

# ERROR IDENTIFICATION AND CORRECTION

These questions test correctness and effectiveness of expression. In choosing your answer, follow the requirements of standard written English; that is, pay attention to grammar, choice of words, and sentence construction. Choose the answer that produces the most effective sentence; this answer should be clear and exact, without awkwardness, ambiguity, redundancy, or grammatical error.

Familiarize yourself with these instructions now so that you will not need to spend any time reading them on the day of the test. As the instructions say, these questions test **correctness and effectiveness of expression** and your control of **standard written English**. This is the English you were taught in high school, in which verbs agree with their subjects and modifiers are never misplaced. GAT English is formal and dry, but it is still the same language we read and speak on a daily basis; it just sticks to the rules much more closely than we generally do when we're not taking a test.

## SEQUENCE OF TENSES

The verb bears the main responsibility of defining time relationship in a sentence. This relationship is fairly simple and definite, when the sentence contains a single action. The verb may be in the present, future, or past. The complications arise when the sentence contains two clauses and the action in one clause relates to a time different from that found in the other clause.

### Past and Present:

When the actions are in the past and occur at the same or nearly the same time in both clauses, the other verbs should be in the past tense.

When the general	visited	the camp,
	past	
the soldiers on duty	got	alert.
	past	

The main thing that uncle Ashfaq	proved	is that the world
	past	
is	round.	
present		

Present in the second clause is acceptable as it describes a universal truth.

### Present perfect and the past:

The past (lived) is used to represent a complete action. The present perfect (has/have and a past

participle) represents an action which took place in the past but has its results extending right into the present. The present perfect is also used to represent action, which began in the past and continues through the present.

**We worked/have worked in this company for five years.**

### Two Pasts (Past perfect and the past):

Two pasts in a sentence are common error asked to identify on the tests. Two pasts can never be in a same time. There must be a time difference between the actions. The first completed action should be in past perfect and the following action should be in past participle.

**When the manager entered the room, Saleem had already finished the work on annual sales report.**

## NOUN AGREEMENT

Nouns and verbs must agree in number.

**The cassette is in the box.**

Nouns must agree with pronoun in person and number.

**Abid worked on his assignment.**

**Zahid and Rizwana worked on their Open University assignment.**

The pairs of correlatives, not only... but also, neither... or, either... or, must be placed immediately before the parallel terms.

He enjoys not only playing flute but also listening to that Pathaney Khan's folks.

## USE OF PROPER PRONOUN

For detailed discussion about pronoun, refer to grammar review of sentence completion section of this book. Here, I'd like to discuss the main and the most important problem usually asked on the test, the use of "them or him-her; their or his-hers-its; they or he-she".

### Indefinite pronouns:

The error most frequently involves the indefinite pronouns

each, everyone, everybody, someone, nobody, anyone, anybody, either, neither

Each of the students taking the test attempted the first question.

Since each is singular, and since the pronoun(his, their) must refer to each and not to students, which is not the subject, the singular possessive pronoun is required.

Each of the students taking the test employed his full potential.

"his" is acceptable here.

Every one of us in the room is doing his work.

Since the subject is everyone and which is singular, therefore, the pronoun referring to it should be singular.

You can use everybody, someone, nobody, anyone, anybody, either, and neither in a similar fashion.

### Pronouns used impersonally:

When "you" and "one" are used impersonally, they must be followed by their corresponding pronouns.

One must perform his duties honestly.

If the sentence begins with "one", then the forms of one must be continued. Usages allowed are - his, him to follow one, but not you.

## PARALLELISM

Different parts of a sentence equal in importance should be expressed by parallel grammatical constructions.

He comes here to read and to write.

"to read" and "to write" explain his purpose; therefore, they should be in the same grammatical construction. They should both be infinitive, not a mixture of infinitive and continuous form.

The captain was ordered to see the training spot, to write a report on its effectiveness, and that they should discuss it afterwards.

Two of the commands are infinitive form (to see, to write). The third command is a clause, that they should discuss it afterwards. Since all three are commands, they should be in the same construction.

## REFERENCE PRONOUN

The specific noun or pronoun that a pronoun refers to must be clear to the reader. Two common types of errors in usage arise in this area.

### Reference causing Dangling:

Najam said that he had not met even the ten percent of the assigned target, which annoyed me very much.

The relative pronoun "which" in the above sentence should refer to a specific noun or pronoun. Instead, it refers to the entire idea in the preceding clause.

### Correct sentence:

Najam said that he had not met even the ten percent of the assigned target. His statement annoyed me very much

Or

Najam's statement that he had not met even the ten percent of the assigned target annoyed me very much.

### Ambiguous reference:

Abid told Fauzia that she did not come to the New Year party at Jahania.

In this sentence the reader does not know who is "she".

The correct sentence should be like:

Abid told Fauzia that Fauzia did not come to the New Year party at Jahania.

## SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT

If the subject is singular, the verb that follows must be singular. If the subject is plural, then the verb that follows must be plural.

### Intervening clause:

In my experience, this type of questions often causes confusion leading to wrong choice, in our Pakistani students.

When a singular subject is separated from its verb by an intervening clause or phrase, the student often tends to make the verb agree with the nearest noun even though it is not the subject of the sentence.

Rizwana,	as well as	her	three friends,
Subject		pronoun of Rizwana	
is working in the Physics lab.			

The subject of the sentence is Rizwana. When the subject is followed by a group of words introduced by with, together with, or as well as, these words are not part of the subject. Therefore, "three friends" is not part of the subject.

A basket of apples is in the car for all of you.

The subject of the sentence is basket.

### Examples:

- A group of soldiers has been fixed at the spot for security reasons.
- A set of eighty books lies on the shelves, waiting for you to catalogue them.

### Indefinite pronouns:

Sometimes, the sentence may seem to carry a plural sense when certain indefinite pronouns are used, the student must know which of these pronouns are singular, and have them followed every singular verbs.

Every one of these five hundred men is in hurry to have the reach the stadium.

somebody, anybody, nobody, everybody, someone, anyone, and everyone are singular and should be followed by a singular verb.

Some of the boys were ready to leave the office before noon.

Some, few, several are plural in form, they should be followed by plural verbs.

### Compound subjects:

When "and" joins the elements of the subject, the subject is plural, and the verb must be plural.

Elena and Shahbaz are waiting in the office lounge for the director.

When a compound subject is connected by the correlative conjunctions (neither...nor, either...or, not only.... But also), the verb is determined by the subject word closest to it. If that word is plural, then the verb must be plural; if that word is singular, then the verb must be singular.

Neither the managing director nor the director marketing was present at the product launch.

Neither Mr. Khan nor his brothers were present at the panchayat.

### Relative pronoun:

In ordinary cases, it is an easy task to identify the correct form to follow a relative pronoun.

Salman is the one who was to judge the contest.

### There and here: *Relation*

When there and, much less frequently, here are used to introduce sentences the subject follows the verb rather than precedes it.

There are several apparent explanations for this event.

### Compound subjects:

The elements of a compound subject lose their individuality when they become a single entity in the mind of the speaker.

Bacon and eggs is your favorite winter breakfast.

Bacon and eggs is used as single unit.

Fifty rupees was too much to pay for that article.

Sum of money (fifty rupees) is used as a single unit.

Collective nouns like group, army, set, jury, etc., are normally use a singular verb, but when the speaker or writer is considering the individuals of the group as separate entities, the verb should be plural.

**The committee were unable to agree on the decision of road rehabilitation in Bure Wala.**

The members of the committee cannot agree. It indicates that more than one person must be involved in such an action; the speaker actually means the individual members. Therefore, the verb should be plural.

### **Plural Nouns, singular in meaning:**

Measles is a common dangerous disease in Africa.

Some Common nouns plural in form but singular in meaning:

mumps, economics, civics, molasses, tactics, statistics, physics, aeronautics, politics, news, mathematics, comics

They end in s, but are treated as singular in meaning.

### **With fractions and percentages:**

**Thirty five percent of the bills are enough to pay the debt of the company.**

Since individual items bills are being represented, the verb should be plural.

**Three-fourths of the project of the new building is completed now.**

Since only one dam is involved, the verb should be singular.

### **Commonly mistaken plurals:**

The following group of nouns is often mistaken as singular.

Ashes, clothes, goods, links, nuptials, oats, pliers, proceeds, remains, riches, spectacles, suds, thanks, thongs, victuals, vitals, wages.

**Thanks are due to you for this real help.**

**The wages of sin are death!**

### **Double subject:**

Rizwana and I, we will attend the Jarga meeting.

Rizwana and I form the subject. The word "we" is unnecessary and the addition of a second subject is an error.

**The mobile, it is the necessity of time.**

"it" is completely unnecessary.

### **Subjects joined by "OR"**

When the conjunction joining a compound subject is "or", the noun or pronoun after the "or" determines the form of the verb.

**Abid or you have the right to choose the participants in the wedding ceremony of their sister Fauzia.**

Since "you" is after the "or", the form of the verb must be according to "you".

### **All, none, any, some as pronouns:**

The pronouns all, any, none, some may be singular or plural depending upon their meaning in the sentence.

**Are any of the guests still sleeping in the room?**

In this example, any refers to individual units and is therefore plural in nature.

### **Titles:**

The title of a book is treated as a singular subject even when the title contains a plural idea.

Adventures of Opo Khan- bestseller of 1999, is an interesting novel by a woman.

## **LOGICAL COMPARISON**

Logical comparison is second important topic that causes problem for students to pick the right choice.

Care must be taken in using some comparative forms, to ensure that the comparison is valid and logical.

**Abid is more experienced than any other doctor in his hospital.**

Since Abid is himself one of the members of the hospital, he cannot be more experienced than all of the doctors in his hospital, which includes himself. Therefore, the word other must be included.

The two forms for comparison are as .... as and more.... than.

Rizwana is definitely as capable as or more capable than her sister is.

The adjective unique means one of a kind. It cannot have comparative or superlative form.

The experience I just had was unique.

Following adjectives that should be used in the positive degree are dead, everlasting, final, last, round.

## MODIFIERS

Adjectives and adverbs must have a word in the sentence that they logically modify.

Dangling Modifiers:

Walking towards the school, the grassy plots look beautiful.

Obviously, there is no subject for walking. Therefore, the phrase dangles without a true noun for it to modify.

Dangling Verb forms:

Upon entering the room, the missing ring was soon found on the floor.

The gerund phrase, upon entering the room, has no word in the sentence for it to modify. The missing ring could not enter the room. A noun or pronoun must be added to the sentence for the phrase to modify.

The correct form

When I entered the room, I soon found the missing ring on the floor.

Or

Upon entering the room, I soon found the missing ring in the floor.

To plan carefully in case of fire, doors must not be kept locked when the auditorium is in use.

As the sentence stands, the only known word that "To plan carefully" can modify is doors. However, doors cannot plan. Therefore, To plan dangles. A satisfying noun or pronoun must be added.

**Correct sentence:**

To plan carefully in case of fire, you must make certain that the doors of the auditorium are not locked then it is in use.

**Dangling clauses and phrases:**

When a child, his father took him to Murree.

Who was the child is the main question in the sentence.

**Correct Sentence:**

When he was a child, his father took him to Murree.

## DICTION

The English language is a combination of a variety of communication systems. When different systems of communications are used, confusion and misunderstanding result.

**Standard:**

Use of words to convey the thoughts of one person to another on the widest communication band is called the standard use of the words.

**Nonstandard:**

Words that are used by (social, geographical, ethnic, etc groups) to convey thoughts to a restricted number of people are called nonstandard.

Word	Standard Meaning	Nonstandard Meaning
Scream	Loud sound revealing fright.	Funny, amusing.
Square	a geometrical figure.	Old-fashioned, conservative.
Smashed	Broken to pieces.	Drunk.

**Examples of Standard Words:**

FORMAL	WRITTEN	INFORMAL
complete	Finish	End
Relate	Describe	Tell
Secrete	Hide	Put away
Inquired	Questioned	Asked
Possess	Own	Have got
Acquire	Obtain	Get

## WORDINESS

Wordiness (verbosity) is the use of repetitious elements that add nothing to the meaning of the sentence. A concise form of the idea is the acceptable form on the test.

List of some frequently used verbose phrases:

Wordiness	Concise
cooperate together	cooperate
round in shape	round
Repeat again	Redo again
Lose out	Win out
large in size	large
few in number	few
same identical	identical
because of the fact	because
Green in color	green
by means of	by
expert in the field of	expert in
advance notice	notice
of an indefinite nature	indefinite
in order to	to
seen by the eyes	seen
on the occasion of	when
novelist writes in his novels	novelist writes
connected up with	connected with
fundamental principles	principles
attractive in appearance	attractive
at about	about
refer back	refer
advance forward	advance
both alike	alike
give encourage to	encourage
endorse on the back	endorse
consensus of opinion	consensus
give instruction to	teach
give encouragement to	encourage
give instruction to	teach
have need for	need
with respect to	about
for the purpose of	for
with a view to	to
come into conflict	conflict
in view of the fact that	because, since
make an adjustment in	adjust
give consideration to	consider
of a confidential nature	confidential

despite that fact that	though
in the amount of	for
in accordance with	by
make inquiry regarding	inquire
is of the opinion	believes
for the reason that	since
in the case that	if