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Spotting Errors – 100 Rules – Part 1

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A. SUBJECT - VERB AGREEMENT

1. Two or more singular subjects connected by and usually take a verb in the plural.

Example

Incorrect- Hari and Ram is here.

Correct- Hari and Ram are here

2. If two singular nouns refer to the same person or thing, the Verb must be Singular.

Example

Incorrect- The Secretary and Principal are coming.

Correct- The Secretary and Principal is coming. (Here the same person is Secretary as well as Principal)

3. If the singular subjects are preceded by each or every, the verb is usually singular.

Example

Incorrect- Every boy and girl were ready.

Correct- Every boy and girl was ready.

4. Two or more singular subjects connected by or, 'nor', 'either'..... 'Or', 'neither'.... 'Nor' take a verb in the singular.

Example

Incorrect- Neither he nor I were there.

Correct- Neither he nor I was there.

5. When the subjects joined by 'or/nor' are of different numbers, the verb must be plural, and the Plural Subject must be placed next to the Verb.

Example

Incorrect - Neither the Assistant Masters nor the Headmaster was present.

Correct- Neither the Headmaster nor the Assistant Masters were present.

6. When the Subjects joined by or, nor are of different persons, the Verb agrees in person with the one nearest to it.

Example

Incorrect- Either he or I is mistaken.

Correct- Either he or I, am mistaken.

7. A Collective Noun takes a Singular Verb when the collection is thought of as a whole, a Plural verb when the individuals of which it is composed are thought of.

Example

Correct- The Council has chosen the President.

Correct- The military were called out.

8. Some Nouns which are singular in form but plural in meaning, take a Plural Verb.

Example

Incorrect- Mathematics are a branch of study in every school.

Correct- Mathematics is a branch of study in every school.

9. Words joined to a Singular Subject by with, together with, in addition to, or, as well as, etc. are parenthetical, and therefore do not affect the number of the Verb.

Example

Incorrect- The Chief, with all his men, were massacred.

Correct-The chief, with all his men, was massacred.

10. When the Subject of the Verb is a Relative Pronoun care should be taken to see that the Verb agrees in Number and Person with the Antecedent of the relative.

Example

Incorrect- I, who is your friend, will guard your interests.

Correct- I, who am your friend will guard your interests.

B. USES OF PARTICIPLES AND INFINITIVES

11. Ask, advise, allow, command, force, forbid, invite, encourage, compel, beg, order, imagine, instruct, permit, persuade, tell, require, remind, teach, etc. are followed by Object + To +V2

Example

Incorrect- He advised to do it by me.

Correct- He advised me to do it.

But if these are used in Passive Voice, then they are followed by To +V,

Correct- She was permitted to go with him.

12. Know is followed by how/ where/when/why and Infinitive.

Example

Incorrect- I know to write a letter.

Correct- I know how to write a letter.

13. After let, bid, behold, watch, see, feel, make etc. we use Bare-Infinitive and not To-infinitive.

Example

Incorrect- I heard him to speak on several subjects.

Correct- I heard him speak on several subjects.

14. Bare Infinitive is used after Modal Auxiliaries (can, could, may, might, shall, should, will, would, must, dare not, need not).

Example

Incorrect- You need not to work hard.

Correct- You need not work hard.

15. Had better, had rather, had as soon ... as ..., had sooner etc. are followed by Bare Infinitive.

Example

Incorrect- He had better to go now.

Correct- He had better go now.

16. Conjunction than is also followed by Bare Infinitive.

Example

Incorrect- He had better read than to write.

Correct- He had better read than write.

17. When but is used as a Preposition and preceded by any form of the Verb do, then but is followed with Bare Infinitive.

Example

Incorrect- He did nothing but to wander.

Correct- He did nothing but wander.

18. Every Participle must have a Subject of Reference.

Example

Incorrect- Being a rainy day Vijay decided to stay at home.

Correct- It being a rainy day Vijay decided to stay at home.

19. For completed action Having + V is used in Active Voice, whereas Having + been + V or Being + V is used in Passive Voice. After should not be used in such a sentence.

Example

Incorrect- After the leader having been killed, the followers ran away.

Correct- The leader having been killed, the followers ran away.

20. Participles like considering, judging, referring, concerning, regarding, viewing, broadly speaking etc. do not take any Subject of Reference.

Example

Correct - Considering the case, I took the decision.

Here 'I' is not a Subject of Reference of considering. So, there is no Subject of Reference for 'considering, still the sentence is correct.

C. USES OF VERBS

21. When there are two Subjects in a sentence and they are not in the same Number, then we must have to use separate Auxiliaries (is, are, am, was, were, have, has) for both of them.

Example

Incorrect- Three killed and one were injured.

Correct- Three were killed and one was injured.

22. A single Verb should be made to serve two Subjects, only when the form of Verb is same for both the subjects.

Example

Incorrect- I am seventeen years old and my sister fourteen.

Correct- I am seventeen years old and my sister is fourteen.

23. Two auxiliaries can be used with one principal Verb, only when the form of the principal Verb is appropriate to both the auxiliaries. '

Example

Incorrect- He never has, and never will take such strong measures.

Correct- He never has taken, and never will take such strong measures.

24. When there is only one auxiliary to two principal Verbs it should be correctly associated with the both.

Example

Incorrect- Ten candidates have passed one failed.

Correct- Ten candidates have passed, one has failed.

25. A Past Tense in the main clause should be followed by a Past Tense in the subordinate clause.

Example

Incorrect- He succeeded because he works hard.

Correct- He succeeded because he worked hard.

26. A Past Tense in main clause may be followed by a Present Tense in the subordinate clause when the subordinate clause expresses a universal truth.

Example

Incorrect- Our teacher said that the earth moved round the sun.

Correct- Our teacher said that the earth moves round the sun.

27. When the subordinate clause comes after 'lest', the auxiliary Verb 'should' must be used, whatever be the Tense of the Verb in the main clause.

Example

Incorrect- We start early lest we shall miss the train.

Correct- We start early lest we should miss the train.

28. An Adverb or Adverbial phrase should not be placed between 'to' and verbal part of the infinitive. (This is called the split infinitive).

Example

Incorrect- I hoped to immediately reply to your letter.

Correct- I hoped to reply immediately to your letter.

29. An infinitive should be in the present tense unless it represents an action prior to that of the governing Verb.

Example

Incorrect- I should have liked to have gone there.

Correct- I should have liked to go there.

30. Gerund if preceded by a Pronoun, that Pronoun must be in Possessive case.

Example

Incorrect - He emphasized me going there.

Correct- He emphasized my going there.

31. The Present Perfect Continuous Tense is used for an action that began in the past time and still going at the time of speaking. It is used with, Adverb of time introduced by 'since', 'for' and 'how long'.

Example

Incorrect- How long are you working in this office?

Correct- How long have you been working in this office?

32. A Verb when preceded by a Preposition must be the Gerund.

Example

Incorrect- They were punished for come late.

Correct- They were punished for, coming late.

33. The Future Indefinite Tense is not used in the clauses of time, place and condition. Here the Present Indefinite Tense is used.

Example

Incorrect- I shall wait for you till you will finish your work.

Correct- I shall wait for you, till you finish your work.

34. The Present Perfect Tense is not used with the Adverbs of past time like yesterday, in 1990 etc. Here Past Indefinite Tense is used.

Example

Incorrect- I have bought a cycle yesterday.

Correct- I bought a cycle yesterday.

The Past Perfect Tense is used to represent the earlier of the two past actions.

Incorrect- When I reached the station, the train already left.

Correct- When I reached the station, the train had already left.

35. Modal Auxiliaries are not used together. But two Auxiliaries can be connected by a Conjunction.

Example

Incorrect- He should must do it.

Correct- He should and must do it.

36. When need or dare is followed by not, it turns into modal auxiliary. In that situation it takes Bare Infinitive 'and we cannot use 'needs not' or 'dares not'.

Example

Incorrect- He needs not do it.

Correct- He need not do it.

D. USES OF ADJECTIVES

37. Adjectives of quantity show how much of a thing is meant. Adjectives of quantity (some, much, little, enough, all, no, any, great, half, sufficient, whole) are used for Uncountable Nouns only.

Example

Incorrect- I ate a few rice.

Correct- I ate some rice.

38. Numeral Adjectives are used for Countable Noun only and they show how many persons or things are meant or in what order a person or thing stands.

Example

Incorrect- I have taught you little things.

Correct- I have taught you a few things.

39. When cardinal and ordinal are used together ordinal precedes the cardinal.

Example

Incorrect- The four first boys will be given the chance.

Correct- The first four boys will be given the chance.

40. Later, latest refer to time, latter and last refer to position.

Example

Incorrect- I reached at 10 AM. But he was latter than I expected.

Correct- I reached at 10 AM. But he was later than I expected.

41. Farther means more distant or advanced; further means additional.

Example

Incorrect- He insisted on farther improvement.

Correct- He insisted on further improvement.

42. Each is used in speaking of two or more things, every is used only in speaking of more than two.

Example

Incorrect- Every of the two boys will get a prize.

Correct- Each of the two boys will get a prize.

43. To express quantity or degree some is used in affirmative sentences, any in negative or interrogative sentences.

Example

Incorrect- Have you bought some mangoes?

Correct- Have you bought any mangoes?

44. In comparing two things, the Comparative should be used, the Superlative should not be used.

Example

Incorrect- Which is the best of the two?

Correct- Which is the better of the two?

45. When two qualities of the same person or thing are compared, the Comparative in 'er' is not used. 'More' is used for this purpose.

Example

Incorrect- He is wiser than brave.

Correct- He is more wise than brave.

46. When comparison is made by means of a comparative, the thing compared should be excluded from the class of things with which it is compared by using 'other' or some such word.

Example

Incorrect- He is cleverer than any boy in the class.

Correct- He is cleverer than any other boy in the class.

47. When comparison is made by means of a superlative, the thing compared should include the class of things with which it is compared.

Example

Incorrect- He is the strongest of all other men.

Correct- He is the strongest of all men.

48. When two persons or things are compared, it is important that the same parts of things should be compared.

Example

Incorrect- The population of Bombay is greater than Delhi.

Correct- The population of Bombay is greater than that of Delhi.

49. Double comparatives and superlatives should not be used.

Example

1. Incorrect- He is the most cleverest boy in the class.

Correct- He is the cleverest boy in the class.

2. *Incorrect- He is more wiser than his brother.*

Correct- He 'is wiser than his brother.

50. The comparative Adjectives superior inferior, senior, junior, prior, anterior, Posterior prefer, etc., should be followed by 'to' instead of 'than'.

Example

Incorrect- He is senior than me.

Correct- He is senior to me.

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