

Error Free English: Common Grammar Mistakes

Jyothi Masuram

Project Associate, The English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad, India

Email - jyothi.masuram@gmail.com

Abstract: Grammar lays the foundation for effective communication in life. Grammar skills are helpful in every aspect of life from education to employment opportunities. Improper usage of grammar can affect the meaning of an intended message.

They are equally important at home where children learn their grammatical patterns from their parents and family. This puts the children at an immediate effect if learning incorrectly. Making some grammatical errors makes us unsuccessful in an interview, qualifying in an exam or silly impression with our higher authorities which hurts our image. Sometimes we even misuse words when we hear others use them incorrectly. The objective of this paper is to identify and rectify the common mistakes we commit when we speak and write. This paper details some of the easily avoidable errors and commonly confused words with examples. By learning to recognize such mistakes we can improve our speaking and writing skills in the future.

Key words: Common grammar mistakes, speaking skills, writing skills, common errors in sentences, commonly confused words.

1. INTRODUCTION:

According to a research, India has the second highest number of English speaking population in the world. It is a second language for a vast majority of people. A lot of mistakes creep into the vocabulary of an average English speaker in Indian. Writing and speaking in English as a non-native speaker has its own set of problems. Grammatical errors come in many forms and all can easily confuse and obscure meaning. Some common errors are with sentence structure, subject, tenses, punctuation, spelling and parts of speech. Sometimes a misplaced comma can completely change the meaning of a sentence. For example: "Let's eat daddy" vs. "Let's eat, daddy." Proper use of grammar makes written content more readable and interesting.

Here I present few typical mistakes second language speakers are prone to making when speaking or writing articles in English whose mother tongue is not English.

2. COMMON ERRORS IN SENTENCES:

Below are some of the most common English errors made by English as Second Language students, in speaking and writing sentences. Please identify and make a note of the corrections so that we should not repeat the same errors in the future of communication. Explanation has been given to some of the examples.

a. Nouns

1. The judge issued order for his arrest. ✗
The judge issued orders for his arrest. ✓
Orders should always be used in plural form.
2. We are leaving to Chennai by the 7.30 o' clock train. ✗
We are leaving to Chennai by the 7.30 train. ✓

Do not use o'clock when minutes are mentioned.
3. I took one and a half rupee. ✗
I took one and half rupees. ✓
Anything greater than one should take the plural form.
4. A woman's life is different from a man. ✗
A woman's life is different from a man's. ✓

In a comparative statement, if the first noun is in the possessive case, the second noun must be too.

5. She has built a new home for herself. ✗
She has built a new house for herself. ✓

House is any building; home is a place of residence with long associations.

6. Her family members are coming by this train. ✗
The members of her family are coming by this train. ✓
7. Good night Akash, where have you been? ✗
Good evening Akash, where have you been? ✓

Good night is a parting salutation. One cannot have further conversation after saying 'Good night'.

8. You bought a new dress, Arvind? ✗
You bought a new suit, Arvind? ✓

Men and boys wear suits, only women and girls wear dresses.

9. When I entered the house, I saw an ant on the ground. ✗
When I entered the house, I saw an ant on the floor. ✓
The ground is outside the house, floor should be used in the house.
10. I get a weekly allowance of hundred rupees. ✗
I get a weekly allowance of a hundred rupees. ✓
The word hundred should always be preceded by the indefinite article.
11. He sold two dozens mangoes. ✗
He sold two dozen mangoes. ✓
If dozen is preceded by a numerical use the singular form.
12. We saw dozen of pigeons. ✗
We saw dozens of pigeons. ✓
13. I just had my meals. ✗
I just had my food or lunch or supper. ✓

Since we never have more than one meal at a time we don't use meals.

14. I read three-fourth of this book. ✗
I read three-fourths of this book. ✓

Three-fourths implies three parts, we use plural form.

b. Pronouns

1. My brother and myself coming tonight. ✗
My brother and I are coming tonight. ✓
2. I shall avail of this opportunity to come with you. ✗
I shall avail myself of this opportunity to come with you. ✓

The word avail must always be followed by a reflexive pronoun.

3. Whom do you think will be suspended first? ✗
Who, do you think will be suspended first? ✓

Who should be used instead of whom.

4. One should always be loyal to his employer. ✗
One should always be loyal to one's employer. ✓
5. May I now take your leave? ✗
May I now take leave of you? ✓
6. You are taller than me. ✗
You are taller than I am. ✓
7. She is two years old, isn't it? ✗
She is two years old, isn't she? ✓

The object of the verb is she not it.

c. Adjectives

1. He is suffering with cold. ✗

He is suffering from a bad cold or a bad headache. ✓

2. Her work is superior than me. ✗
Her work is superior to mine. ✓
3. Tea with milk is preferable than coffee. ✗
Tea with milk is preferable to coffee. ✓
4. He is two years. ✗
He is two years old. ✓

d. Articles

1. I will meet you after the dinner. ✗
I will meet you after dinner. ✓

Definite article is not used before the names of meals.

2. Does your brother go to the school? ✗
Does your brother go to school? ✓
3. What kind of a salad is this? ✗
What kind of salad is this? ✓
4. I have headache. ✗
I have a headache. ✓
5. There are many a books you can choose from. ✗
There is many a book you can choose from. ✓
6. Dog is barking / The Buddy (the name of a dog) is barking. ✗
The dog is barking / Buddy is barking. ✓
7. Don't make noise. ✗
Don't make a noise. ✓

e. Conjunctions

1. The couple are moving to Australia. ✗
The couple is moving to Australia. ✓
2. The book has two hundred five pages. ✗
The book has two hundred and five pages. ✓

f. Miscellaneous

1. I am living in Hyderabad. ✗
I live in Hyderabad. ✓
2. She spoke very well, isn't it? ✗
She spoke very well, didn't she? ✓
3. Roja told that she may go. ✗
Roja told that she might go. ✓
4. I am seeing this great painting. ✗
I am looking at this great painting. ✓
5. I am seeing Television. ✗
I am watching Television. ✓
6. He revenged his mother's murder. ✗
He avenged his mother's murder. ✓
7. She has left job. ✗
She has quit the job. ✓
8. Leave my hand, please. ✗
Let go my hand, please. ✓
9. Will you open this knot, please? ✗
Will you untie this knot, please? ✓

10. I have to give another exam next year. ✗
I have to take another exam next year. ✓
11. Where have you kept my pen? ✗
Where have you put my pen? ✓
12. When he lost my book, I became very angry. ✗
When he lost my book, I felt very angry. ✓
13. I will just be back just now. ✗
I will just be back presently. ✓
14. Vybhav is very clever than Sunny. ✗
Vybhav is much cleverer than Sunny. ✓
15. Please write your details with ink. ✗
Please write your details in ink. ✓
16. I live at Chennai. ✗
I live in Chennai. ✓
17. I went to Hyderabad for attending a seminar. ✗
I went to Hyderabad to attend a seminar. ✓
18. Let me congratulate you for your daughter's marriage. ✗
Let me congratulate on your daughter's marriage. ✓
19. He died from Malaria. ✗
He died of Malaria. ✓
20. He is good in Mathematics. ✗
He is good at Mathematics. ✓
21. He is married with a rich girl. ✗
He is married to a rich girl. ✓
22. I shall return this bag after a week. ✗
I shall return this bag in a week. ✓
23. Where have you been to? ✗
Where have you been? ✓
24. Open the sixth page of this book. ✗
Open this book at page six. ✓
25. What to do? ✗
What can be done? ✓
26. One of my friend is coming to meet me today. ✗
One of my friends is coming to meet me today. ✓
27. He has no issues. ✗
He has no issue. ✓
28. His both legs have been injured. ✗
Both of his legs have been injured. ✓
29. I spoke to her with a high tone. ✗
I spoke to him in a high tone. ✓
30. There are many worth seeing places in Mysore. ✗
There are many places worth seeing in Mysore. ✓
31. She said to me if you like you may go. ✗
She told me that if I liked I might go. ✓
32. I enquired of his health. ✗
I enquired about his health. ✓
33. I saw some books on the table. ✗
I saw few books on the table. ✓
34. I need few milk/ he needs few coffee. ✗
I need some milk / he needs some coffee. ✓
35. She have a great idea / She have a bike that we can borrow. ✗
She has a great idea / She has a bike that we can borrow. ✓

36. Do you has any money / I has a great deal for you. ✗
Do you have any money / I have a great deal for you. ✓
37. Can I have a cold drink, please? ✗
Can I have a soft drink, please? ✓
38. Can I come in? ✗
May I come in? ✓
39. The police is coming. ✗
The police are coming. ✓
40. You speak English good. ✗
You speak English well. ✓

3. COMMONLY CONFUSED WORDS:

English has a lot of commonly confused words. They either look alike or sound alike but have completely different meanings. At the same time some other words look and sound different but are similar in meaning, and it's hard to recognize which is the correct one in a given context. The following list of pairs of commonly confused words with meanings and examples will help us keep them straightened out.

1. Advice – an opinion or recommendation offered as a guide to action
Advise - to give a recommendation about what should be done
e.g., I need some advice on which mobile to buy.
She advised me to buy a house.
2. Adapt - to adjust or make suitable to new conditions
Adopt - to choose or bring it up as one's own
e.g., He adapted herself to the change quickly.
He was adopted as an infant.
3. Ago - back in time from the present
Before - at an earlier time
e.g., The booking was done three months ago.
I knew her before.
4. Alright - fairly well
All right - acceptable, good enough
e.g., Her health is alright.
Her answers are alright.
5. Berth - sleeping place in a train or a ship
Birth - being born
e.g., She booked a berth to go to Chennai
She gave birth to a baby girl.
6. Childish - immature
Childlike - innocent
e.g., I am fed up with your childish behaviour.
She gave a childlike smile.
7. Complement (noun) quantity that completes anything
Compliment (noun) praise for something
e.g., The bus has its complement of 100 passengers.
He complimented her for her beautiful looks.
8. Continual - Repeated frequently
Continuous - nonstop, without interruption
e.g., The expectation this time is for continual improvement.
Baby is crying continuously.
9. Council - committee
Counsel - advice

e.g., The local council is responsible for keeping the town clean.
We are ready to offer help and counsel.

10. Definite - exact, not vague

Definitive - accurate, providing a solution

e.g., I will need a definite answer by Monday.

He has written a definitive biography.

11. Effect - cause to happen or having impact

Affect - to influence

e.g., The medicine had an effect on the city.

The tornado will affect our picnic plans.

12. Especially - particularly

Specially - on purpose

e.g., I like all sweets, especially Jamoon.

I made this cake specially for you.

13. Loose - free, detached

Lose - unable to find

e.g., Your shirt is loose.

He lost the pencil.

14. Meter - instrument for measuring

Metre - poetic rhythm

e.g., The cloth is one meter.

The poet often mixes different metres in his poems.

15. Particular - special, precise

Peculiar - odd

e.g., He is very particular about his food.

He has the peculiar habit of walking in sleep.

16. Popular - liked by people

Populous - thickly inhabited by people.

e.g., Biryani is popular in Hyderabad.

Mumbai is very populous city.

17. Popular – someone or something who is like by the people, reputation

Famous – someone or something a lot of people know, recognition

She is a popular personality in the country.

It is famous hotel in the city.

18. Sensible - reasonable, ability to make sound decisions

Sensitive - easily affected

e.g., He is sensible; he will never waste his time.

I found him to be a sensitive boy who will cry for every reason.

19. Stationary - fixed, not moving

Stationery - materials used for writing

e.g., The bus was stationary in the bus station.

The stationery he uses is very good.

20. Storey - horizontal division of a building

Story - a tale, narrative writing

e.g., She fell from a second storey building.

He tells amazing short stories.

21. Temporary - not permanent

Temporal - not spiritual or eternal.

e.g., This job is only temporary.

The priest's commitment requires him to ignore the temporal pleasures of the world.

22. Thorough - complete

Through - across

e.g., He reads his material thoroughly.

They walked slowly through the woods.

23. Vacation - holiday

Vocation - calling towards a career

e.g., The family has been to a vacation.

He has a vocation for the priesthood.

24. Wander - to roam

Wonder - something remarkable, a feel of amazement.

e.g., I always wonder about the origin of the solar system.

The boy is wandering in the city.

4. CONCLUSION:

Grammar skills are important to be an effective leader. Communication skills give direction, confidence and provide assurance to a student or an employee. While correct grammar is a valuable tool for success in many areas of life. Grammar is a tool to opening doors by being heard and understood more clearly. While correct grammar will offer an edge in a job interview. Knowing basic grammar helps us in easier communication and important in order to be able to analyze and improve our language. To conclude, we can say that as rules are compulsory in everyday life, grammar rules are very essential in everyday life for clarity of meaning and intention.

REFERENCES:

1. Joseph Madappally: Write Better Speak Better: Orient Longman Limited 2004.
2. Margaret M Maison: Examine your English: Orient Longman Private Limited 1964: Eighteenth Impression 2003.
3. Peter Howard: Mistakes to avoid in English: Orient Longman Limited 1997.

Author's Biography:

Ms. Jyothi Masuram is working as the Project Associate for District Centre for English Scheme and English Language Training Institutes Support Scheme (both schemes merged to Skill Development Centre) in the English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad. She is a Post Graduate in English.