are** grazing in the field.

Rule 7: Expressions of Quantity: "A number of" vs. "The number of"

- **"A number of" + Plural Noun $\rightarrow$ Plural Verb** (means *many*).
- **"The number of" + Plural Noun $\rightarrow$ Singular Verb** (refers to the specific figure/statistic).
- ☒ **Incorrect:** A number of students **is** absent today.
- ☒ **Correct:** A number of students **are** absent today.

-  *Incorrect*: The number of applications **have** increased this year.
-  *Correct*: The number of applications **has** increased this year.

Rule 8: "Many a / an" Construction

- "Many a / an" + Singular Noun $\rightarrow$ Singular Verb & Singular Pronoun.
- "A great many" + Plural Noun $\rightarrow$ Plural Verb.
-  *Incorrect*: Many a student **have** failed the examination.
-  *Correct*: Many a student **has** failed the examination.
-  *Correct*: A great many students **have** passed the test.

Rule 9: Dummy Subjects ("It" vs. "There / Here")

- "It" is always followed by a **singular verb**, regardless of what noun follows.
- "There / Here" does NOT govern the verb. The verb agrees with the **real subject that comes after the verb**.
-  *Incorrect*: It **are** the teachers who guide us.
-  *Correct*: It **is** the teachers who guide us.
-  *Incorrect*: There **is** many reasons for his failure.
-  *Correct*: There **are** many reasons for his failure.

Rule 10: Relative Pronouns as Subjects (Who, Which, That)

When a relative pronoun (*who*, *which*, *that*) acts as the subject of a clause, the verb must agree with the **antecedent** (the noun/pronoun immediately preceding the relative pronoun). - **Structure A**: One of the [Plural Noun] + **WHO** + Plural Verb - **Structure B**: THE ONLY ONE of the [Plural Noun] + **WHO** + Singular Verb -  *Incorrect*: He is one of those men who **does** not compromise. -  *Correct*: He is one of those men who **do** not compromise. (Antecedent = *men* [plural]) -  *Incorrect*: This is the only one of his books that **are** worth reading. -  *Correct*: This is the only one of his books that **is** worth reading. (Antecedent restricted by *the only one*)

Rule 11: Compound Subjects Joined by 'And'

- When two singular nouns joined by *and* refer to **two distinct people or items** $\rightarrow$ **Plural Verb**.
- When two singular nouns joined by *and* refer to **the same person, single idea, or compound item** $\rightarrow$ **Singular Verb**.
-  *Correct*: Bread and butter **is** a wholesome breakfast. (Single meal unit)
-  *Correct*: The collector and magistrate **was** present at the inauguration. (One person holding both titles)
-  *Correct*: The collector and **the** magistrate **were** present at the inauguration. (Two distinct persons, indicated by repeating the article 'the')

Rule 12: Subjunctive Mood / Hypothetical Conditionals

In hypothetical statements, wishes, or contrary-to-fact conditions, the verb **were** is used for all subjects (including *I*, *he*, *she*, *it*). -  *Incorrect*: If I **was** the President, I would reform the policy. -  *Correct*: If I **were** the President, I would reform the policy. -  *Incorrect*: She wishes she **was** taller. -  *Correct*: She wishes she **were** taller.

2. Complete Tenses Matrix & Usage Rules

Complete 12-Tense Matrix (Active vs. Passive Formulas & Time Signals)

Tense	Active Voice Structure	Passive Voice Structure	Primary Usage & Key Time Markers / Signal Words
Simple Present	V1 / V1 + s/es	is/am/are + V3	Universal facts, habits, routines, scheduled future events. <i>Signal words: always, usually, daily, every week, seldom.</i>
Present Continuous	is/am/are + V-ing	is/am/are + being + V3	Action happening right now, temporary situations. <i>Signal words: now, at present, currently, at this moment.</i>
Present Perfect	has/have + V3	has/have + been + V3	Completed action with present relevance; experience. <i>Signal words: already, yet, just, so far, recently, lately, ever, never.</i>
Present Perfect Continuous	has/have + been + V-ing	(Rarely used in Passive)	Action started in the past and continuing into the present. <i>Signal words: for + duration, since + point in time.</i>
Simple Past	V2	was/were + V3	Action completed at a specific past time. <i>Signal words: yesterday, last night, in 2010, ago, once.</i>
Past Continuous	was/were + V-ing	was/were + being + V3	Action in progress at a specific past moment or interrupted. <i>Signal words: while, when, at 5 PM yesterday.</i>
Past Perfect	had + V3	had + been + V3	Action completed BEFORE another past action (earlier past). <i>Signal words: before, after, by the time, already.</i>
Past Perfect Continuous	had + been + V-ing	(Rarely used in Passive)	Duration of an action up to a certain point in the past. <i>Signal words: for 2 hours before..., had been waiting when...</i>
Simple Future	will/shall + V1	will/shall + be + V3	Voluntary action, prediction, spontaneous decision. <i>Signal words: tomorrow, next year, soon, shortly.</i>

Tense	Active Voice Structure	Passive Voice Structure	Primary Usage & Key Time Markers / Signal Words
Future Continuous	will/shall + be + V-ing	(No standard passive)	Action that will be in progress at a specific future moment. Signal words: at this time tomorrow, next week at 9 AM.
Future Perfect	will/shall + have + V3	will/shall + have + been + V3	Action that will be completed BEFORE a specified future time. Signal words: by tomorrow, by the time you arrive, by next month.
Future Perfect Continuous	will/shall + have + been + V-ing	(No standard passive)	Duration of an action up to a point in the future. Signal words: by next year for 5 years.

Crucial Tense Rules & Common Exam Pitfalls

Pitfall 1: Stative Verbs (No Continuous Forms)

Stative verbs represent states of being, perception, emotion, or possession—NOT physical actions. They CANNOT be used in continuous tenses (-ing) when expressing state. - **Common Stative Verbs:** know, believe, understand, remember, forget, love, hate, prefer, possess, belong, own, resemble, seem, hear, smell, taste. - ❌ Incorrect: I **am knowing** the answer to this question. - ✅ Correct: I **know** the answer to this question. - ❌ Incorrect: This house **is belonging** to my uncle. - ✅ Correct: This house **belongs** to my uncle. - *Dynamic Exception:* If a stative verb changes meaning to describe a deliberate action/process, continuous form is allowed: - State: "I **have** a car." (Possession → Stative) - Action: "I **am having** lunch." (Eating → Dynamic)

Pitfall 2: Simple Past vs. Present Perfect

- **Present Perfect (has/have + V3):** Used for completed past actions with NO specific past time marker. Current relevance exists.
- **Simple Past (V2):** MUST be used if a **specific past time marker** (yesterday, last week, in 1999, two days ago) is present.
- ❌ Incorrect: I **have seen** him yesterday.
- ✅ Correct: I **saw** him yesterday.
- ❌ Incorrect: India **has gained** independence in 1947.
- ✅ Correct: India **gained** independence in 1947.
- ✅ Correct: I **have seen** him before. (No specific past time mentioned)

Pitfall 3: Past Perfect Sequence of Events Rule

When two actions occurred in the past, the **earlier action** MUST be in the **Past Perfect (had + V3)**, and the **later action** MUST be in the **Simple Past (V2)**. - **Formula:** Earlier Action (Had + V3) + Before / By

the time + Later Action (V2) - Formula:

Later Action (V2) + After + Earlier Action (Had + V3) - ❌ Incorrect: The train **left** before I **reached** the station. - ✅ Correct: The train **had left** before I **reached** the station. - ❌ Incorrect: When I arrived at the cinema, the movie **started**. - ✅ Correct: When I arrived at the cinema, the movie **had started**.

Pitfall 4: Present Perfect Continuous: "Since" vs. "For"

- **Since + Point of Time** (Specific start timestamp): *since 1995, since Monday, since morning, since 4 PM, since childhood.*
- **For + Period / Duration of Time** (Length of time): *for 5 hours, for 3 days, for 2 decades, for a long time.*
- ❌ Incorrect: He has been living in Delhi **since** five years.
- ✅ Correct: He has been living in Delhi **for** five years.
- ❌ Incorrect: She has been working here **for** 2018.
- ✅ Correct: She has been working here **since** 2018.

3. Conditional Sentences & Hypothetical Structures

Conditional sentences consist of an **If-clause** (condition) and a **Main clause** (result).

Comprehensive Conditionals Matrix

Type	Condition Category	If-Clause Tense Structure	Main Clause Tense Structure	Example Sentence
Zero Conditional	Scientific Facts / Universal Truths	If + Simple Present (V1)	Simple Present (V1)	If you heat water to 100°C, it boils .
Type 1 (Real/ Probable)	Real / Likely Future Condition	If + Simple Present (V1)	Will / Can / May / Shall + V1	If it rains , we will cancel the match.
Type 2 (Unreal Present)	Hypothetical / Contrary to Present Fact	If + Simple Past (V2 / Were)	Would / Could / Might + V1	If I were the CEO, I would double salaries.
Type 3 (Unreal Past)	Impossible Past Regret / Counterfactual	If + Past Perfect (Had + V3)	Would / Could / Might + have + V3	If you had studied , you would have passed .

Advanced Conditional Concepts & Edge Cases

1. Inversion in Conditional Clauses (Omitting 'If')

In formal English and exam questions, 'If' is omitted by inverting the auxiliary verb to the beginning of the clause.

- **Type 1 Inversion:** Should + Subject + V1 ..., Main Clause
- *Standard:* If you need any assistance, call me.
- *Inverted:* **Should you need** any assistance, call me.

- **Type 2 Inversion:** **Were + Subject ... , Main Clause** or **Were + Subject + to + V1 ...**
- *Standard:* If I were rich, I would travel the world.
- *Inverted:* **Were I** rich, I would travel the world.
- **Type 3 Inversion:** **Had + Subject + V3 ... , Main Clause** (Extremely High Frequency in Exams)
- ❌ *Incorrect:* Had I known your arrival, I **will meet** you.
- ❌ *Incorrect:* Had I known your arrival, I **would meet** you.
- ✅ *Correct:* **Had I known** your arrival, I **would have met** you.

2. Mixed Conditionals

Mixed conditionals blend past condition with present result (or vice-versa).

- **Past Condition $\rightarrow$ Present Result:** **If + Past Perfect (Had + V3), Main Clause: Would + V1**
- ✅ *Correct:* If I **had taken** that job last year, I **would be** living in London today.
- **Present Condition $\rightarrow$ Past Result:** **If + Simple Past (V2 / Were), Main Clause: Would have + V3**
- ✅ *Correct:* If I **were** smarter, I **would have solved** that puzzle yesterday.

3. Negative Conditional: "Unless"

- **Rule:** *Unless* means *If... not*. Therefore, **do NOT use a negative word (not , no) inside the clause governed by unless**.
- ❌ *Incorrect:* Unless you **do not** work hard, you will not succeed.
- ✅ *Correct:* Unless you **work** hard, you will not succeed.
- ❌ *Incorrect:* Unless he **does not come**, we will leave.
- ✅ *Correct:* Unless he **comes**, we will leave.

4. Active & Passive Voice Transformations

Fundamental Rules of Transformation

1. **Subject-Object Swap:** The Object of the active sentence becomes the Subject of the passive sentence, and vice versa.
2. **Verb Form:** The main verb ALWAYS changes into its Past Participle form (**V3**).
3. **Agent Insertion:** The original subject is preceded by the preposition **by** (or *with / at / to / in* depending on the verb).
4. **Tense Preservation:** The auxiliary verb (**be** verb form) indicates the original tense.

Tense-Wise Voice Transformation Chart

Tense	Active Structure	Passive Structure	Example Active $\rightarrow$ Passive
Simple Present	Subject + V1/s/es + Object	Object + is/am/are + V3 + by + Subject	Active: She writes a letter. Passive: A letter is written by her.
Present Continuous	Subject + is/am/are + V-ing + Object	Object + is/am/are + being + V3 + by + Subject	Active: They are building a house. Passive: A house is being built by them.
Present Perfect	Subject + has/have + V3 + Object	Object + has/have + been + V3 + by + Subject	Active: He has completed the project. Passive: The project has been completed by him.
Simple Past	Subject + V2 + Object	Object + was/were + V3 + by + Subject	Active: The chef cooked a delicious meal. Passive: A delicious meal was cooked by the chef.
Past Continuous	Subject + was/were + V-ing + Object	Object + was/were + being + V3 + by + Subject	Active: She was singing a song. Passive: A song was being sung by her.
Past Perfect	Subject + had + V3 + Object	Object + had + been + V3 + by + Subject	Active: They had won the match. Passive: The match had been won by them.
Simple Future	Subject + will/shall + V1 + Object	Object + will/shall + be + V3 + by + Subject	Active: We will launch the product. Passive: The product will be launched by us.
Future Perfect	Subject + will + have + V3 + Object	Object + will + have + been + V3 + by + Subject	Active: She will have finished the assignment. Passive: The assignment will have been finished by her.
Modal Verbs	Subject + Modal + V1 + Object	Object + Modal + be + V3 + by + Subject	Active: You must follow the rules. Passive: The rules must be followed by you.

Special Voice Transformations

1. Imperative Sentences (Orders, Requests, Advice)

- **Orders/Commands:** **Let + Object + be + V3** OR **You are ordered to + V1**
- Active: Shut the door.
- Passive: **Let the door be shut.** OR **You are ordered to shut the door.**
- **Requests:** **You are requested to + V1**
- Active: Please help me.
- Passive: **You are requested to help me.**
- **Advice:** **Object + should + be + V3** OR **You are advised to + V1**
- Active: Respect your elders.
- Passive: **Your elders should be respected.**

2. Interrogative Sentences (Questions)

- **Wh- Questions (except 'Who'):** Retain the Wh- word at the start.
- Active: Why did you break the glass?
- Passive: **Why was the glass broken by you?**
- **Questions starting with 'Who':** Change 'Who' to '**By whom**'.
- Active: Who wrote this poem?
- Passive: **By whom was this poem written?**

3. Verbs Following Prepositions Other Than 'By'

Certain verbs take specific prepositions in passive voice instead of 'by': - **Known to:** Active: I know him. \$
→\$ Passive: He is **known to** me. (NOT *known by*) - **Surprised at:** Active: Her behavior surprised us. \$
→\$ Passive: We were **surprised at** her behavior. - **Filled with:** Active: Smoke filled the room. \$
→\$ Passive: The room was **filled with** smoke. - **Interested in:** Active: History interests me. \$
→\$ Passive: I am **interested in** history.

5. Direct & Indirect (Reported) Speech Rules

Fundamental Steps of Conversion

When converting Direct Speech into Indirect (Reported) Speech: 1. **Remove Quotation Marks** and use appropriate conjunction (**that** , **if/whether** , or **to**). 2. **Change Reporting Verb:** **said to** → **told** , **asked** , **ordered** , **advised** , **exclaimed** , **requested** . 3. **Shift Tenses** (Backshifting) if reporting verb is in the Past Tense. 4. **Change Pronouns** according to the **SON** rule. 5. **Change Time & Place Words** (Words showing closeness → Words showing distance).

1. Pronoun Change Rule: The SON Formula

- **1st Person Pronoun** (I, we, my, our) changes according to the **Subject** of the reporting verb.
- **2nd Person Pronoun** (you, your) changes according to the **Object** of the reporting verb.

- **3rd Person Pronoun** (he, she, it, they, his, her) undergoes **No** change.

2. Tense Shift Matrix (When Reporting Verb is in Past Tense e.g., "said")

Direct Speech Tense	Indirect Speech Tense	Example Direct $\rightarrow$ Indirect
Simple Present (V1)	Simple Past (V2)	Direct: He said, "I write stories." Indirect: He said that he wrote stories.
Present Continuous (is/am/are + V-ing)	Past Continuous (was/were + V-ing)	Direct: She said, "I am reading." Indirect: She said that she was reading .
Present Perfect (has/have + V3)	Past Perfect (had + V3)	Direct: They said, "We have completed the task." Indirect: They said that they had completed the task.
Simple Past (V2)	Past Perfect (had + V3)	Direct: He said, "I bought a car." Indirect: He said that he had bought a car.
Past Continuous (was/were + V-ing)	Past Perfect Continuous (had been + V-ing)	Direct: She said, "I was studying." Indirect: She said that she had been studying .
Past Perfect (had + V3)	NO Tense Change (Had + V3)	Direct: He said, "I had left early." Indirect: He said that he had left early.
Modal: Will / Shall	Would / Should	Direct: He said, "I will call you." Indirect: He said that he would call me.
Modal: Can / May	Could / Might	Direct: She said, "I can solve this." Indirect: She said that she could solve that.



CRITICAL EXCEPTION: If the reported statement expresses a **Universal Truth, Scientific Fact, or Habitual Action**, the tense does NOT change even if the reporting verb is in the past! - Direct: The teacher said, "The Earth revolves around the Sun." - **✗ Incorrect:** The teacher said that the Earth **revolved** around the Sun. - **✓ Correct:** The teacher said that the Earth **revolves** around the Sun.

3. Change of Time and Place Adverbs

Direct Speech	Indirect Speech	Direct Speech	Indirect Speech
Now	Then	Today	That day
Here	There	Tonight	That night
This	That	Yesterday	The previous day / day before

Direct Speech	Indirect Speech	Direct Speech	Indirect Speech
These	Those	Tomorrow	The next day / following day
Ago	Before	Last week	The previous week

4. Conversion Rules by Sentence Type

A. Assertive (Declarative) Sentences

- Reporting verb: **said to** $\rightarrow$ **told**. Conjunction: **that**.
- Direct: He said to me, "I am going home."
- Indirect: **He told me that he was going home.**

B. Interrogative Sentences (Questions)

- Reporting verb: **said / said to** $\rightarrow$ **asked** or **enquired of**.
- Change inverted question word order into normal assertive sentence structure (**Subject + Verb**).
- **Yes/No Questions:** Use conjunction **if** or **whether**.
- Direct: He said to me, "Are you coming?"
- Indirect: **He asked me if I was coming.** (NOT *if was I coming*)
- **Wh- Questions:** Retain the **Wh- word** as conjunction (do NOT use *that* or *if*).
- Direct: She said to him, "Where do you live?"
- Indirect: **She asked him where he lived.**

C. Imperative Sentences (Commands, Requests, Advice)

- Reporting verb: **said to** $\rightarrow$ **ordered / requested / advised / instructed / warned**.
- Replace quotation marks with **to + V1** (or **not to + V1** for negative imperative).
- Direct: The doctor said to the patient, "Do not smoke."
- Indirect: **The doctor advised the patient not to smoke.**

D. Exclamatory Sentences

- Reporting verb: **said** $\rightarrow$ **exclaimed with joy / sorrow / surprise / regret**.
Conjunction: **that**.
- Direct: They said, "Hurrah! We won the match."
- Indirect: **They exclaimed with joy that they had won the match.**

6. Exhaustive High-Frequency Error Spotting Rules

Here is the master list of 15 high-frequency error spotting rules tested across competitive aptitude exams.

Rule 1: Negative Adverb Inversion Rule

When a sentence begins with a negative adverb (*Hardly, Scarcely, Barely, No sooner, Seldom, Little, Rarely, Never*), the auxiliary verb **MUST** be placed before the subject (**Inversion**). - **Correlative Pairs:** - *Hardly / Scarcely / Barely ... WHEN* (NOT *than*) - *No sooner ... THAN* (NOT *when or then*) -  *Incorrect:* Hardly I had reached the station than the train arrived. -  *Correct:* Hardly **had I** reached the station **when** the train arrived. -  *Incorrect:* No sooner did the bell ring when the students ran out. -  *Correct:* No sooner **did** the bell ring **than** the students ran out.

Rule 2: Correlative Conjunction Parallelism

Correlative conjunctions (*Not only...but also, Either...or, Neither...nor, Both...and*) **MUST** join grammatically parallel structures (e.g., noun with noun, verb with verb, prepositional phrase with prepositional phrase). -  *Incorrect:* He **not only** lost his wallet **but also** his watch. (joins verb + noun vs noun) -  *Correct:* He lost **not only** his wallet **but also** his watch. (joins noun + noun) -  *Incorrect:* She is both intelligent and she is hardworking. -  *Correct:* She is **both** intelligent **and** hardworking.

Rule 3: Dangling and Misplaced Modifiers

A modifier clause must clearly modify the noun intended. A introductory participial clause refers to the subject of the main clause. -  *Incorrect:* **Walking down the street**, a brick fell on his head. (Implies the brick was walking down the street) -  *Correct:* **Walking down the street**, he was struck on the head by a falling brick. -  *Correct:* **While he was walking down the street**, a brick fell on his head.

Rule 4: Pronoun Choice: "Who" vs. "Whom"

- **Who:** Subjective case (performs the action $\rightarrow$ replace with *he/she/they*).
- **Whom:** Objective case (receives the action $\rightarrow$ replace with *him/her/them*).
-  *Incorrect:* Whom shall I say is calling?
-  *Correct:* **Who** shall I say is calling? (*He* is calling $\rightarrow$ Subject)
-  *Incorrect:* The candidate who the board selected was interviewed.
-  *Correct:* The candidate **whom** the board selected was interviewed. (The board selected *him* $\rightarrow$ Object)

Rule 5: Mistakes in Comparative Degrees

1. **Comparing Non-Equivalent Things:** Use *that of* (singular) or *those of* (plural).
2.  *Incorrect:* The climate of Bengaluru is better than Chennai. (Compares climate to a city)
3.  *Correct:* The climate of Bengaluru is better than **that of** Chennai.
4.  *Incorrect:* The streets of Mumbai are wider than Delhi.
5.  *Correct:* The streets of Mumbai are wider than **those of** Delhi.
6. **Latin Comparatives:** Adjectives like *superior, inferior, senior, junior, prior, anterior, posterior, preferable* are followed by **to** (NOT *than*), and do NOT take *more*.
7.  *Incorrect:* He is more senior than me.
8.  *Correct:* He is **senior to** me.
9.  *Incorrect:* Tea is more preferable than coffee.
10.  *Correct:* Tea is **preferable to** coffee.

11. **Double Comparatives / Superlatives:** Never use two comparative or superlative markers together.
12. ✗ *Incorrect:* She is **more taller** than her sister.
13. ✓ *Correct:* She is **taller** than her sister.

Rule 6: Uncountable Nouns Treated as Countable

The following nouns are **uncountable** in English. They NEVER take plural '-s' and CANNOT be preceded by *a/ an*: - *Information, Advice, Furniture, Luggage, Baggage, Equipment, Scenery, Poetry, Machinery, Work, News, Mischief, Paper, Hair*. - ✗ *Incorrect:* He gave me an advice and many informations. - ✓ *Correct:* He gave me a **piece of advice** and **much information**. - ✗ *Incorrect:* The sceneries of Kashmir are breathtaking. - ✓ *Correct:* The **scenery** of Kashmir **is** breathtaking.

Rule 7: Preposition Traps & Redundant Prepositions

Transitive verbs do NOT take prepositions when followed directly by their object: - **Redundant Phrases to Avoid:** - ✗ *discussed about the topic* → ✓ **discussed the topic** - ✗ *ordered for a cup of tea* → ✓ **ordered a cup of tea** - ✗ *resembles to his father* → ✓ **resembles his father** - ✗ *entered into the room* → ✓ **entered the room** (Note: *entered into an agreement* is correct as an idiom) - ✗ *comprises of ten chapters* → ✓ **comprises ten chapters** (OR *is composed of*) - ✗ *accompany with me* → ✓ **accompany me**

Rule 8: Gerund vs. Infinitive Patterns

1. **Verbs followed by Gerund (V-ing):** *enjoy, avoid, mind, admit, deny, postpone, risk, suggest, finish, practise, can't help, look forward to, used to (be used to), accustomed to, with a view to.*
2. ✗ *Incorrect:* I am looking forward to **meet** you.
3. ✓ *Correct:* I am looking forward to **meeting** you.
4. ✗ *Incorrect:* She avoided **to answer** my question.
5. ✓ *Correct:* She avoided **answering** my question.
6. **Verbs followed by Infinitive (to + V1):** *agree, decide, hope, manage, offer, plan, promise, refuse, afford, desire.*
7. ✗ *Incorrect:* He agreed **helping** us.
8. ✓ *Correct:* He agreed **to help** us.

Rule 9: The "Lest ... Should" Construction

- **Rule:** The conjunction **lest** (meaning *for fear that*) MUST be paired with **should** (or bare infinitive). It is inherently negative, so **do NOT put not inside a lest clause.**
- ✗ *Incorrect:* Walk carefully lest you **might not** fall.
- ✗ *Incorrect:* Walk carefully lest you **should not** fall.
- ✓ *Correct:* Walk carefully lest you **should** fall.

Rule 10: Hypothetical Expressions: "It is time" / "It is high time"

When followed by a subject, expressions like *It is time, It is high time, It is about time* take the **Simple Past Tense (V2)**. - **Structure A:** **It is high time + Subject + V2** - **Structure B:** **It is high time + to +**

V1 (When no subject follows) - ❌ *Incorrect*: It is high time we **start** studying for exams. - ✅ *Correct*: It is high time we **started** studying for exams. - ✅ *Correct*: It is high time **to start** studying.

Rule 11: Hyphenated Compound Nouns as Adjectives

When a compound noun (number + noun) functions as an adjective modifying another noun, the modifying noun MUST remain **singular**. - ❌ *Incorrect*: He gave me a **five-rupees** note. - ✅ *Correct*: He gave me a **five-rupee** note. - ❌ *Incorrect*: They stayed at a **five-stars** hotel. - ✅ *Correct*: They stayed at a **five-star** hotel.

Rule 12: Pronoun Agreement after Prepositions & Subjective/Objective Case

- Prepositions must be followed by **Objective Case Pronouns** (*me, him, her, us, them, whom*).
- Expressions of identity after linking verbs (*is/am/are/was/were*) formally require **Subjective Case Pronouns** (*I, he, she, we, they*).
- ❌ *Incorrect*: Divide the sweets between you and **I**.
- ✅ *Correct*: Divide the sweets between you and **me**. (Preposition *between* takes objective case)
- ❌ *Incorrect*: It was **him** who called you.
- ✅ *Correct*: It was **he** who called you. (Formal subjective case after *was*)

Rule 13: Redundancy & Tautology Errors

Avoid using words that repeat the same meaning unnecessarily: - ❌ *Return back* → ✅ *Return* - ❌ *Repeat again* → ✅ *Repeat* - ❌ *Revert back* → ✅ *Revert* - ❌ *Reason why ... because* → ✅ *Reason why ... is that* - ❌ *Equally as good as* → ✅ *As good as* OR *Equally good* - ❌ *Final destination / Past history* → ✅ *Destination / History*

Rule 14: Difference between "Used to + V1" vs. "Be / Get used to + V-ing"

- **used to + V1**: Expresses a past habit that no longer occurs.
- ✅ *Correct*: I **used to play** football in school. (Past habit)
- **be / get used to + V-ing**: Expresses being accustomed to something in present/past/future.
- ❌ *Incorrect*: He is used to **wake** up early.
- ✅ *Correct*: He is used to **waking** up early. (Accustomed to)

Rule 15: Reflexive Pronouns Cannot Stand Alone as Subjects

Reflexive pronouns (*myself, himself, herself, yourself, themselves*) cannot serve as the subject of a sentence without a preceding personal pronoun or noun. - ❌ *Incorrect*: **Myself** Rahul from Mumbai. - ✅ *Correct*: **I am** Rahul from Mumbai. OR **I, Rahul**, am from Mumbai. - ❌ *Incorrect*: **Myself** and Suresh will handle the project. - ✅ *Correct*: **Suresh and I** will handle the project.

7. Comprehensive Worked Practice Examples

Exercise Set: Spot the Error and Rewrite Correctly

Q1. Neither the principal nor the teachers was available to answer the parents' questions.

-  **Incorrect:** ...was available...
-  **Correction:** Neither the principal nor the teachers **were** available to answer the parents' questions.
-  **Rule Explanation:** Rule of proximity (SVA Rule 1). The nearest subject to the verb is *teachers* (plural), so the verb must be plural (*were*).

Q2. Scarcely had I entered the classroom than the teacher started the test.

-  **Incorrect:** ...than the teacher...
-  **Correction:** Scarcely had I entered the classroom **when** the teacher started the test.
-  **Rule Explanation:** Correlative pair rule (Error Spotting Rule 1). *Scarcely* / *Hardly* MUST be paired with *when*, never *than*.

Q3. The CEO, accompanied by his board members, have decided to liquidate the assets.

-  **Incorrect:** ...have decided...
-  **Correction:** The CEO, accompanied by his board members, **has** decided to liquidate the assets.
-  **Rule Explanation:** Intervening phrase rule (SVA Rule 2). *Accompanied by* links the secondary subject, so the verb agrees with the principal subject (*The CEO* - singular).

Q4. If he would have worked harder, he would have cleared the CoCubes assessment easily.

-  **Incorrect:** If he would have worked...
-  **Correction:** If he **had worked** harder, he would have cleared the CoCubes assessment easily.
-  **Rule Explanation:** Type 3 conditional rule. The condition clause MUST use Past Perfect (*had* + V3), NOT *would have*.

Q5. The manager discussed about the new project guidelines in detail during the meeting.

-  **Incorrect:** ...discussed about the...
-  **Correction:** The manager **discussed the** new project guidelines in detail during the meeting.
-  **Rule Explanation:** Redundant preposition rule (Error Spotting Rule 7). *Discuss* is a transitive verb taking a direct object without *about*.

Q6. Five hundred kilometers are a long distance to travel by bike in a single day.

-  **Incorrect:** ...are a long distance...
-  **Correction:** Five hundred kilometers **is** a long distance to travel by bike in a single day.
-  **Rule Explanation:** Quantity rule (SVA Rule 5). Specific distances acting as a single unit take a singular verb.

Q7. The teacher asked the student where was he going during class hours.

-  **Incorrect:** ...where was he going...
-  **Correction:** The teacher asked the student **where he was going** during class hours.
-  **Rule Explanation:** Indirect question rule (Speech Rule 4B). Indirect questions adopt assertive word order (**Subject + Verb**), not interrogative inversion (**Verb + Subject**).

Q8. One of the reasons why he failed were that he did not practice consistently.

-  **Incorrect:** ...why he failed were...
-  **Correction:** One of the reasons why he failed **was** that he did not practice consistently.
-  **Rule Explanation:** *One of the [plural noun]* takes a singular verb (*was*) because the main subject is *One*.

Q9. I am knowing the solution to this problem since last week.

-  **Incorrect:** I am knowing... since last week.
-  **Correction:** I **have known** the solution to this problem since last week.
-  **Rule Explanation:** Stative verb + duration rule (Tense Pitfalls 1 & 4). *Know* is stative (no continuous *-ing*). Furthermore, action starting in past with *since* requires Perfect tense (*have known*).

Q10. It is high time the government takes strict action against corruption.

-  **Incorrect:** ...takes strict action...
-  **Correction:** It is high time the government **took** strict action against corruption.
-  **Rule Explanation:** Hypothetical time expression (Error Spotting Rule 10). *It is high time* + *Subject* requires the Simple Past tense (**V2** $\rightarrow$ *took*).