AN ENGLISH HANDBOOK FOR THE UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

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the grammar underground

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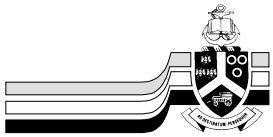

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INTRODUCTION

This is not a complete grammar of English but a set of notes on the most frequent grammatical problems encountered by students and staff at the University of Pretoria. It is hoped that these notes will contribute towards a general heightening of language awareness throughout the University of Pretoria, and will be a general aid for editing and marking.

The aim is not only to help students but also to help those teaching staff who need help with their own usage. Furthermore, all staff have to deal with the language of students and to remedy the grammatical faults of the students. If everyone concentrates on a few of the same basic errors, some progress will be made.

It is hoped that students will consult these notes as well as staff. They have been written for both. For some the notes may sometimes be too easy, for others a little difficult. One cannot please all the people all the time, as Abe Lincoln said.

To assist in uniformity of application and as an aid to memory, a code of symbols that can be used for marking is provided. If enough lecturers use this code, the student body will come to understand it and some impact will be made.

Some grammatical terminology cannot be avoided. In fact, the memorisation of a few terms is probably necessary and beneficial. We take language through life with us: why not go well-equipped? Key terms will be printed in bold.

In addition to notes on the most frequent grammatical errors, some general advice will be given on writing and reading skills, also some advice on what dictionaries to get and on how dictionaries should be used.

If one knows the grammar, but has a poor vocabulary, one is still handicapped. A section is given to vocabulary building and to the growth and history of the English language.

Pronunciation is the trickiest area to deal with, because accents are very difficult to change, once they are established, without intensive coaching, while the medium of these notes is print. Some basic, practical advice will be given, but in general we are entitled to our own accents provided they are comprehensible.

Finally, brief comments are needed on language flux. Now and again, points of grammar will be encountered which reflect slow processes of language change or for which definite answers cannot be given. These points will be briefly discussed when necessary.

1

BASIC SENTENCE STRUCTURE

1.1 FULL SENTENCES FINITE VERBS SENTENCE FRAGMENTS

Let us start with the basics of the sentence. There is a difference between jotting down notes in sentence fragments or in speaking in sentence fragments and the finished written product. Formal academic writing must take place in full sentences.

A full sentence requires a **subject** (S) and a **finite verb** (V). There can also be an **object** (O), but this is not essential.

Dogs (S) bite (V).
Cats (S) scratch (V).
The dog(S) bites (V) the man (O).
The man (S) bites (V) the dog (O).

Notice the order: SVO. This helps us to know which is the subject, the verb, the object. It is essential, both in writing and in reading, to know which is the subject and which the verb. This is the backbone of any statement. The above sentences are called **simple** sentences because there is only one subject and one verb. More complicated structures will be tackled a little later.

To repeat: in both reading and writing, if you cannot find the subject and verb, you are lost.

Finite Verbs. The verb in a complete sentence must be **finite**. Put briefly, this means that the verb must be complete and state a time. If the verb is not finite, or if there is no subject, then you will have a **sentence fragment**, not a complete sentence. The marking code for a sentence fragment is:

S. Frag.

If the group of words has no subject, it is also a sentence fragment.

1.2 SOME MORE ABOUT VERB FORMS

Be careful of the ***ing*** forms in English verbs. Very often this indicates a **participle**, which is part of a verb but not the complete verb. “Coming down the stairs” is not a sentence, it is a **phrase**. There is no subject. Furthermore, the participle “coming” needs something added to it to make the verb complete and finite. What is needed is an **auxiliary** verb, that is a “helping” verb. “He is coming down the stairs” is a complete sentence. “He” is the subject, “is coming” is a complete verb because of the auxiliary “is”.

1.3 PARTICIPLES AND FULL VERBS

Verbs have a **present participle** and a **past participle**. The past participle also needs an auxiliary verb to make a complete finite verb. Take “to work”. The present participle is “working”, the past participle is “worked”. The ordinary past tense is also “worked”. “She worked” is a full sentence. “She has worked” is also a full sentence, in which the past participle “worked” is supplemented by the auxiliary verb “has”. “She works” is a full sentence. “She working” is not a full sentence: “She is working” or “She was working” or “She has been working” are full sentences with finite verbs.

The past participle gives problems with a large group of **irregular verbs**, sometimes, for historical reasons, called “strong verbs”. “She swims” is a full sentence. “She swam” is also a full sentence: the past tense of “swim” is created by changing the root vowel. “She swum” is not a sentence: “swum” is the past participle not a finite verb, again created by changing the root vowel. “Swum” must be supplemented by an auxiliary verb: “She has swum the Midmar Mile a number of times”.

The irregular verbs must be known. The list appears in an appendix after this section. Consult this list frequently. The list gives the present participle (always **ing**), the past tense (which does not need an auxiliary verb), and the past participle. Sometimes the ending **en** is added. “She has swum the Midmar Mile many times but she has never broken the record.”

1.4 EXAMPLE AND EXERCISE

Here is a group of sentences and fragments. How would you deal with them. Try your own solution before you look at the suggested answer.

He fell. Coming down the stairs.
In the early morning. While it
was still dark. His leg, broken.

“He fell” is a complete sentence with subject and finite verb. You have the basis if you attach the fragments to this complete sentence. Here is a suggested solution.

Coming down the stairs in the
early morning while it was
still dark he fell, and his
leg was broken.

Very often, the problem of fragments can be cured by attaching them to a main sentence. Note, however, that in the case of broken the verb had to be made finite by adding an auxiliary verb. This could have been made a separate sentence: “His leg was broken”.

1.5

Something more has to be said about the fragment “while it was still dark”. You might be inclined to argue that this group of words has a subject, “it” and a finite verb “was”. Why can it not stand on its own as a complete sentence?

The answer is that the “while” is a **conjunction**, a word that joins, indicating that this group of words has to be joined onto something else. The group of words, “while it was still dark” is a **subordinate clause**. The term “subordinate” indicates that it is of lower rank and so needs a main sentence to support it, rather as the trunk of a tree supports branches. A subordinate clause, introduced by a conjunction cannot stand by itself and counts as a fragment.

1.6

Here is another example of a fragment. Again try your own solutions for correction before looking at the suggested explanation and answer.

The man who was wearing a red shirt.

Here we have a complete subordinate clause but an incomplete main sentence. The subordinate clause has a subject, “who” which also acts as a conjunction. This kind of word is called a **relative pronoun**. The verb “was wearing” is finite. The main clause, however, has a subject but no verb. “The man” must do something.

The man who was wearing a red
shirt ran away.

Obviously, you do not have to have a subordinate **clause**, you could do the same job with a participial **phrase**.

The man wearing a red shirt ran away.

Here the participial phrase, “wearing a red shirt”, is not a fragment because it is attached to a full sentence: “The man ran away”.

1.7 THE RELATIVE CLAUSE: DEFINING AND NON-DEFINING SENTENCES.

You have learned that "who" is a **relative pronoun**. The relative pronouns are **who, whom, which, whose, that**. A clause that starts with a relative pronoun is called a **relative clause**.

There is something important that you should know about the punctuation of a relative clause.

> The man who was wearing a
> red shirt ran away.
>
> The man, who was wearing a
> red shirt, ran away.

Which is right? Is there any difference? The answer is that they are both right but that there is a difference of meaning. We call the first one, without the commas, a **defining clause**; it picks out the man from other men. The implication is that there is more than one man, but that the one in the red shirt ran away. The defining clause picks out something.

If one puts in the commas, the red shirt is an additional descriptive detail but he could be the only man. There is no picking out from a group of men. This is a **non-defining** clause.

In the defining clause it is possible to use "that" instead of "who".

> The man that was wearing a
> red shirt ran away.

If you put in the commas then you cannot use "that" in place of "who".

1.8 CONCLUSION

This brings us to the end of the opening section about full sentences and sentence fragments. The above concepts to do with elementary sentence structure are absolutely basic. In the writing that you do at university sentence fragments are not permissible. Obviously you talk differently. Some more complicated material on sentence structure will be given later.

Try to remember the grammatical terminology of this section.

What follows is the list of irregular verbs that was mentioned earlier. Learn them if possible: you will find that you already know many of them. Use the list for reference purposes whenever you are uncertain. The present participle is not always given: it is always **ing**.

1.9 THE IRREGULAR VERBS

Present Tense	**Present Participle**	**Past Tense**	**Past Participle**
be	being	was / were	been
bear		bore	born / borne
beat		beat	beaten
begin	beginning	began	begun
bid	bidding	bade	bidden
blow		blew	blown
break		broke	broken
choose	choosing	chose	chosen
come	coming	came	come
do	doing	did	done

Present Tense	Present Participle	Past Tense	Past Participle
draw		drew	drawn
drink	drinking	drank	drunk
drive	driving	drove	driven
eat		ate	eaten
fall		fell	fallen
fly	flying	flew	flown
forbid	forbidding	forbade	forbidden
forget	forgetting	forgot	forgotten
forgive	forgiving	forgave	forgiven
forsake	forsaking	forsook	forsaken
freeze	freezing	froze	frozen
give	giving	gave	given
go	going	went	gone
grow		grew	grown
hide	hiding	hid	hidden
know		knew	known
lie	lying	lay	lain
mow		mowed	mown
overdo	overdoing	overdid	overdone
ride	riding	rode	ridden
rise	rising	rose	risen
ring		rang	rung
run	running	ran	run
saw		sawed	sawn
see	seeing	saw	seen
shake	shaking	shook	shaken
show		showed	shown
shrink		shrank	shrunk
sing		sang	sung
sink		sank	sunk
slay		slew	slain
speak		spoke	spoken
spring		sprang	sprung
steal		stole	stolen
stink		stank	stunk

Present Tense	Present Participle	Past Tense	Past Participle
strive	striving	strove	striven
swear		swore	sworn
swim	swimming	swam	swum
swell		swelled	swollen
take	taking	took	taken
tear		tore	torn
thrive	thriving	thrived	thrived/thriven
throw		threw	thrown
tread		trod	trodden
undo	undoing	undid	undone
wear		wore	worn
weave	weaving	wove	woven
write	writing	wrote	written

The verbs in this next group have the same past tense and past participle forms, but are also ‘irregular’ verbs.

Present Tense	Present Participle	Past Tense	Past Participle
bend		bent	bent
beseech		besought	besought
bind		bound	bound
bleed		bled	bled
bring		brought	brought
build		built	built
burn		burnt	burnt
buy		bought	bought
catch		caught	caught
cling		clung	clung
creep		crept	crept
deal		dealt	dealt
dig		dug	dug
deal		dealt	dealt
dream		dreamt	dreamt
dwell		dwelt	dwelt
feed		fed	fed
feel		felt	felt

Present Tense	Present Participle	Past Tense	Past Participle
fight		fought	fought
find		found	found
flee	fleeing	fled	fled
fling		flung	flung
get	getting	got	got
hang (things)		hung	hung
have	having	had	had
hear		heard	heard
hold		held	held
keep		kept	kept
kneel		knelt	knelt
lay		laid	laid
lead		led	led
lean		leant	leant
leap		leapt	leapt
learn		learnt	learnt
leave	leaving	left	left
lend		lent	lent
light		lit	lit
lose	losing	lost	lost
make	making	made	made
mean		meant	meant
meet		met	met
pay	paying	paid	paid
read		read	read
say	saying	said	said
seek		sought	sought
sell		sold	sold
send		sent	sent
shine	shining	shone	shone
shoe	shoeing	shod	shod
shoot		shot	shot
sit	sitting	sat	sat
sleep		slept	slept
slide	sliding	slid	slid

Present Tense	Present Participle	Past Tense	Past Participle
smell		smelt	smelt
spell		spelt	spelt
spill		spilt	spilt
spit	spitting	spat	spat
spoil		spoilt	spoilt
stand		stood	stood
strike	striking	struck	struck
teach		taught	taught
tell		told	told
think		thought	thought
weep		wept	wept
win	winning	won	won
wind	winding	winded	wound
wring		wrung	wrung

The verbs in this group are the same in the Present Tense, Past Tense and Past Participle.

Present Tense	Present Participle	Past Tense	Past Participle
bid	bidding	bid	bid
burst		burst	burst
broadcast		broadcast	broadcast
cast		cast	cast
cost		cost	cost
cut	cutting	cut	cut
hit	hitting	hit	hit
hurt		hurt	hurt
let	letting	let	let
put	putting	put	put
set	setting	set	set
shed	shedding	shed	shed
shut	shutting	shut	shut
split	splitting	split	split
spread		spread	spread
thrust		thrust	thrust

The ‘regular’ verbs in this final group form the Past Tense and Past Participle by the addition of -ed.

Present Tense	Present Participle	Past Tense	Past Participle
boiled		boiled	boiled
brush		brushed	brushed
crow		crowed	crowed
dress		dressed	dressed
dust		dusted	dusted
hang (people)		hanged	hanged
knit	knitting	knitted	knitted
lie	lying	lied	lied
load		loaded	loaded
pour		poured	poured
work		worked	worked

A small group of verbs have Past Tense and Past Participle forms in -t or -ed.

Present Tense	Present Participle	Past Tense	Past Participle
burn		burnt / burned	burnt / burned
learn		learnt / learned	learnt / learned
smell		smelt / smelled	smelt / smelled
spoil		spoilt / spoiled	spoilt / spoiled

2

CONCORD OR AGREEMENT OF SUBJECT AND VERB

2.1

The previous section has laid the basis for elementary sentence structure, in particular the need for subject and finite verb in a sentence. This section builds further on this. The basic skill needed is to be able to identify subject and verb, hence the name "Agreement of Subject and Verb" as an alternative to "Concord".

The marking code is either

	C	=	Concord
or	S+V	=	Subject and Verb

The form of the verb changes depending on whether the subject is singular (i.e. one) or plural (two or more). **Concord or Agreement of Subject and Verb is the source of a great many errors and any piece of writing must be thoroughly checked for this error.** This involves finding the subject and verb in every sentence or clause and also considering **person**, which will be explained a little lower.

Some typical errors:

He work	John and Peter is friends.
They works	Everyone are working.
They is	He have done it.
They was late	They has done it.

The number of murders have increased.

2.2 NOTE THE FOLLOWING TABLES:

Singular

First person	I am	I work
Second person	You are	You work
Third person	He she it is	He, she, it, the girl, the boy works

Plural

First person	We are	We work
Second person	You are	You work
Third person	They are	They, the girls, boys etc. work

I was, you were, he she etc. was, We were, you were, they were.

I have you have, he she etc has, we have, you have, they have.

I do	I do not	(don't)
You do	You do not	(don't)
He she etc does	does not	(doesn't)

We do	We do not	(don't)
You do	You do not	(don't)
They do	They do not	(don't)

Rule. The verb agrees with the subject in number and in person.

What stands out in the tables above is the *S* in the third person singular. This is the source of frequent error.

Always ask yourself, "Is the subject singular or plural?" and, "Is the subject third person singular?"

2.3

Apart from the basic patterns shown in the tables above, there is a large number of tricky concord problems. The following notes must be consulted frequently.

2.3.1 And

Two or more nouns or pronouns joined by 'and':

Peter and John **are** my friends.
You and I **are** both going.
The hen and her chickens **are** scratching in the garden.

2.3.2 Distributives

Each, every, either, neither, nobody, everybody, everyone, everything, anybody, anything, and so on as subjects or as adjectives before a noun/pronoun subject, take a singular verb.

Each (boy) has a book.
Each of them has a book.

Neither of them has a book.

Everybody is here.

NOTE: Even if two or more singular nouns are joined by 'and' (expressed or understood) and are qualified by 'each' or 'every' the verb must be singular.

Every woman and child has to be protected. Every man,
horse and rifle was needed.

2.3.3 All

All is singular or plural, depending on the context and/or meaning.

All **is** lost (everything = singular).
All **are** lost (all the people = plural).
All (the people) he saw **were** women.
All he saw (the only thing) **was** women.
All that he could see (the only thing) **was** four women
and their children (NEVER plural).

2.3.4 Relative Pronouns

The verb after a relative pronoun agrees with the **antecedent** of that pronoun. The antecedent is the word to which the relative pronoun refers.

I saw the **man** who **is** our new mayor.
I brought the **books** that **were** needed.
He is one of **those people** who **dislike** flattery.
(Is **people** the antecedent of **who**? Traditional grammars say so)
They accuse **me**, who **am** innocent. (I am innocent.)
The prize goes to you, who are clearly the best contestant. (You are the best.)
They accuse him, who **is** innocent. (He is innocent.)
It is **one** of his pets that **has** won the prize.
He is one of the best doctors that has/have ever lived.
(This is debatable. Is **one** the antecedent **or best doctors**? Traditional grammars say **have** i.e. **doctors** is the antecedent. However, some modern grammars disagree.)
His left jab is the fastest that has ever been seen.
His left jab is one of the fastest that have ever been seen.

2.3.5 This sort of thing

This takes a singular verb.

This sort of thing **interests** me.
Things of this sort **interest** me.

NOTE: Both 'This sort of things interests me' (unidiomatic), and 'These sort of things interest me' (ungrammatical) are incorrect.

2.3.6 More than one (of)

This takes the singular verb.

More than one child **was** hurt.
More than one of the children **was** hurt.

But Several children **were** hurt.

2.3.7 'Much/little, many/few (of)'

'Much/little' used with the singular - 'uncountable' 'Many/few' used with the plural - 'countable'

Much/little food (of the food) **was** eaten.
Many/few loaves (of the loaves) **were** eaten.

NOTE: He has **fewer/more friends** than enemies.
He had **less/more trouble** last week.
You have given me a **book too many/few**.
Many a child **hates** school.

2.3.8 Collectives

Collectives are singular or plural depending on whether they are seen as denoting single entities or as denoting the individuals who compose the collection. In other words, you have a choice depending on meaning, on how the matter is seen.

Examples: Family, crew, party, congregation, bank, army, flock, mob, crowd, committee, government

NOTE: **Pronouns** must also **agree** - singular or plural - depending on the verb chosen.

The party **have** lost their way.
The party **has** lost its way.

2.3.9

Some nouns with apparently plural endings usually take singular verbs, because they name one thing or idea.

Examples: News, politics, measles, gallows, mathematics, innings, means, and so on.
Politics **interests** many people.
The news **has** come.
A gallows **was** erected on that hill.
Mathematics **is** an important science.
The only means of finding out **is** ...

2.3.10

Some plurals denoting a whole of some kind take singular verbs

Examples: *Hard Times* **was** written by ...
Five and five **is** ten.
Two times two **is** four.
The United States of America **is** a republic.
Ten years **is** a long time.
Bread and butter **was** served with the tea.
Curry and rice **is** his favourite dish.

Compare: There **was** ten cents on the table. (one coin)
There **were** ten cents on the table. (ten separate coins)

Nine tenths of the land **is** a large share. (one piece)
Nine tenths of the people **spend** too much. (so many people)

2.3.11 Composite objects

These take plural verbs.

Examples: Scissors, trousers, spectacles, shears, longs, tweezers, pliers

The scissors **are** lying on the table.

NOTE: To emphasise singular aspect, use 'a pair of'.

- There **is a pair** of scissors lying on the table.

To denote several composite objects use 'pairs of'.

- There **are** three pairs of scissors lying on the table.

'A pair of twins' takes the plural because it indicates two people, not joined together.

2.3.12 Subject and Complement

The number of the verb 'to be' depends on the number of the subject, not of the complement.

Examples: My interest **is** horses. (... interest is)
Horses **are** my interest. (Horses are ...)

2.3.13

'What', as subject, is plural only if it refers definitely to a plural noun in the sentence.

Examples: What **were** the causes of the First World War?
What **is** meant by the word 'schizophrenia'?

What **is** your excuse for being late?
The party, for what (= reasons) **were** probably good **reasons**, decided to turn back.

2.3.14 Either/or and neither/nor

When 'either/or' or 'neither/nor' is used in a sentence, the verb should agree in number with the noun/pronoun nearest to it.

Examples: Neither he nor **you are** going to go there.
Neither you nor **I am** going to watch the match.

When the phrases 'as well as ...', 'like ...', '(together) with ...' occur in a sentence, the verb always takes the number of the subject of the sentence, **not** of the noun nearest to it.

Examples: Our soldiers, like theirs, **are** extremely well trained.
The cow, with her calf, **is** grazing in the meadow.
James, with a few of his friends, **is** coming to see you.

2.3.15 None and Not One

None of them has/have survived (This is debatable. **Has** is probably safer.) None can be plural.
Not one of them has survived.

2.4 EXERCISE IN CONCORD

Choose the correct form of the verbs in brackets.

1. Young drivers (is/are) our main traffic problem.
2. His only source of income (is/are) odd jobs.
3. Clothes (was/were) her main topic of conversation.
4. No news (is/are) good news.
5. John's years of experience (qualifies/qualify) him for the post.
6. An important cause of traffic congestion (is/are) the huge office blocks in the city centre.
7. The building of houses, shops and flats (continues/continue) rapidly.
8. Conditions in the hospital (requires/require) investigation.
9. The Prime Minister as well as the members of his cabinet (was/were) present.
10. A number of serious accidents (has/have) occurred at this intersection.
11. The number of road deaths (has/have) risen considerably within the past year.
12. My greatest expense (is/are) clothes.
13. We prefer to discuss the matter with you, who (is/are) the leader of the deputation.
14. Because the pair of scissors (was/were) not in this drawer, she called out: 'Where (is/are) the scissors?'
15. More than one traveller (was/were) caught unprepared by the storm.
16. One advantage of living in this region is that there (is/are) the ocean and countless lakes to choose from for recreational purposes.
17. Her voice is one of the sweetest that (has/have) ever thrilled audiences in this city.
18. One of the problems that (has/have) puzzled medical science for decades (is/are) about to be solved.
19. Dogs of this breed (is/are) excellent hunters.

20. No sound but their whispers (was/were) heard.
21. He is one of the best runners who (has/have) won a gold medal.
22. He is the only one of the runners who (has/have) won a gold medal.
23. The consequences of drunken driving (is/are) often serious.
24. To have loved and to have lost (is/are) an experience most people (has/have) suffered.
25. The most rewarding part of the investigations (was/were) the discovery and identification of the forged documents.
26. His motives may be good, but his tactics (is/are) reprehensible.
27. Politics (is/are) a controversial subject.
28. Radical politics (is/are) offensive to moderates.
29. Each article (is/are) tested before it (is/are) exported.
30. Wages (is/are) paid monthly by that firm.
31. Two-thirds of the money (is/are) mine.
32. The content of the essay (is/are) good.
33. The list of names of successful candidates (was/were) published yesterday.
34. The jury (has/have) given its verdict.
35. The committee (is/are) divided in their opinions.
36. The committee (is/are) unanimous in its decision.
37. What caused the confusion (was/were) two drivers who were hurling insults at each other.
38. His athletics (is/are) his favourite activity.
39. Neither the father nor his sons (is/are) guilty of the crime.
40. What everybody (longs/long) for (is/are) peace and quiet.
41. This is one of the best answers that (has/have) been given.
42. More than a hundred tons of gold (is/are) sold in one year.
43. More than a hundred students (was/were) present yesterday.
44. Every tree and every bush (is/are) in bloom.
45. A great variety of articles (is/are) sold at the auction.
46. The principal, like his predecessors, (is/are) a strict disciplinarian.
47. There (is/are) tables and chairs in the room.
48. Nothing but stunted trees (was/were) to be seen.
49. Mumps, for an older person, (is/are) more than a mere inconvenience.
50. Either of the applicants (is/are) suitable for the post.
51. Where (is/are) the shears?
52. All that (matters/matter) to most people (is/are) their own interests.
53. My main interest (is/are) horses.
54. Physics (is/are) a difficult subject, but so (is/are) Chemistry and English.
55. The high cost of living (affects/affect) all of us.
56. (Has/Have) his brother and sister arrived yet?
57. Bacon and eggs (is/are) our favourite breakfast dish.
58. Bad manners (is/are) a common fault nowadays.
59. Horses (is/are) my main interest.
60. The wages of sin (is/are) death.

Answers to 2.4

1. are
2. is (subject is “source)
3. were
4. is (idiomatic)
5. qualify
6. is (subject is “cause”)
7. continues (S = building)
8. require
9. was (“as well as” is a trap)
10. has or have - this is debatable
11. has (probably)
12. is
13. are (you who are)
14. was (pair) are (scissors)
15. was (one)
16. are
17. have (according to traditional grammars)
18. have (traditionally) is (relates to “one”)
19. are
20. was (sound)
21. have (in traditional grammars)
22. has (the only one)
23. are
24. is (the concept) have (“people”)
25. was (“part)
26. are
27. is (a trap: “politics”)
28. is or are (debatable)
29. is
30. are
31. is
32. is
33. was (“list”)
34. either has or have
35. either is or are
36. is: the “its” shows that the concept is singular
37. was (confusion)
38. is
39. are
40. longs; is (“peace and quiet” taken as one concept)
41. have (traditional grammars)
42. is or are
43. were
44. is
45. is (variety)
46. is
47. are
48. was
49. is
50. is
51. are
52. matters ... is
53. is
54. is ... are
55. affects
56. Have
57. is (they are one concept)
58. are
59. are
60. is (The King James Bible - the Authorised version of 1611 - puts it this way. Can it be wrong?)

2.5

Be careful of number with **this these** (plural) and **that those** (plural). Only too often one gets something like

This things is ...
That things is ...

NOTE: **These** is pronounced with a long **ee** sound, and with a **Z** sound at the end. **These** is often pronounced to sound like **this** and the mistake then creeps into writing.

3

MISRELATED AND UNRELATED (DANGLING) PARTICIPLE

3.1

In Section I you learnt that the **-ing** form is the **present participle**. You learnt, also, that this is not a **finite verb** but can be turned into one by adding an **auxiliary** verb. You learnt the difference between a **phrase** and a **clause**: the phrase has no finite verb, the clause starts with a **conjunction** or **relative pronoun** and has a subject and a finite verb. All these points of grammar will be exercised again in relation to the **misrelated and unrelated (or dangling) participle**. The misrelated participle is so called because the participle appears to relate to the wrong word. The unrelated (dangling) participle has nothing to relate to. **When writing (or when reading) always check which noun or pronoun a participle relates to.**

3.2

What is wrong with the following sentence?

> The reporter saw several dead soldiers
> walking over the battlefield.

Obviously the reporter is walking over the battlefield, but the sentence seems to say that the dead soldiers are walking. This is a misrelated participle. The **participial phrase** is in the wrong place. The sentence can be corrected either by moving the participial phrase, or by turning it into a clause.

> Walking over the battlefield, the reporter
> saw several dead soldiers. (Note the comma)

> The reporter saw several dead soldiers
> while walking over the battlefield.

In the first sentence the phrase “walking over the battlefield” has been moved to the beginning of the sentence where it is near to the noun “reporter” to which it applies. **Note the comma.** A phrase at the beginning of the sentence before the subject usually has to be marked by a comma.

In the second sentence a conjunction has been provided, “while”, a pronoun has been supplied as a subject, “he”, referring back to “the reporter”, and the participle “walking” has been turned into a finite verb by the addition of the auxiliary verb “was”.

3.3

Here are further examples. Try them yourself, then look at the answers.

1. Being blind, a dog guided her.
2. After turning the radio off, there was silence.

1. Because she was blind, a dog guided her.
2. After she/he had turned the radio off, there was silence.
   After the radio had been turned off, there was silence.

These two examples cannot be corrected just by moving the participial phrase, the phrase has to be turned into a clause. **Note** that when the sentence begins with a subordinate clause, the clause needs a comma at the end of it.

Here are other examples.

3. Being an excellent student, her teacher
   gave her extra work to do.
4. When absent through illness, the company
   pays you your salary for three months.

Neither of these can be satisfactorily rectified by just moving the participial phrase to a better place. In both cases the phrase must be turned into a clause.

3. Since she was an excellent student,
   her teacher gave her extra work to do.
4. When you are absent through illness,
   the company pays you your salary for three months.

3.4

One can get cases in which there is a dangling participle but correction is not really necessary.

Considering the circumstances, you may go.
Roughly speaking, all men are deceivers.

3.5

One can also get a dangling modifier (adjective) that can need correction.

Although large enough, they did
not like the apartment.

It is the apartment that is large enough, not "they".

They did not like the apartment, although
it was large enough.
Although it was large enough, they
did not like the apartment.

3.6 EXERCISE

Correct the following sentences. They are all dangling participles. For most of them, you will have to turn the participial phrase into a full clause, as there is no noun or pronoun in the rest of the sentence to which it can be more clearly attached by moving it to another place. You must supply a conjunction, a subject of the clause and a finite verb.

1. While reading the newspaper this afternoon, an interesting article on fishing caught my eye.
2. Written in simple language, any student can enjoy this play.
3. Unless thoroughly cooked, a person should not eat pork.
4. While peeling onions, my eyes always smart.
5. Rolled very thin, you can make five dozen biscuits from this dough.
6. If neatly written, more attention will be paid to your application.
7. Having studied hard, my test score disappointed me.
8. By sitting around, our work will never get done.
9. Having wrung out the washing, it was hung out to dry.
10. Emerging from behind the moon, a wonderful sight met the astronaut's gaze.
11. Compelled to remain in Pretoria owing to pressure of work, my annual holiday had to be put off until late in the year.

12. When entering the room, the clock struck nine.
13. Being stolen, the Bank of England refused to honour the note.
14. Being a holiday, we decided to relax.
15. Standing on the bridge, the aeroplane flew over them.
16. Shattered into a thousand fragments, he looked sadly at the valuable vase.
17. Arriving late, the concert had already begun.
18. Failing to find the keys, forcible entry was effected.
19. Being in a dilapidated condition, I decided to renovate the house.
20. Bowing to the crowd, the bull caught the matador unawares.

Answers

1. While I was reading the newspaper this afternoon, an interesting article on fishing caught my eye.
2. Because it is written in simple language, any student can enjoy this play.
3. Unless it is thoroughly cooked, a person should not eat pork. OR A person should not eat pork unless thoroughly cooked.
4. While I peel onions, my eyes always smart.
5. If it is rolled very thin, you can make five dozen biscuits from this dough.
6. If it is neatly written, more attention will be paid to your application.
7. Because I had studied hard, my test score disappointed me.
8. If we sit around, our work will never get done. OR Our work will never get done by our sitting around.
9. After the washing had been wrung out, it was hung out to dry.
10. When he emerged from behind the moon, a wonderful sight met the astronaut's gaze.
11. Because I was compelled to remain in Pretoria owing to pressure of work, my annual holiday had to be put off until late in the year.
12. When I entered the room, the clock struck nine. OR The clock struck nine as I entered the room.
13. Because it was stolen, the Bank of England refused to honour the note. OR Because the note was stolen, the Bank of England refused to honour it.
14. Because it was a holiday, we decided to relax.
15. While they were standing on the bridge, the aeroplane flew over them.
16. He looked sadly at the valuable vase, which had shattered into a thousand fragments.
17. Because they arrived late, the concert had already begun.
18. Because they failed to find the keys, forcible entry was effected.
19. Because the house was in a dilapidated condition, I decided to renovate it.
20. While the matador was bowing to the crowd, the bull caught him unawares.

4

SYNTAX: SENTENCE STRUCTURE

This section will expand and take further what you already partly know.

- You know the structure of a **simple sentence**: S + V (finite).
- You know the difference between a **phrase** and a **clause**: the phrase has no **finite verb** (but may have a participle), while the clause has a conjunction, a subject and a finite verb.
- You have had experience with **relative clauses** and concord, for example: It is you who are responsible.
- When dealing with **misrelated** or **unrelated** participles, you have had some experience of changing a **phrase** into a **clause**.
- Revise what you have learnt about sentence fragments **Frag** and run-on sentences **R-on** in the opening section.
- **Some general comments**

  Some are often told to keep their sentences short. This is sound advice, within limits. Long sentences can run into difficulties and this section is to help you with the composition of longer sentences.

  One cannot write simple sentences all the time. The style is naive and limiting. The capacity to write longer sentences is essential and there are two methods for doing this, **subordination** and **co-ordination**.

4.1 SIMPLE COMPOUND COMPLEX

There are three kinds of sentences, **simple, compound** and **complex**.

4.2 SIMPLE SENTENCE

This you have already dealt with. There is one subject and a finite verb.

> The cat sat on the mat.
> The cat sat on the mat while
> lapping the milk. (participial phrase)

The group of words “while lapping the milk” is a participial phrase. If we said “while it was lapping the milk” we would make the phrase into a clause by adding a subject “it”, and by making the participle “lapping” into a finite verb by adding the **auxiliary** verb “was”.

4.3 COMPOUND SENTENCE

The compound sentence is a sentence in which two or more simple sentences are combined. The sentences do not become subordinate clauses, they remain of equal status. The process of combining independent simple sentences is called **co-ordination**.

> The cat sat on the mat and
> the dog sat in its kennel.

The two sentences are:

> The cat sat on the mat.
> The dog sat in its kennel.

They are joined by the **co-ordinating conjunction** *and.* There is a group of co-ordinating conjunctions. The commonest are **and** and **but**.

4.4 THE CO-ORDINATING CONJUNCTIONS

There is a special group of conjunctions used for co-ordination. These should be mastered. **In general, fluent argument is made possible by the use of conjunctions. Logic depends on them.** Obviously there are many more conjunctions than the group that is used for co-ordination.

Here is the list of co-ordinating conjunctions:

and, but, or, for, yet,
either/or, neither/nor, than,
therefore, both/and, thus,
consequently, hence, otherwise,
thereafter, else, nevertheless,
moreover, furthermore,
meanwhile.

This is an extremely useful list of logical connectives. Take the trouble to look up the ones that you do not know in a dictionary that gives examples of how the words are used. Some of these words can be used to start a new sentence and not just to join two simple sentences together.

They knew that the painting
was a forgery. Moreover, [note the comma] they
knew who painted it,
and when it was painted.

4.5 SUBORDINATION AND CO-ORDINATION

Co-ordination is the joining of simple sentences that could stand by themselves. **Subordination** means a lowering of rank. If something is "subordinate" to something else, it is of lower rank. A **subordinate clause** cannot stand by itself but needs a **main sentence** to support it. It is rather like a tree with a trunk and branches. The trunk is the main sentence, the branches are joined to the trunk, and some branches even branch off from other branches.

The subordinate clause is joined by a conjunction to the main sentence and has a subject and verb. **It cannot stand by itself. A subordinate clause by itself is a sentence fragment.**

4.6 COMPLEX SENTENCE

The complex sentence is a main sentence with one or more subordinate clauses.

The man who was wearing a
red shirt ran away while the
other man stood still.

The main sentence is

The man ran away.

The clause "who was wearing a red shirt" is a relative clause that qualifies the noun "man". Remember the discussion of defining and non-defining clauses earlier. The defining clause does not have commas. There is another clause, "while the other men stood still". It is an **adverbial** clause that tells us something about the circumstances.

Note that the following group of words is a sentence fragment.

> The man who was wearing a red shirt.

The main clause is lacking a finite verb, and the relative clause cannot stand alone.

> The man who was wearing a red shirt
> ran away.

4.7 COMPLEX-COMPOUND

Obviously, one can have a sentence that is a complex-compound sentence. In such a sentence the two main sentences have subordinate clauses attached to them.

> The man who was wearing a red
> shirt ran away and the others,
> who were not wearing red shirts,
> did not run.

The co-ordinating conjunction “and” joins the two parts of the compound sentence.

> The man ran away and the
> others did not run.

Each part of the compound sentence has a subordinate clause attached to it.

> Who was wearing a red shirt.
> Who were not wearing red shirts.

4.8 CO-ORDINATE CLAUSES

It is perfectly possible to have co-ordinate subordinate clauses, too. Co-ordination joins two components of equal status.

> The man who was wearing a
> red shirt and who was
> smoking a cigar ran away.

Here the two relative clauses are co-ordinate, joined by the co-ordinating conjunction **and**.

4.9 CONTROL OF SENTENCE STRUCTURE

One of the keys to sound, correct writing is the control of sentence structure. One must know consciously what one is doing. Here is Churchill’s description of how he was taught syntax or sentence structure at school. Churchill was thought to be stupid so he was kept down in one of the lower forms for longer than normal.

> ‘I continued in this unpretentious situation for nearly a year. However, by being so long in the lowest form I gained an immense advantage over the cleverer boys. They all went on to learn Latin and Greek and splendid things like that. But I was taught English. We were considered such dunces that we could learn only English. Mr Somervell - a most delightful man, to whom my debt is great - was charged with the duty of teaching the stupidest boys the most disregarded thing - namely, to write mere English. He knew how to do it. He taught it as no one else has ever taught it. Not only did we learn English parsing thoroughly, but we also practised continually English analysis. Mr Somervell had a system of his own. He took a fairly long sentence and broke it up into its components by means of black, red, blue and green inks. Subject, verb, object:, Relative Clauses, Conditional Clauses, Conjunctive and Disjunctive Clauses! Each had its colour and its

> bracket. It was a kind of drill. We did it almost daily. As I remained in the Third Fourth three times as long as anyone else, I had three times as much of it. I learned it thoroughly. Thus I got into my bones the essential structure of the ordinary British sentence - which is noble thing. And when in after years my schoolfellows who had won prizes and distinction for writing such beautiful Latin poetry and pithy Greek epigrams had to come down again to common English, to learn their living or make their way, I did not feel myself at any disadvantage. Naturally I am biased in favour of boys learning English. I would make them all learn English: and then would let the clever ones learn Latin as an honour, and Greek as a treat. But the only thing I would whip them for is not knowing English. I would whip them hard for that."

4.10

The symbol for incorrect sentence structure is

S

4.11 THE NOUN CLAUSE

Note that sometimes a clause can function either as the subject or the object of a sentence.

> That this is true is obvious.
> I suggest that you keep quiet about this.

In both cases, the *that* clause is a noun clause. In the first sentence it functions as the subject of the verb "is", in the second sentence the *that* clause is the object of the verb "suggest".

4.12 EXERCISES

See if you can combine the following groups of short, simple sentences into one long sentence. Do not hesitate to pull the individual sentences about quite radically. Use subordination as well as co-ordination. Convert the sentences into subordinate clauses, phrases, or whatever you want. Pay attention to the logic behind the conjunctions that you use. As has been said before, conjunctions are essential for logic and for fluency. This is an exercise. Probably in real life you would not write such long sentences. However, a series of short simple sentences like those given is most unsatisfactory.

> The men were exhausted.
> They had climbed the greater part of the ascent.
> The ascent was steep.
> Smith commanded the men to halt.
> He wished to advance to the summit alone.
> He wished to be the first to enjoy the spectacle from the summit.
> He had desired this for years.

> The weather was bad.
> It threatened to become worse.
> We stayed under shelter.
> We did not wish to be drenched with rain.
> Our journey was not yet over.

> I was able to read with fluency.
> My mother began a course of Bible work with me.
> She watched every intonation of my voice.
> She corrected the false intonations.
> She made me understand the text.
> It was within my reach.

You are now well acquainted with the fact.
You can judge for yourself.
Have I been fairly treated in this matter?
Have I been unfairly treated in this matter?

It was a bright day during summer.
We rambled through the forest.
We came upon a cottage.
The cottage was thatched.
A fine cedar tree was growing by its side.
The tree stood forty to fifty feet high.

The traveller failed to reach his destination that day.
He had received clear instructions.
He missed the way.
He took another road.
The road was a detour.

4.13 SYNTAX AND READING SKILLS

At this point it is worth saying that the ability to write a good sentence implies also the ability to read with comprehension. If the reader is confronted with a sentence that is difficult to comprehend, then an attempt must be made to analyse the sentence. Find the main sentence. Identify each subordinate clause. Find out what belongs to what. Which clause qualifies which noun or which verb. Where do the participles belong?

4.13.1

This is one of the skills needed to read legal English. We are all involved with legal English at one stage or other. Try to read the following sentence, which is taken from an antenuptial contract in which the future husband, XYZ, makes over to his future wife, ABC, a number of life insurance policies.

Does the sentence hang together? Trace all the clauses and find the main clause. Could the sentence be simplified? Try to rewrite it yourself. Is it not possible that the single long sentence, (although difficult) does the job the best?

> In consideration of the said intended marriage the said XYZ undertakes to give and settle upon the said ABC all his right and title and interest in the following insurance policies under which the said XYZ is the insured, namely
>
> a) Policy 123;
>
> b) Policy 456;
>
> c) Policy 789;
>
> subject to the condition that, should the said ABC predecease the said XYZ, whatever right, title and interest in the said policies or any of them that may then still remain with the said ABC, shall revert to and again become the property of the said XYZ, provided that whatever right, title and interest in the said policies or any of them or in any policies taken by the said XYZ in substitution for any of the said policies may upon the subsequent death of the said XYZ then still remain with him shall thereupon devolve upon any child or children surviving the said XYZ who may have been born of the said intended marriage.

4.13.2

Here is another passage that tests reading skill and sentence analysis skill. It is the opening of the famous American Declaration of Independence, and is a good example of eighteenth century prose style.

Try to find the main sentence of the first sentence, and try to trace the various clauses, noting the conjunctions that begin them and finding each subject and finite verb. Try, also, to trace the various pronouns. A pronoun stands in place of a noun and part of the skill of making out a difficult passage (or of writing clearly) is to be clear about which pronoun relates to which noun (in technical language, the **antecedent**). More about pronouns and antecedents will be said later on.

> When, in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth the separate and equal station to which the laws of nature and of nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.
>
> We hold these truths to be self evident: that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; that to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed; that whenever any form or government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute a new government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem likely to effect their safety and happiness.

Answers to the above exercise. Do not read this section until you have attempted the exercise.

4.13.2

The main sentence of the first sentence is "a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires". It does not start with a conjunction and is not subordinate to anything. The **that** clause, which follows the main sentence acts as the object - the whole clause. It is a **noun clause**, serving the function of a noun. The clause starting with **which**, at the end is an adjectival (relative) clause which describes **causes**.

The main sentence comes after a very long adverbial clause starting with **when**, the very first word. Within it are two more clauses. **Which** qualifies **bands** and **to which** qualifies **station**: they are both adjectival clauses.

The main sentence, therefore, comes a long way after the beginning, and is deliberately held back.

By contrast, the second sentence starts with the main sentence: "We hold these truths to be self evident...". It is followed by a series of **that** clause - noun clauses. The contrast in the two clauses is probably a deliberate stylistic device: a long preamble and then the punch of the second sentence. Sentences can be shaped consciously.

4.13.3 Sentence Shaping

It is possible to shape sentences consciously. One trick is to hold back the thing that comes last, to give it emphasis. The kind of sentence that holds back the last detail and slots it in at the end is called a *periodic* sentence. Obviously, you do not have to try to make all your sentences periodic. However, to try to write the occasional periodic sentence is a good exercise in control of sentence structure.

4.13.4

Try to rewrite the following sentence so as to keep the words "once more seeing the sea" or the words "I enjoy the journey" to the end of the sentence.

> I enjoy the journey whenever I go to
> the coast because of the keen
> anticipation of once more seeing the sea,
> notwithstanding the state of my car,
> which struggles up the long hills.

Here are two possibilities.

> Whenever I go to the coast, notwithstanding the state of my car, which struggles up the long hills, I enjoy the journey because of the keen anticipation of once more seeing the sea.
>
> Because of the keen anticipation of once more seeing the sea, notwithstanding the state of my car, which struggles up the long hills, whenever I go to the coast I enjoy the journey.

4.13.5

Now try to rewrite the following sentence, keeping "seem far away" or "I feel happy" to the end.

> Because the ills of a civilized existence (if you will excuse the well-worn cliché) seem far away, I feel happy when I walk through mountains, although the effort is taxing and the weight of the rucksack becomes burdensome, while the sun burns and the wind chills and the belly rumbles hungrily.

Here are three suggestions as to how it could be done.

> When I walk through mountains, although the effort is taxing and although the weight of the rucksack becomes burdensome, while the sun burns and the wind chills and the belly rumbles hungrily, I feel happy, because the ills of civilized existence (if you will excuse the well-worn cliché) seem far away.
>
> Although the effort is taxing and the weight of the rucksack becomes burdensome, while the sun burns and the wind chills and the belly rumbles hungrily, when I walk through mountains I feel happy, because the ills of civilized existence (if you will excuse the well-worn cliché) seem far away.
>
> Because the ills of a civilized existence (if you will excuse the well-worn cliché) seem far away, when I walk through mountains, although the effort is taxing and the weight of the rucksack becomes burdensome, while the sun burns and the wind chills and the belly rumbles hungrily, I feel happy.

4.13.6

Here is an example of a very fine and famous periodic sentence. It is the opening of Boswell's enormously long biography of Dr Samuel Johnson, the renowned eighteenth century literary figure.

Note how the key word *task* is kept back for the end, as also the important word *presumptuous*. The main sentence is "To write the life of him .... is an arduous and may be reckoned in me a presumptuous task." There are actually two main sentences, joined by **and** - in other words a compound sentence.

> To write the life of him who excelled all mankind in writing the lives of others, and who, whether we consider his extraordinary endowments, or his various works, has been equalled by few in any age, is an arduous, and may be reckoned in me a presumptuous task.

4.14 CONCLUSION

This last section has been an exercise in stretching your reading skill as well as your writing skills. The key to both is an understanding of syntax. A sentence can be consciously shaped. Clarity and coherence can be improved, and in fact go along with the aesthetic aspects of sentence structure. The basis is a grasp of the fundamentals of syntax, of the connection of subject to verb and of the connection of the various parts of the sentence, main sentence and clauses, the one to the other. This is as true of scientific and functional writing as it is of any other kind of writing.

And, as has been said before, a grasp of the fundamentals of syntax also greatly improves one's capacity to read with comprehension.

5

PUNCTUATION

Punctuation bears a close relationship to syntax, therefore it is logical that the section on punctuation should follow that on syntax. A sense for syntax is the basis of punctuation. Punctuation is a set of signposts for the reader. Not only the immediately preceding section on syntax, but also the opening section on basic sentence structure, is relevant to what follows.

5.1 THE FULL-STOP (PERIOD)

As everybody knows, the full-stop marks the end of a sentence. However, there are various hazards. For example, there is the Run-on Sentence, as discussed in the opening section, in which one sentence is allowed to run on into the next, without a full-stop, or perhaps only with a comma (the **Comma Splice**).

There is also the possibility of breaking up a sentence by a full stop that should not be there.

> I met them on a Cunard liner several years ago. Coming home from Liverpool to New York.
>
> He was an interesting talker. A man who had travelled all over the world and lived in half a dozen countries

The parts after the full-stop obviously cannot stand by themselves. They lack the full **subject** and **finite** verb structure. In both cases, a comma would have been sufficient. Obviously, the part that the full-stop cuts off belongs to the previous sentence. This is a not infrequent feature of student writing.

Sometimes we find the following phenomenon, two independent sentences joined only by a comma rather like the comma splice. It is sometimes possible to get away with a semi-colon.

> It is nearly half past five, we cannot reach town before dark.
>
> It is nearly half past five; we cannot reach town before dark.

It would obviously be possible to replace the comma with a full-stop.

> It is nearly half past five.
>
> We cannot reach town before dark.

5.2 THE COMMA

Punctuation is not an absolutely precise art. It is not easy to find a set of rules for the comma to which effective exceptions can not be found. The following rules do not exclude possible differences of opinion.

In general, the comma marks a slight pause and is connected with sentence rhythm and intonation. It is also an important structure, syntactic, signpost.

5.2.1

The comma breaks up a list.

> We bought bread, cheese, jam, sugar and tea.

There is some debate about whether there should be a comma before the and.

5.2.2

Commas are used to break up a string of adjectives or adverbs, or other similar parts of speech.

> The scene was a plain, bare, monotonous
> vault of a schoolroom ... (Dickens: *Hard Times*)

Note that the last adjective before the noun does not have a comma.

> Then slowly, quietly, steadily, he
> raised the rifle and took aim.
>
> He ran, jumped, skipped, hopped
> and stumbled on.

5.2.3

Parenthetical phrases, a phrase that interrupts the flow of a sentence, are marked off by a comma. Note the comma at the end as well as at the beginning.

> He was, however, less certain than he seemed.
>
> He was, on the face of it, totally confident.

5.2.4

A whole clause, that interrupts the flow of a sentence, must be marked off by commas. Note the comma at the end as well as at the beginning.

> He came on, while the seconds ticked by, with every appearance of unconcern.

5.2.5

A participial phrase that interrupts the flow of the sentence must be marked off. Note the comma at the end as well as at the beginning.

> He came on, staggering under the burden, with great determination.

A participial phrase will often have to be marked off in many positions.

> He came on with great determination, staggering under the burden.
>
> Staggering under the burden, he came on with great determination.

5.2.6

Adverbials at the beginning of sentences need a comma.

> However, ...
> Nevertheless, ...
> Moreover, ...

5.2.7

Participial phrases at the beginning of sentences must be marked off.

> Running, he fell.
>
> While coming down the stairs, he tripped.

5.2.8

A whole clause that comes before the subject and verb of the main sentence must be marked off.

> While Julius Caesar was on his way to the forum, he met a group of acquaintances.

Similarly, a clause or phrase that comes after the main sentence may need marking off with a comma.

He walked towards the Forum at a brisk pace, until a group of acquaintances delayed him.

He walked towards the Forum at a brisk pace, having forgotten the warning of the soothsayer.

5.2.9 Non-Defining Clauses

In the opening section of these notes (1.7) there is an explanation of defining and non-defining clauses. The non-defining clauses have commas.

The man, who was wearing a red shirt, ran away.

There is all the difference in meaning in the above sentence, depending on whether or not the clause is flanked by commas.

5.2.10

Obviously, a clause within a clause must also be marked by commas.

He was a man who, although he held firm beliefs, expressed his beliefs with moderation.

The general principle is that of interruption of the main flow of the sentence.

5.2.11 Commas in co-ordinated constructions

In the previous section (4), about sentence structure, there was a section on co-ordination as opposed to subordination. Co-ordination, using and or but or a number of other co-ordinating conjunctions (**co-ordinators**) joins two independent sentences that could stand by themselves, separated by a full-stop, if the co-ordinator (and or but) is taken away.

If there is a co-ordinator (and or but), and if the first of the two co-ordinated sentences is a fairly long one, then a comma is probably required.

I was standing knee deep in the water near the tail end of the pool, and my observations were limited to an area of possibly forty or fifty square yards.

If the co-ordinator is and and the sentences joined are short, then the comma can be left out.

The work was pleasant and the hours were short.

You can sit at my desk and write your letters.

If but is used, there is a greater chance of a comma's being needed, even though the parts of the sentence are short.

The situation is perilous, but there is still a chance of escape.

5.2.12 When not to use a comma

Don't break up sentences unnecessarily. This is rather vague advice. Break up long sentences adequately. It is, however, possible to have a long sentence that needs no commas at all.

Do not put in a comma that separates the subject from the verb, or the verb from the object or the complement.

The man, went, to town.

I know, that you are tired.
The man over there in the corner, is obviously drunk.
He gave the leading lady, a bouquet.

Separating the subject from the verb is a fairly frequent error.

5.2.13 Some examples and exercises

Here is a long sentence that needs punctuating by commas. Try to do it, then look below for answers.

> Counsel maintained that the accused if he had as was alleged by some though not the most reliable of the witnesses for the prosecution taken the articles in question had been subject to a temporary lapse of memory as a result of shell-shock sustained during the War.

The above sentence needs signposts to help the reader.

> Counsel maintained that the accused, if he had, as was alleged by some, though not the most reliable, of the witnesses for the prosecution, taken the articles in question, had been subject to a temporary lapse of memory as a result of shell-shock sustained during the War.

You could regard commas as a kind of bracketing of units that have meaning. Take a look at the following; however, in practice we use commas, not the various kinds of brackets.

> Counsel maintained that the accused [if he had {as was alleged by some (though not the most reliable) of the witnesses for the prosecution} taken the articles in question] had been subject to ..... War.

Here is long sentence that needs no commas.

> Counsel for the prosecution said that the evidence proved beyond any possible doubt that on the morning in question the accused had wilfully and deliberately removed a number of articles displayed on the counter of the plaintiff's shop and that at the time of doing so he had been fully responsible for his actions.

Commas are essential signposts for both writer and reader. However, they can be overdone, and a long sentence, just because it is long, does not necessarily need commas.

5.3 THE COLON (:) AND THE SEMICOLON (;)

Both the colon and the semicolon indicate heavier pauses than the comma. The distinction between the semicolon and colon is simple: a semicolon separates; and a colon introduces or indicates what is to follow. Note the punctuation of the above sentence. Here is another example.

> There remained one thing she wanted above all else: a room of her own; but she did not acquire her own room until she was eighteen.

The semicolon can separate various elements in which there are already a lot of commas.

> Her reading should include the stories children love; the traditions, history and folklore of her part of the country; the stories of history, and of great men and women.

The colon points to what follows.

> He had just had some good news:
> he had been offered a good job.

A semi-colon can replace a conjunction, and may join independent clauses. Do not join independent clause with a comma. The semi-colon does not separate parts of unequal rank, e.g. a phrase from a clause or a main sentence from a dependent clause.

> School children have adopted the fund as one of their favourite charities, and their small contributions have enabled the fund to reach its target. (Doubtful comma)
>
> School children have adopted the fund as one of their favourite charities; their small contributions have enabled the fund to reach its target.

School children have adopted the fund as one of their favourite charities. Their small contributions have enabled the fund to reach its target.

The Senator might have succeeded in getting the bill passed but he failed because public opinion was against it.

The Senator might have succeeded in getting the bill passed but he failed. Public opinion was against it.

The Senator might have succeeded in getting the bill passed but he failed; public opinion was against it.

Of course, the colon and semicolon can be combined in a list or a number of points.

Please send the stipulated items:
i. birth certificate;
ii. passport;
iii. correct fee.

The items are all part of the same sentence, so the individual items do not start with capital letters. Remember that the use of a colon or semicolon does not terminate a sentence, and that the laws of sentence structure still hold good.

The following examples are not particularly elegant, and are grammatically dubious.

Graduate Centre: the planning commenced in 1994.

Installation of a lift: This building did not have a lift and such a facility became an urgent necessity.

5.4 THE DASH (-)

The dash is used rather like the comma but it is more abrupt and emphatic, and it is rare. It is used for special effects - and loses its punch if used frequently. Continual punctuation by dashes is most unsatisfactory, and often is a sign of loose sentence structure or of the jotting or note-taking style.

Two dashes can be used to mark off a segment very decisively.

His good intentions - for all their sincerity - were ineffectual.

The dash can also be used to indicate something that is added, or an afterthought or surprise.

He had almost completed the project - then suddenly dropped it.

5.5 PUNCTUATION AND QUOTATION

Quotation is a necessary skill for academic writing. It is often necessary to quote from a source. Obviously, a quotation has to be acknowledged by using one or other of the recognised systems of reference.

The actual words that someone said or wrote must be put in inverted commas.

Caesar, in his account of his conquest of the Gauls, wrote, “I came, I saw, I conquered”.

Henry Ford once said, “History is bunk”

A comma precedes the quotation. There is some debate as to whether the final full stop goes before or after the closing inverted commas. Whatever you do, be consistent. There is also debate about whether to use single or double inverted commas.

Obviously, the words could be conveyed in reported speech.

Henry Ford once said that history is bunk.

If the quotation is a longer one, it could be preceded by a colon. If the quotation is long enough to justify it, it could be written as an indented block, after a colon.

A quotation within a quotation presents problems. Either use single inverted commas for the main quotation and double for the quotation within the quotation, or the other way round. British and American usage is said to differ on this point. Apparently British usage favours single inverted commas. Whatever you do, be consistent.

5.6 THE APOSTROPHE

The apostrophe is frequently forgotten or neglected.

The boy's books. (one boy)
The boys' books. (more than one boy)

The men's tools.
The children's toys.

The plural is not formed by an **s**, so the apostrophe can go before the **s**.

There is a problem with names ending in **s** and with classical names. A rough rule of thumb is to double the **s** in names ending in **s** e.g. Dickens's novels. For classical names, just add the apostrophe: Hercules' labours.

There are some frequently muddled cases, partly because the apostrophe is also used to indicate that a letter has been left out.

It's	=	it is (It's a breeze.)
Its	=	the something or other of **it**.
who's	=	who is
whose	=	of who
don't	=	do not
doesn't	=	does not
isn't	=	is not
can't	=	cannot
there's	=	there is
it's	=	it has (It's been a lovely party.)

In formal writing do not (don't) use the form in which the apostrophe replaces a dropped letter.

6

PARAGRAPHING: WIDER WRITING CONSIDERATIONS

Good writing is not just good grammar but involves wider structure. The sentence is the main building block of any piece of writing but isolated sentences do not get us very far. The next building block in any piece of writing is the paragraph, and one of the good ways of judging any piece of writing is to look at the organisation of the facts and of the line of thought into paragraphs.

The existence of paragraphs implies that the material has been sorted out and that a line of thought has been determined. A paragraph is a unit in a wider context, a step in an argument. One paragraph leads to another, although each paragraph is a unit in itself, too. The facts and the ideas must be grouped before writing commences, so that the writer knows what belongs with what. In other words, the writer knows what the line of thought is going to be, and the various points that will be made. Perhaps a list of points has been drawn up or some kind of visual mind map has been made. Preliminary notes have been sorted into groups around each particular point that is to be made.

Each paragraph must deal with a particular point, developed in a number of sentences. The sentences must all have a bearing on the main point of the paragraph. It is desirable, though not absolutely necessary, that each paragraph should contain a **topic sentence**, a sentence that expresses the main point of the paragraph. The topic sentence may be the first sentence of the paragraph, although it does not have to be. It could be the last sentence with all the other sentences moving towards it, or it could be a sentence in the middle of the paragraph. If there is no sentence that can be described as a topic sentence, a paragraph must still be an intellectual unity. It is useful for beginners to consciously write a topic sentence for each paragraph.

The opening paragraph is a special kind of paragraph because it must contain a **thesis statement** for the whole piece of writing. Each subsequent paragraph must then, in some way or other, relate to this thesis statement, have some bearing on it. The concluding paragraph is also a special kind of paragraph because it must in some way, obviously, offer a conclusion or some final thoughts, to round off the whole piece of writing.

When you revise a piece of work, or judge a piece of work, ask yourself whether each paragraph in some way develops the thesis announced in the beginning. Then, does each paragraph hang together: do all the statements and facts in the paragraph have bearing on one particular point? Is there a topic sentence, or is there a clearly defined point which the particular paragraph develops.

A series of paragraphs requires signposts and **transitional phrases**. Other names for signposts are **logical connectors** or **discourse markers**. How is the reader assisted? As you write, think of where you are taking the reader and of what signposts you are putting up along the way. As you judge a paragraph, or a series of paragraphs, look for signposts, words or phrases that suggest a new direction of thought, that refer back to what has been said before, that offer continuity or make a transition. These are the signs of good writing. Obviously the writer must acquire this vocabulary of transitional phrases.

What has been said here about writing also applies to reading. The reader must note the signposts and try to see the particular point of each paragraph. Look for the topic sentence: you never know your luck! If there is no topic sentence, try to make out what the particular point of the paragraph is. Furthermore, try to see how the point of the paragraph follows from the previous paragraph and leads on to the next one, and how each point relates to the thesis statement right at the beginning. In a good piece of writing the clues should be there. Teaching staff should reread the study guides that they have written

for the students and see whether they stand up to this test. Consider your spoken lectures, too. The signposts must be there, even in a relatively informal lecturing style.

Good English (or the good use of any language) depends on more than just grammatical correctness. There is also a "grammar", or discourse, of coherent, well-argued statement or exposition. Good paragraphing is the key to this skill.

Physical appearance

A paragraph must be properly indicated visually. The word paragraph comes from **para graphein**, to set a mark at the side of the writing. Originally the unit was marked by a sign in the margin. The correct indication of paragraphs is important. Either indent, that is, start a little way in from the margin, without leaving a line blank, or start at the margin and leave a line blank. Do not, as many students do, leave the right hand part of the line blank, as if the paragraph has ended, but then continue with the paragraph. Proper physical indicating of paragraphs must be taken into account when assessing a piece of writing. The writer must not muddle the two systems and the visual effect must correspond with the intellectual organisation.

The marking code for a bad paragraph is:

Para

7

SIGNPOSTS AND LOGICAL CONNECTORS

Signposts and logical connectors are a most important part of academic discourse, (and indeed of any discourse). These are the conjunctions, the logical connectors, the linking phrases: in short, the signposts by which the writer tells the reader where he is going. This set of phrases (of which there are many in English) are a most important part of accurate, clear, well-argued and persuasive language use.

The previous, short section was on paragraphs, and the art of paragraphing. You were told of the importance of the paragraph in a larger argument, as a unit of meaning. Logical connectors, signposts, conjunctions, operate within sentences, and also between paragraphs. The individual sentence, the paragraph, and the continuous argument throughout the whole piece of written work, are dependent on logical connectors.

This holds good not only for the writer, but for the reader. In fact, the writer must provide signposts for the reader, and the reader must consciously look for signposts and clues left by the writer (we hope). Obviously, this aspect of language use and of writing and reading skill does not apply only to English, but to every language. Nevertheless, as stated above, English has a considerable number of phrases of this kind, with a wide range of meaning and subtlety. A list is provided. It dos not claim to be a comprehensive list and, in fact, it concentrates on written language rather than spoken. The range of innuendo and subtlety is even wider in spoken English, but the list that follows, on the whole, applies to the written language and especially, perhaps, to academic discourse. The spoken and colloquial has not, however, been totally neglected, and nearly all the words on the list can be used conversationally or in spoken language, as well.

The list of words must be mastered. Look up words that you do not know in a full dictionary that gives examples of how the words are used. Obviously, the list is not exhaustive.

The list has been divided up under headings that give some idea of the use. One could, broadly, divide these words under the four headings of additive, adversative, causal and sequential. However, a variety of other categories have been suggested in what follows.

One needs to show the stages of an argument. One needs to show cause and effect. One needs to mark turning points in the argument, or continuation. One needs to refer back to what has been said previously and sometimes to look forward to what is to come. One needs to mark main points, and one needs devices to indicate what is a digression and when one returns to the main line of argument. One needs to link paragraphs.

As said before, the writer must consciously try to signpost the argument, while the reader must consciously look for the signposts. Both reading skills and writing skills are therefore involved with signposts and logical connectors.

7.1 ORDERING POINTS

First, firstly, second, secondly - third, fourth, etc. Finally, lastly, last, last of all.
NB. If there is a *firstly*, there must be at least a *secondly*.
then next
initially, at first, first of all, to start with, to begin with, for a start (colloquial)
previously (i.e. at an earlier stage)
after, afterwards, eventually, subsequently, before this, hereinafter, thereafter.
above (i.e. earlier in the document) below (i.e. later in the document)

"as explained above" "as will be explained below"
"as has been mentioned earlier"
"we will return to this question later"

First:	We should first consider the impact on the environment before we decide to build more factories.
Firstly:	There are two parts to this debate and we will deal, firstly, with that of the victim.
Second:	The second point I will raise has to do with crime in South Africa.
Secondly:	Crime causes fear in the citizens of South Africa and, secondly, among any tourists who want to visit us.
Finally:	Finally, I would like to thank everyone who has contributed to the project.
Lastly:	Lastly, having weighed up all the options, the company must act on its decision.
Last:	That's the last thing I have to say on that subject.
Last of all:	Last of all I would like to address the issue of payment.
Then:	I'll start with the salad, then I'd like the roast beef.
Next:	In the next passage, Dickens addresses the theme of suffering.
Initially:	She was initially nervous about her speech, but once she started she was fine.
At first:	At first I didn't like the poetry but the more I read, the more I came to appreciate it.
First of all:	First of all, I think we should add more salt and then perhaps add the extra herbs.
To start with:	To start with, there isn't enough time and, secondly, there aren't enough funds.
To begin with:	He couldn't dance at all to begin with, but now he's our best ballroom dancer.
For a start:	I don't agree with your argument; it's illogical for a start and it's poorly substantiated.
Previously:	He's previously taught in the Far East and France, and is now teaching in England.
After:	After the first motion was passed the committee discussed Mr Robinson's proposal.
Afterwards:	We had dinner and afterwards went for a walk along the promenade.
Eventually:	After talking for an hour he eventually came to the point and asked if he could borrow my car.
Subsequently:	We had decided to go out but subsequently changed our minds and stayed in.
Before this:	Before this, I thought he was innocent but now I'm not so sure.
Hereafter:	Science Fiction, hereinafter referred to as sf, is a popular genre.
Thereafter:	He crossed the border into Ireland and thereafter considered himself free.
Above:	The incident referred to above is still under investigation.
Below:	Ms Jackson's complaint, outlined in full below, has caused much upset.

7.2 ADDING OR CLARIFYING

also, moreover, furthermore, further, in addition (to), additionally
alternatively (suggests a contrast), instead (also contrast)
not to speak of (i.e. when you are going to mention it - rare)
in other words
thereafter

Also:	I would also suggest we put more effort into the rehearsals.
Moreover:	I've almost finished the book I'm writing and moreover have found a publisher.
Furthermore:	Furthermore, not only others but our own children will suffer unless the pollution is halted.
Further:	There is nothing further to be said about pollution.
In addition to:	In addition to the posters, I think we should hand out pamphlets to advertise.
Additionally:	He has additionally offered, not only to attend the function, but to cover all costs.
Alternatively:	We could, alternatively, have Chinese take-out tonight and save the Mexican food for tomorrow.
Instead:	Instead of going out every night, perhaps you should do some studying.
Not to speak of:	There is no original insight to speak of in your work.
In other words:	She was the same as usual, in other words she was grumpy and unfriendly.
Thereafter:	Foxes, thereafter bred specifically for the hunt, were originally considered common vermin by the English aristocrats.

7.3 CAUSE AND RESULT OR CONSEQUENCE

so, then, or else, consequently, therefore, hence, thus.
as a result / consequence
it follows that
owing / due to (the fact that)
because (of the fact that)
since, as, inasmuch as
in view of the fact that
for
so much so that
thereafter

So:	He was forced to do French so I have to do it too.
Then:	Jemima broke the bowl that held the punch and then had to clean the floor.
Or else:	You must confess or else they'll think I killed him.
Consequently:	Seamus Heaney was on a pilgrimage and the publishers could consequently not find him.
Therefore:	James achieved a distinction for German and therefore expected to be top student.
Hence:	I studied all night, hence my exhaustion today.
Thus:	I almost had an accident last week and have thus decided to replace my tyres.
As a result:	As a result of your cheating in the exam, you can expect to be expelled.
It follows that:	If he had motive and opportunity and no alibi, it follows that we must consider him a suspect.
Owing to:	Owing to your continued absence, we have been forced to replace you.
Because:	Because many people are vegetarians, we cannot serve beef at the party.
Since:	Since James has hurt his arm, we can't ask him to play golf this Thursday.

As:	As you've already been to Paris, I thought we could go to Milan.
In as much as:	In as much as Peter is your friend, he is mine too.
In view of the fact that:	In view of the fact that Shakespeare is considered one of the greatest playwrights of all time, we must include him in the English syllabus.
For:	Don Quixote was encouraged for he had recovered the Golden Helmet of Mambrino.
So much so that:	I feel very strongly about recycling, so much so that I recycle my things every week.
Thereafter:	Mrs Rose was rude to me but I have thereafter avoided her.

7.4 PURPOSE

so, in order that, in the hope that
for the purpose of
for fear that (negative)
lest (negative)

So:	He held a cloak over my head so I wouldn't get wet in the rain.
In order that:	We arrived early in order that we could get good seats.
In the hope that:	In the hope that their daughter would settle down, the Jones's bought her a puppy.
For the purpose of:	For the purpose of good employer - employee relations, we have granted the pay increase.
For fear that:	For fear that Alex would hurt himself, we removed the swing from the garden.
Lest:	Lest you think I am lying, I have proof of their conversation.

7.5 INTRODUCING A CONTRAST OR CONTRADICTION

but, however, on the other hand, in contrast, by contrast, on the contrary, conversely, nevertheless, yet, nonetheless, rather (implying an adjustment)
actually (conversational)
by way of contrast
whereas, while, otherwise

But:	The special effects were good but, on the whole, the movie was poor.
However:	I thought she liked grapefruit. I was, however, wrong.
On the other hand:	On the one hand technological progress has been beneficial to mankind but, on the other hand, it has proved as harmful as beneficial.
In contrast:	In contrast to the weather report, we had a beautiful sunny day.
By contrast:	He is, by contrast, a far better writer than Stephen King.
On the contrary:	On the contrary, he is hardly ever depressed but rather quite cheerful.
Conversely:	Take two eggs and a cup of flour or, conversely, 500 ml of milk and a cup of flour.
Nevertheless:	It's going to rain, nevertheless I still intend to go to the beach.
Yet:	I thought I had clarified everything yet it remained confusing to many.
Nonetheless:	It's going to cost a lot of money but the investment should nonetheless be worth it.

Rather:	She encouraged me, or rather nagged me, to accept the position.
Actually:	Actually, I thought she looked very nice.
By way of contrast:	By way of contrast we discover that tragedy is very different from comedy.
Whereas:	We all thought him rude, whereas he was just being shy.
While:	Tim likes Jazz while Jacob is fonder of hip-hop.
Otherwise:	We had to pay more money than we had otherwise expected.

7.6 CONCESSION

while, even so, nevertheless,
(much as one sympathises, one nevertheless ...)
(in conceding this, I nevertheless ...)
notwithstanding
granted, albeit

While:	While I don't like very loud music, I can understand why many people do.
Even so:	They made a few mistakes in their routine; even so, they were the best dancers at the tournament.
Nevertheless:	He didn't win the marathon, nevertheless the attempt was a valiant one.
	Much as one sympathises, one nevertheless feels the student should be punished for cheating.
	In conceding this, I nevertheless maintain that my first position is the correct one.
Notwithstanding:	Notwithstanding the drop in the number of students at the university, it has been a successful year.
Granted:	Granted, the special effects were good, but the script was awful.
Albeit:	Aristotle's philosophy, albeit written thousands of years ago, is still relevant.

7.7 DISMISSAL

In either event i.e. dismisses the point
In either case

In either event:	He will be overseas or at the conference so, in either event, he will not attend our party.
In either case:	In either case Matlock's argument would have won the jury over to his point of view.

7.8 CONDITION

if, provided that, in the event that, in case, even if, on the condition that,
in case, as long as, granted that

If:	If you take a sandwich to varsity, you won't have to buy lunch.
Provided that:	Provided that you do enough research, the assignment should be quite easy.
In the event that:	In the event that I lock my keys in the car, the AA will help me.
In case:	Take an umbrella in case it rains.
Even if:	Even if Tim gets home late, I'll have supper waiting for him.
On the condition that:	On the condition that you come along, I'll go to the concert.

As long as: As long as you dress neatly, the restaurant should allow us in.

Granted that: Granted that the available facts would appear to justify your position, I still think that further investigation will show that I am right.

7.9 CONCLUDING, ROUNDING OFF, SUMMING UP

to sum up, to conclude, in conclusion, to summarize, in sum, in summary, finally, last but not least, lastly.

To sum up: To sum up, the board is happy with our progress and will give us funding next year.

To conclude: To conclude, pollution must be dealt with forthwith or we will have no plant-life left.

In conclusion: In conclusion, I suggest we decline the proposal.

To summarize: To summarize, I find the book unreadable and a thorough disappointment.

In sum: In sum, we did all we could for him.

In summary: In summary, European politics is far different from the politics of African States.

Finally: Finally, I must extend my thanks to the McLeod's for hosting this meeting.

Last but not least: Last but not least, thanks to Mrs McDougal for the flowers.

Lastly: Lastly, remind Alice to bring some sun screen.

7.10 CONDENSATION

to make a long story short
in short to put the matter briefly briefly

To make a long story short: To make a long story short, I eventually turned their offer down.

In short: In short, Poirot always discovers who the murderer is and gets him to confess.

To put the matter briefly: To put the matter briefly, the board considered the alternatives and decided on Fiji.

Briefly: Briefly, the plot is as follows: an outlaw on the run from the law who eventually gets caught.

7.11 ALTERNATIVES

either / or neither / nor both / and

Either/or: We can either go to Durban or Cape Town in December.

Neither/nor: I like neither Turkish nor Chinese food.

Both/and: Both Alice and I speak French.

7.12 GENERALISING

on the whole, in general, generally, all in all

On the whole: On the whole, South Africa has lovely weather.

In general: Your writing is good in general, but your spelling needs some attention.

Generally: The Irish are generally friendly.

All in all: All in all, the trip was a great success.

7.13 RESTATING

in other words, in a sense, that is, what is intended then is ..., to put it another way.

In other words:	Tom wore a yellow jacket. He was, in other words, inappropriately dressed for a funeral.
In a sense:	He said Jane was selfish and, in a sense, he's right, she doesn't consider other people.
That is:	We'll be leaving early in the morning, that is around seven am.
What is intended then is ...:	From what you've said, what is intended then is an apology for what happened?
To put it another way:	He's a shrewd businessman or, to put it another way a conniving opportunist.

7.14 DIGRESSION AND RETURN OR RESUMPTION

At this point in the argument a digression is needed / is called for ...
At this point in the argument a digression is called for, we must consider the opposition's point of view.
to digress for a moment
incidentally (conversational)
to change the subject
to get back to the main line of thought
to return to the subject
to resume
anyway (conversational)
at any rate

To digress for a moment:	Henchard is a tragic hero but, to digress for a moment, let us consider this in the broader scope of tragedy as a whole.
Incidentally:	I enjoyed the movie. Incidentally, you haven't been to see it yet have you?
To change the subject:	Sorry to change the subject for a moment, but has anyone seen Marie?
To get back to the main line of thought:	To get back to the main line of thought, sports are far healthier than playing computer games.
To resume:	To resume our previous conversation, you believe nuclear testing is necessary?
Anyway:	Anyway, there are so few pandas left that extinction is merely a matter of years.
At any rate:	At any rate, we won't know what the decision is until Monday.

7.15 SIMILARITY

similarly, likewise, in the same way, in a like manner, equally, by the same token, in other words.

Similarly: The two girls dress very similarly.

Likewise: Lincoln was likewise upset by the rise in crime as I was.

In the same way: In the same way as Caesar conquered the Gawls, Napoleon overran Europe.

In a like manner: Sherry was very angry when Jim went hunting and I reacted in a like manner.

Equally: Both actors are equally capable of playing the role well.

By the same token: It is difficult for foreigners to understand us and, by the same token, we don't understand them.

In other words: The bank has foreclosed on our property, in other words we are forced to leave.

7.16 REFERRING FORWARD AND BACKWARDS

Hereinafter (known as, called), to anticipate, to glance forward for a moment
as will be argued more fully below / later
Considering this, having said this, with regard to this, with reference to this, as I said earlier, to take up a point made earlier, as I have said above / before, as was previously stated

Hereinafter: In Science Fiction, hereinafter Sci-fi, the alien plays an important role.

To anticipate: This statement anticipates the outcome of the argument.

As will be argued more fully below/later: The hero, as will be argued more fully later, is a powerful image.

Considering this: Considering this evidence presented by Maria, we must conclude that she has a point.

Having said this: Having said this, I realise many people will not agree with my views.

With regard to this: Our position with regard to this has already been tabled.

With reference to this: With reference to this, I must add that other theories exist.

As I said earlier: As I said earlier, the blue horned toad is found exclusively in the Amazon jungle.

To take up a point made earlier: To take up a point made earlier fewer students in the UK are finishing school.

As I have said above/before: As I have said above, Julius Caesar should be considered a tragic hero.

As was previously stated: As was previously stated, the population density in the CBD is growing.

7.17 GIVING AS AN EXAMPLE, NARROWING DOWN, EMPHASISING

notably, for example, for instance, such as, that is to say, namely, specifically, particularly, in particular, especially, including, by way of example, to illustrate, as an illustration, for one thing

Notably: There are many species of rare butterfly in this area, most notably the Blue Emperor and Greater Swingtail.

For example: People are able to play sports on the beach, volleyball for example and badminton too.

For instance: There are a few actors, for instance Schwarzenegger and Stallone, who have gone into business.

Such as: James eats only citrus fruits such as oranges and naartjies.

That is to say:	My two favourite poets, that is to say Yeats and Kavanagh, are both Irish.
Namely:	Two girls were involved in the accident, namely Mary Jones and Francis Dreyer.
Specifically:	I love reading, specifically fantasy and science fiction books.
Particularly:	Raymond was very upset, particularly about the prank Jeff pulled on Saturday.
In particular:	Ice Hockey, in particular, is a very violent sport.
Especially:	I find formula one especially boring to watch.
Including:	The whole team is to be suspended for cheating, including the two of you.
By way of example:	Superman and Spiderman are, by way of example, modern super heroes.
To illustrate:	To illustrate the point above, let us now consider the nitrogen cycle.
As an illustration for one thing:	As an illustration of personal courage, Helen Keller's life story is particularly evocative.

8

DO SUPPORT

One of our auxiliary verbs (helping verbs) is DO, which is used in certain specialised positions. There are some characteristic mistakes that are made with “do”. First let us determine when it is used.

8.1 THE PRESENT SIMPLE TENSE

There are two forms of the Present Tense, the Present Simple,

I work. He works.

and the Present Continuous,

I am working. He is working.

In the case of the Present Simple Tense, “do” is used to ask questions and to express negations.

Do I work at night?
I do not work at night.
Does he work at night?
He does not work at night.

A sentence with “he” has been added as a reminder of the Third Person form of **does**, that troublesome **s** that follows he, she, it, the dog, the cat, the girl, the boy, a frequent problem of Concord.

8.2 THE PAST SIMPLE TENSE

There are two forms of the Past Tense, the Simple Past,

I worked

and the Past Continuous,

I was working.

Again, “do” is used for questions and negatives with the Simple Past.

I did not work at night.
Did I work at night?

In the case of negatives there are problems with the contractions associated with “do” in informal use.

He does not	He doesn’t
I do not	I don’t
He did not	He didn’t
They did not	They didn’t

Again, notice the “doesn’t” form in the third person singular, the frequent Concord error

Notice that it is the “do” that gives the tense or time when it is used, and it is the “do” that provides the concord, as well.

She did not work.
Not She did not worked.

She does not want to stay.
Not She does not wants to stay.

These errors are fairly frequent in student writing. Here are some real life examples.

> He thinks she didn't heard him. (He thinks she didn't hear him.)
> Boesman didn't liked it. (Boesman didn't like it.)

Here are some concord errors.

> Lena thinks that Boesman just don't want to tell her, but how can he tell her if he doesn't know the answer.

The student got the correct "doesn't" the second time round. The "don't" is wrong.

> Boesman, on the other hand, likes to give orders and do not (does not) want to work hard.

The students were writing about the well-known play by Athol Fugard, *Boesman and Lena*, hence the names in the above examples.

8.3

There is a problem in formal academic writing about the use of the abbreviated forms, *doesn't, don't, didn't*. Perhaps in a formal piece of writing they should not be used. Students need specific training to wrote *does not, do not* and *did not*.

8.4

Another error with what is called "Do Support" is to totally avoid the use of *do*.

Instead of saying

> She does not want to stay,

the student writes

> She is not wanting to stay.

There are two errors here. Firstly, the negative of

> She wants to stay

should use "do support", i.e.

> She does not want to stay.

The use of the continuous "is wanting" is the wrong construction.

Secondly, the verb "to want" is not usually used in the continuous form at all. This is a matter that will be dealt with more fully in a later section but it is worth mentioning briefly here. "Want" belongs to a group of verbs called *Stative Verbs* that are not usually used in the continuous form, the -ing form.

Here is another example of potentially wrong use of the -ing form

> We sent them a letter and they have replied. What do they say?

If the question was "What are they saying?" it would be incorrect.

> What do they say to our proposal?
Not What are they saying to our proposal?

> You say you have lent him your car. Does he know how to drive it?
Not Is he knowing how to drive it?

In the last case, apart from the fact that "do support" should have been used instead of the -ing form, "know" is again one of the stative verbs that were mentioned above, that are, in any case, not usually used in the continuous form.

8.5

Two errors that are becoming increasingly frequent in South African usage (and in English second language and foreign language usage world wide) are dealt with in the above section, the usage of the -ing form instead of "do support" and the use of the -ing form in stative verbs, to which we shall return in a later section.

8.6 CONVERSATIONAL ENGLISH

Do support is used in certain constructions in conversational English that the English second language speaker would be advised to master.

8.6.1 Tag questions

They didn't make any mistakes, did they?
I don't like him, do you?
He knows how to drive a car, doesn't he?

One South African tendency is to convert the tag question (the question tagged-on to the end) to "isn't it".

Obviously, it is possible to convert the whole question into a South African form.

They were not making any mistakes, isn't it?
He is knowing how to drive a car, isn't it?

The point about dealing with what may seem like fairly uneducated South African forms is that they have a habit of spreading, and the teaching of English in our schools is far from ideal. Very often the teachers themselves do not know what is right.

8.7 EMPHATIC USES OF DO

Do can be used for emphasis.

Do sit down!
Do come in!
May I sit here? Yes, do! (i.e. sit there)

The implication is warmth, or insistence, or kindness.

Do be quiet!

Here the implication is irritation or anger

They do want you to come.

Again, the function of "do" is to imply kindly insistence.

I certainly did do it!

Here definiteness or emphasis is expressed

I do, indeed!
I did, indeed!

There is a popular song, now somewhat old-fashioned, that goes:

Oh I do like to be beside the seaside,
Oh I do like to be beside the sea.

8.8 REDUCED CLAUSES

Mary reads faster than I do. (do read).

Did you watch the game. No, but my brother did. (watch the game).

8.9 A HISTORICAL NOTE

Do support moved into English over a long period. In the English of the Authorised Version of the Bible (1611) we can see the transition.

> Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap ...
>
> Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow, they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.
>
> Matthew Chapter 6

Here you see the old form “sow not”, rather like Afrikaans, alongside the new, “neither do they reap”; “toil not, neither do they spin”.

8.10 A FURTHER NOTE ON “DO”

Obviously the verb “do” exists and functions not only as an auxiliary verb, but as a verb in its own right.

I do it regularly.	I did it.
Do you do it regularly?	I did not do it.
I don’t do it regularly.	Did I do it?

Here we have a combination of “do” as a verb with “do” as an auxiliary verb in *do support*.

9

TENSES

As you have probably already realized, the tense system in English is fairly complicated. Tenses are important: cohesion and coherence in writing are affected if tenses are wrong. These notes will concentrate on some of the trouble spots rather than try to teach the whole system. In general, when you write, try to be consistent in your use of tenses. Do not jump from one tense to another without good reason. Teaching staff must watch for this in the writing of students.

What follows is the full set of English tenses, with their names, which are worth the trouble of learning. One term needs explaining: "perfect". It means in effect a kind of past or completed action, but the action can, in fact, apply to the present time or the future time, as you will see.

9.1

Many of the tense forms are made up of a combination of auxiliary verbs (has/have, is, it was etc) and a participle.

I have been studying for many years.
I have studied for a long time.
I have been swimming for half an hour.
He has swum the English Channel.

9.1.2

Please remember that there is the group of irregular verbs such as *swim swimming swam swum* in which the past participle is formed by changing the root vowel, not by adding *ed.* The list of these verbs was printed in the opening section. They are worth knowing (1.9).

9.2

Here, then, is the list of tenses. You will notice that apart from being divided into times such as present, past and future, they are also divided into *simple* and *continuous* (or "progressive") forms. This division between simple and continuous is very important. These continuous or progressive tenses are characterised by the *ing* present participle form. There is a tendency, not only in South Africa but all over the world, to use these *ing* forms incorrectly. There is a group of verbs, called the **Stative Verbs**, that are usually not used in the progressive form. These will be discussed later.

The other important thing is to note the adverbials of time that go with each tense and the circumstances in which different tenses are used.

Simple Present Tense

I swim
I work
He walks to school every day.
Water boils at 100°C.
The sun rises in the east.
The earth is round.
Ronaldho dribbles past the defender and scores. (Sports commentary)
He drives to work.

Continuous Present (Progressive)

I am swimming.
I am working.
He is walking to school now.
Just as this moment I am doing something important.
What are you doing at this moment?
I am learning French.
She is coming tomorrow. (Continuous for future)
He is driving to work today.
He is forever getting lost. (Irritation)

Present Perfect Simple

I have swum
I have worked
I have just finished my work
I have lived in Cape Town since 1970. .
I have lived in Cape Town since I retired.
Professor X has taught at Yale all his life, and is still going strong.
I have read the book.
I have already seen that movie.
If you have finished, you can go home. (Condition)

Present Perfect Continuous

I have been swimming
I have been working
I have been working for the past two hours
He has been teaching at Yale for the last forty years
He has been reading the book for the past few days.
I have been living here since I retired.

Simple Past

I swam
I worked
I went there last week
I did it a few minutes ago
I have just finished the book that I started last year.
Professor X taught at Yale for 40 years and then died.
Once upon a time there was ...
When I was a child, I lived in ...
He attended school every day last year, but has been absent at times this year.

Simple Past Continuous

I was swimming
I was working
I was walking home last night when something odd happened.
He was going to school at 7.30 this morning.
While Caesar was walking to the Forum, he met a group of pals.
My child was coughing all night long, but seems better this morning.

Past Perfect Simple

I had swum
I had worked
He had already done it before I even asked.
We had planned to go on holiday, but circumstances changed.

Past Perfect Continuous

I had been swimming.
I had been working.
He had been making good time, until a puncture delayed him.
She had been working very hard, so she decided to take a break.

Future Simple

I shall/will swim

I shall/will work
He will walk to school tomorrow
We shall/will be in Cape Town next week.
We shall/will wait at the station until you come.
The plane leaves at 10.00.

Future Simple Continuous

I shall/will be swimming
I shall/will be working
He will be walking to school at 8.00 tomorrow.
She will be working on her thesis for the next three years.
We shall/will be waiting for you when you arrive.
She is coming tomorrow (Present Continuous for Future)
She is going to work hard next term. (Certainty or determination)

Future Perfect Simple

I will/shall have finished the work by tonight.
In March they will have been married for thirty years.
He will have walked to school before you have finished breakfast.
By the time that building is completed, it will have cost R3m.
Future Perfect Continuous
By the time he is ten years old, he will have been riding his bicycle to school for four years.
By the end of the year we will have been living here for twenty years.

9.3 THE STATIVE VERBS (NON-CONCLUSIVE VERBS)

Half the English tenses are continuous (or progressive). **However, there is a group of verbs that are not usually used in the progressive or continuous form.** They are usually called **stative verbs**, because they imply a state rather than an action. There is a tendency in second language English in South Africa (and, indeed, throughout the world) to use stative verbs in continuous forms.

WRONG I am having a problem.

WRONG I am wanting to go home.

WRONG I am smelling something burning.

There is a further problem with the stative verbs. Given a slight adjustment of meaning, some of them can sometimes be used with the continuous form.

RIGHT I am having a bath.

RIGHT I am having breakfast

RIGHT The dog is smelling the lamppost.

RIGHT We are having/giving a party. (Implies future)

Here is a list of stative verbs.

Verbs of the senses: see, hear, smell, notice, recognise.

Verbs of emotion: want, desire, refuse, forgive, wish, care, love, hate, adore, like, dislike, prefer

Verbs of thinking and mental status: think, feel (in the sense of "think"), realize, understand, know, mean, suppose, believe, expect, remember, recollect, forget, recall, trust (in the sense of "believe"), mind, agree, doubt.

Some other verbs: seem, signify, appear (in the sense of "seem"), belong, owe, own, possess, have (in the sense of possess), contain, consist, keep (in the sense of "continue"), concern, matter.

Verbs of measurement: weight, cost, measure, equal

This steak weighs 500g (state)

But The butcher is weighing the meat. (active action)

9.3.1

"Hear" is usually a stative verb. One does not say "I am hearing a noise". But in the irritable statement "Jim is always/forever hearing noises" the *ing* form is needed. This construction usually indicates irritation on the part of the speaker.

9.3.2

This region of stative verbs is indeed a tricky one because, with adjustments of meaning, stative verbs can sometimes be used with the continuous tense. Some examples have been given above. Here are some more.

I hear music *but* I am listening to music.
I see him *but* I am looking at/watching him.
I am seeing the film tonight.
Mary is seeing a lot of Tom these days.
Tom is seeing about tickets for tonight.
I am seeing to the matter.
I have been hearing the most dreadful things.
What are you thinking about? (Appears lost in thought.)
but What do you think of this picture? (Opinion wanted)
I'm having my house painted.
How are you liking the job?

Are you enjoying the trip?
No, I'm hating it / Yes I'm loving it.
How are you feeling?
but I feel certain that this is so.
I am smelling the fish to see if it is fresh.

9.3.3

There is a tendency to replace "Do support" with the continuous. "I saw a man walk past but did not look at him" is sometimes incorrectly rendered as "I saw a man go past but was not looking at him".

9.4 GENERAL REMARKS ON TENSES

There are a few general remarks on tenses that need making.

- History and story-telling need the Past Tense and the Past Perfect Tense.
- Minutes of a meeting need the Past Tense. In Afrikaans the Present Tense is often used.
- Tenses are often grouped together and belong in what we call *sequences*. For example, the Present Perfect and Present Tense are sometimes linked, and the Past Tense and Past Perfect are often linked. Considering tenses in isolation does not ensure correct use. Tenses need a context or situation.
- Don't jump from past to present time without a good reason.
- There are some special uses of the Present Tense and Present Perfect when writing about literature and art.

9.5 SOME PARTICULAR TENSE PROBLEMS

In the section that follows, a few of the common problems and errors in the use of tenses will be discussed.

9.5.1 The Present Tense (Simple and Continuous)

English makes a clear distinction between these two forms of the Present Tense. **This is an area in which frequent mistakes are made.** The area is bedevilled by the question of stative verbs, as set out above. Generally speaking, the Simple Present is used to state *general rules*, while the Continuous Present is used for what happens right now. In fact, the Continuous Present is sometimes called the *Real Present*. There is a South African tendency (in fact a world-wide English second language tendency) to use the continuous form when it should not be used.

Anxious mother to small boy in the next room: "Johnny, whatever you are doing, stop it at once".

a. John drives to work
b. John is driving to work today, although he usually takes the bus.
c. John is driving to work at the moment.

Note the adverbials - "at the moment", "usually", "today".

Sentence a. gives what happens on a regular basis.
Sentence b. gives what is happening that day (although not necessarily at that moment), as opposed to what usually happens.
Sentence c. says what is happening at that precise moment.

I am reading an interesting book at the moment.

I am working on an interesting research project.

In the above two sentences the reading or working may not be taking place precisely at that time, but the continuous is used nevertheless for present time.

John is learning French. He has lessons every day.

The learning is not happening necessarily at precisely that moment. The regular rule of a lesson every day is conveyed by the *has*, the Simple Present.

WRONG We live here since 1950.
We live here for twenty years.
We are living here since 1950.
We are living here for 20 years
(We have lived here since 1950.)
(We have lived here for twenty years.)

The uses of the Present Perfect will be discussed later.

Further examples: note the adverbials.

I often/usually go to the cinema on Friday night.
I go to the cinema every Friday night.
I always write my grammar notes on Friday night.
At the moment I am writing grammar notes.

In sports commentaries it is idiomatic to use the simple present, even though the events are happening at that very moment.

Rhodes takes a dip, the ball
gets the edge of the bat,
it is caught by the keeper
and Rhodes is out.

9.5.2 Science, Mathematics, Geography

The Simple Present, because it is used to state laws, is particularly important in scientific writing.

Water boils at 100°C.
Water runs downhill.
The second law of thermodynamics states that ...
Rome stands on the Tiber.
Two and two make four.

Here are some other examples that express laws of a kind.

Honesty is the best policy.

War solves no problems

Proverbs use the Simple Present.

A rolling stone gathers no moss.

9.5.3 Literary Criticism and Art Criticism

There is a particular use of the *Simple Present* and related *Present Perfect* in literary criticism and in art criticism. The literary work, the novel, poem, play, is regarded as eternally present. A clear distinction between history, the life of the author, and the eternally present, the work, must be maintained.

Dickens wrote *Great Expectations* in the Victorian Age. In this novel he tells us about ... discusses ... presents the story of ... investigates the theme of ...

Note the Simple Past for the historical fact. But as soon as you write about what is within the book you move to the *Simple Present Tense:* NB, NOT the continuous form.

We use the same tense convention for art criticism.

Rembrant's use of light and shade is remarkable.

Although Rembrant lived a long time ago, when we discuss the actual painting we treat the matter as present and use the Simple Present, not the continuous.

Do the following exercise. Answers are given at the end. This exercise targets a number of issues. It requires, most of the time, the Simple Present, as has just been discussed. It also exercises the **s** that is needed in the third person singular of the Simple Present, that ending that is so often left out, one of the most frequent **concord** errors. Sometimes the Present Perfect can be used. The Present Perfect operates in relation to present time, and forms a sequence with the Present Tense. Only twice is the Past Tense used - see if you can spot the places.

Dickens ([1]to write _____) the novel *Great Expectations* in the Victorian Age. In this novel he ([2]to tell _____) the story of an orphan boy called Pip who ([3]to be) ([4]to bring up _____) by his sister and her husband, Joe Gargery, a blacksmith. Pip ([5]to make _____) the acquaintance of a wealthy old woman called Miss Havisham who ([6]to live _____) nearby. Miss Havisham ([7]to adopt _____) a small girl called Estella whom she ([8]to bring _____) up to be proud and contemptuous towards boys and young men, especially if they ([9]to be _____) of a lower class. Pip ([10]to fall _____) in love with Estella. When he ([11]to be _____) a young man, Pip ([12]to be _____) mysteriously ([13]to leave _____) some money. He immediately ([14]to presume _____) that Miss Havisham ([15]to be _____) his secret benefactor and that she ([16]to intend _____) him to marry Estella eventually. He ([17]to be _____) ([18]to send _____) to London to learn the ways of a young gentleman and he ([19]to become _____) ashamed of his humble upbringing by Joe Gargery.

Eventually he ([20]to discover _____) that the origin of the money, which he ([21]to spend _____) too extravagantly, ([22]to be _____) Abel Magwitch, a convict who ([23]to be _____) ([24]to deport _____) to Australia where he ([25]to become _____) a rich sheep farmer. Early in the novel Pip ([26]to help _____) Magwith when he ([27]to be _____) is on the run, having escaped from prison. Magwitch ([28]to remember _____) the small boy's kindness and secretly ([29]to become _____) his benefactor.

Magwitch ([30]to return _____) to London, risking the death penalty because he ([31]to be _____) a deported convict. He ([32]to want _____) to see the small boy who ([33]to help _____) him when he ([34]to starve _____) and freezing on the marshes. Pip ([35]to be _____) terrified to discover that the money he ([36]to spend _____) so liberally ([37]to come _____) from a socially unacceptable source and not from Miss Havisham. He ([38]to realize _____), too, that Miss Havisham has not ([39]to intend _____) Estella for him.

The theme of the novel ([40]to be _____) the growth of a small boy and the effect on him of money. Dickens ([41]to analyse _____) Victorian society, its class structure and reliance on money and status, and its attitudes to the poor. Pip ([42]to have _____) to learn many painful lessons: to understand and accept Magwitch, and to realise that the humble blacksmith, Joe Gargery ([43]to be _____) his truest friend and the person most worthy of his admiration and gratitude.

Key

1. wrote (why? The reason is that this is an historical fact, not something from inside the text of the novel)
2. tells (the present tense is used, by convention, to give immediacy to the narration and to the fictional events)

3/4. Is brought up

5. makes
6. lives
7. has adopted (Present Perfect - past but leading up to the present)
8. brings up [or is bringing up]
9. falls

Paragraph 2

11. is
12. is (present tense, passive voice)
13. left
14-18. All the examples in this paragraph must go into the Present Tense (active or passive): presumes, is, intends, is, sent, becomes.

Paragraph 3

20. discovers
21. has been spending (Present Perfect) (The Present Perfect is used for past occurrences in relation to a Present Tense sequence.)
22. is
23/24 has been deported
25. has become (Present Perfect)
26-29 Present tense: helps, remembers, becomes

Paragraph 4

30-32 Present tense: returns, is wants
33. helps, [or helped]
34. is starving (parallel construction: is starving and freezing) or was starving

If the word 'once' were inserted in the text, i.e. once helped, the Past would become necessary - who once helped him when he was starving and freezing ...)

35. is horrified
36. has been sending (i.e. up to that point)
37/38 comes, realises
39. has not intended (Present Perfect)

Paragraph 5

40-43 Present tense: is, analyses, has, is.

The narrator of *Great Expectations* narrates the story in the Past Tense. However, we discuss the novel in the Present Tense Sequence (Simple Present Tense, Present Perfect Tense). Students are often caught out by texts in which the Past Sequence is used for narrative and use the Past Sequence in discussing the text.

9.5.4 Present to indicate future

The Present Tense, continuous and simple, can be used to indicate future time.

I am seeing him tomorrow.
I see him next week.
I am seeing him next week.

In these examples, see, which is normally a stative verb, is used in a slightly different sense, so can be used with the continuous form of the tense.

Going to also indicates future, with a measure of determination, or definiteness.

I am going to see him next week.
I am going to get this done soon.

NOTE:

The train leaves at 17:00 this evening.

9.5.5 Exercise

The following exercise is an exercise in Do Support as well as the Present Tense. Fill in the right form when required and with the others decide whether what is given is right or wrong.

1. I am hungry. I (want) something to eat.
2. Are you understanding what I mean? (Right or wrong?)
3. Anne is not seeming very happy at the moment.
4. What are you thinking will happen?
5. What are you thinking about?
6. I'm thinking of giving up my job.
7. We are having a nice room in the hotel.
8. We are enjoying our holiday. We are having a great time.
9. Are you seeing that man over there?
10. This room is smelling. Let's open a window.
11. The dog is smelling the lamp-post.
12. Are you hearing something?
13. I am seeing him tomorrow.
14. He is being selfish.
15. I can't understand why he is being so selfish.
16. He never thinks about other people. He is very selfish.
17. Sarah is being very tired.
18. I usually feel happy at Christmas.
19. I am feeling well today.
20. Are you believing that the sun goes round the earth?
21. This food is tasting very good.
22. I think this is yours.
23. The food is smelling good.
24. Is anybody sitting here?
25. Could you phone again later - I am having dinner.
26. Who is this umbrella belonging to?
27. Are you wanting something to eat?
28. She is not belonging to a political party.
29. I am needing to use the hammer.
30. I am thinking of selling my car.
31. I am thinking that I need a rest.
32. You are not using your car very often.
33. Air is consisting of oxygen and nitrogen.
34. Water is running downhill.
35. Water is boiling at 100EC.
36. I can't understand why he is being so selfish - he is not usually like that.
37. I am reading a play by Shakespeare.
38. She is knitting a jersey for her son.

39. I am working for an examination.
40. I am seeing him tomorrow.
41. He is smoking a pipe and reading a newspaper.
42. He is leaving after the weekend.
43. I am hearing music.
44. I am listening to music.
45. This is containing alcohol.
46. This is not belonging to me.
47. Mary is seeing a lot of Tom these days.
48. He is seeing to the repairs.
49. What do you think about all this?
50. What are you thinking about? I'm thinking about my dinner.

Answers

1. I want something to eat.
2. Do you understand what I mean?
3. Anne does not seem very happy at the moment.
4. What do you think will happen?
5. Correct.
6. Correct.
7. We have a nice room in the hotel.
8. Correct.
9. Do you see that man over there?
10. This room smells.
11. Correct.
12. Do you hear something?
13. Correct.
14. Correct.
15. Correct.
16. Correct.
17. Sarah is very tired.
18. Correct.
19. I feel well today.
20. Do you believe that the sun goes round the earth?
21. This food tastes very good.
22. Correct.
23. The food smells good.
24. Correct.
25. Correct.
26. Who does this umbrella belong to?
27. Do you want something to eat?
28. She does not belong to a political party.

29. I need to use the hammer.
30. Correct.
31. I think I need a rest.
32. You don't use your car very often.
33. Air consists of oxygen and nitrogen.
34. Water runs downhill (But water is running down a particular hill, now).
35. Water boils at 100EC.
36. Correct.
37. Correct.
38. Correct.
39. Correct.
40. Correct.
41. Correct.
42. Correct.
43. I hear music
44. Correct.
45. This contains alcohol.
46. This does not belong to me.
47. Correct.
48. Correct.
49. Correct.
50. Correct.

9.6 THE PRESENT PERFECT

The Present Perfect Tense is formed with *has / have*. It is called the Present Perfect because it is a past tense (Perfect) that relates to the present time, not a finished action in the past. It is the source of very frequent error. At the same time, it is a tense that has to be used very frequently: some authorities even say that it is the most frequent tense in English! The error usually comes because the ordinary Past Tense is used instead. Sometimes, however, the Present Perfect is used when the ordinary Past is needed. Here is an extract from a UP document.

> The University has adopted a strategy of educational innovation some time ago.

The Present Perfect (has adopted) would be correct if the adverbial "some time ago" had not been used. As soon as an adverbial that indicates a finished action in the past is used, then the Past Tense is required. The Present Perfect is used for an action that relates in some way to present time, an action that is still going on, or a time span that comes up to the present.

The above example is a tricky one, because the educational innovation does, presumably, still operate - the action comes up to the present, but was initiated in the past. However, the "some time ago" excludes the Present Perfect Tense, putting the emphasis on the moment of adoption, rather than on the extension of the action up to present time. Suggested re-writings are the following:

> The University adopted a strategy of educational innovation some time ago, which has continued up to the present.
>
> The University has adopted a strategy of educational innovation. This was done some time ago.

9.6.1

While certain adverbials exclude the Present Perfect Tense, other adverbials require the Present Perfect: *ever, never, recently, in the last few days, since, first time, just, already, yet, for, up to now, often*. However, even some of these can be used with the past, if the time if firmly placed in the past and finished. *Recently* can, in fact, be used with both the Present Perfect and the Past.

1. Over the last few days I have been reading an interesting book.
2. Over the last few days of 1999, I read an interesting book.
3. Over the last year I have been doing some interesting research.
4. Last year I did some interesting research.
5. I have just finished an interesting project.
6. Five minutes ago, I completed an interesting project.
7. Recently, I have been doing some interesting research.
8. He came here recently, but has left again.

Note example 6. The completion was final and finished only five minutes ago, but the past is used. In example 5, the Present Perfect is used for something that has obviously been finished very recently, although precisely when is not certain. The word <u>just</u> demands the Present Perfect.

9.6.2 Use in the USA

There is a possibility that American use is not quite as strict as British, and the British pattern has been followed in these notes. However, American grammars and textbooks consulted have conformed, in theory, to the British pattern, even if what happens in practice may differ. I have, for example, observed some variation in the use of the Present Perfect and Past with <u>just</u>: "I just done it". <u>Yet</u> is also subject to variation in American usage: "Did you see your bicycle yet?" The last two examples were, in fact taken from a British grammarian, noting trans-Atlantic use, while the American books consulted did not have equivalent examples. The British versions would be:

I have just done it.
Have you seen your bicycle yet?

These are to be preferred.

9.6.3

Look at the following examples and analyse the reason for the tenses in them.

I lived in Cape Town for ten years / ten years ago. (but no longer do so)
I have lived in Cape town for ten years. (and still do)
I have lived in Cape Town. (at some indefinite time in the past up to now)

The one that might give the most trouble is the third, because it seems to be a finished action, so why use the Present Perfect? Look at the following groups of examples.

Have you been to Cape Town? Yes, I have.
Have you ever been to Cape Town?
He has gone to Cape Town. (the situation at present)

Did you go to Cape Town?
He went to Cape Town last week.
Did he go to Cape Town?
Has he gone to Cape Town?

The last one asks the situation at the present time. Here are further examples.

He has lost his keys.
He has been looking for them all week.

He lost his keys last week.
He has just found them.

Here are some more examples, related to a situation.

I have bought a new car. (recently, just)
I bought a new car last week.
I have not bought a new car for three years.

Ow! I've cut my finger.
I cut my finger last week but it has not healed yet.

Compare these two. The first applies to the present, the second to the finished past.

For generations, Nepal has produced fine soldiers, the Ghurkas.
For generations, Sparta produced Greece's finest warriors.

9.6.4

The Present Perfect is used in the situations outlined below.

Up to the Present

We've lived in London since last September (and still do).

Indefinite Past

Have you been to America?
All my family have had measles.

Habit: still going on

Mr Jones has sung in the choir for fifty years. (and still does)
Professor Smith has taught at Yale for forty years. (and still does)

Compare: Professor Smith taught at Yale for forty years. (but has now retired, is long dead etc)

Resultative Past: the consequence of something.

The taxi has come.
He has recovered from his illness.
Have you seen my slippers?

Compare: Did you see where I left my slippers yesterday?

Finished use

I have visited the Parthenon.
(Last month/year/in 1980 I visited the Parthenon.)
He has written several books.
I have been to America. (I went last year)

News

The Present Perfect is the natural tense for news broadcasts of recent events. "The rand has once more fallen against the dollar. The President has said ...

9.6.5

In general, be on the constant watch for the need to use the Present Perfect tense, but don't get so anxious that you use it when it is not needed. Watch for it in university documents and in student writing and your own writing. Watch for the situations from the past that relate to present time, and for that rather vague past use. Try not to muddle it with the finished action in the past that calls for the

ordinary Past Tense. Take note of what adverbials are being used or implied. These usually give the clue as to which tense to choose.

9.6.6

Perhaps a little had better be said **in particular** about the **continuous progressive** forms of the Present Perfect, and their uses.

The key structure is **been + ing**. (**Been** is the past participle of **to be**).

I have been working for a long time.
He has been working for a long time.
Have I been working for a long time?
Has he been working for a long time?
I have not been working for long.
He has not been working for long.

The general rule is that the continuous is used: (1) for something that started in the past and is still going on; (2) for something that started in the past and has only just finished.

Up to now I have been filing these papers in this file. Is that the right thing?

I am afraid I was delayed by the traffic. I hope that you have not been waiting too long.

<u>Some useful polite phrases.</u>

I hope you have not been waiting long.

I hope I have not kept you waiting.

I have been coming here every day for the last week, but now I think that I shall come every second day.

I have been coming here frequently until recently, but I now come less often.

Compare the above with:

I come here frequently.

You could also say:

I have been coming here frequently.
(and still do).

NOTE I used to come here frequently.
(and no longer do).

OR I came here frequently when I lived near by. (I no long live nearby and no longer come frequently).

Note these possibilities.

Are you learning Zulu?
Have you been learning Zulu for long?

WRONG How long are you learning Zulu?
I am learning Zulu for a long time

There is a strong tendency to use the Past Continuous to replace the Present Perfect

NOTE I learnt Zulu many years ago. (Finished action)

WRONG I am living here for a long time, now.

RIGHT I have been living here for a long time, now.

Note the following

I go to the gym twice a week.
(i.e. habit or rule: Simple Present)

I have been going to the gym twice a week.
(In the past up to now - recent or long term - but may change - not fixed.)

It is raining! (Now)

It has not rained for along time.
(The period up to the present.)

It has been raining for weeks.
(The period up to the present.)

SINCE It has been raining since the holiday started (has rained also possible).

It has been raining since the beginning of the holiday but now it has stopped.

You all know the story of *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*.

Who's been eating my porridge?
Who's been sleeping in my bed?

The baby bear is instructive.

Who's been eating my porridge and (has) eaten it all up.

This shows a continuous process that has only just been completed.

Here are some other examples.

I have been studying hard this week.

I have written three assignments this week.

The first implies a more continuous action, which may still be going on. The second implies something in the recent past that has only just been completed.

He has been waiting for some time.

He has been standing under the shower for ten minutes.

The Union Buildings have overlooked Pretoria for many years.

The third deals with something that is more permanent.

<u>Remember the Stative Verbs</u>

WRONG I have been having the flu for weeks.
I have had the flu for weeks.

WRONG I have been knowing this for days.
I have known this for days.

WRONG I am wanting this for a long time.

WRONG I have been wanting this for a long time.
I have wanted this for a long time.

WRONG I have been having this problem before.
I have had this problem before.

BEEN and the Passive

I have been hijacked twice this week.

He has been operated on twice this year.

He has been expelled from his school.

9.6.7

A last word: remember Concord! Remember that has in the third person singular.

9.6.8

The following exercise consists of the examples in the last section. You can get the answers by looking back at the notes. Fill in the verb forms in the following sentences, using the Present Perfect or the Past Tenses.

1. The University (to adopt) a strategy of educational innovation some time ago.
2. The University (to adopt) a strategy of educational innovation some time ago, which (to continue) up to the present.
3. The University (to adopt) a strategy of educational innovation. This it (to do) some time ago.
4. Over the last few days, I (to read) an interesting book.
5. Over the last few days of 1999, I (to read) an interesting book.
6. Over the last year, I (to do) some interesting research.
7. Last year I (to do) some interesting research.
8. I (to finish) just an interesting project.
9. Five minutes ago, I (to complete) an interesting project.
10. I (to do) just it.
11. (To see) your bicycle yet?
12. I (to live) in Cape Town for ten years.
13. I (to live) in Cape Town ten years ago.
14. I (to live) in Cape Town.
15. I (to live) in Cape Town for ten years, when I was young.
16. (To be) you in Cape Town? Yes, I (to have).
17. I (to live) never in Cape Town.
18. The situation at present is that he (to go) to Cape Town.
19. He (to lost) his keys.
20. He (to look for) all week.
21. He (to lose) last week.
22. He (to find) just found his keys.
23. I (to buy) recently a new car.
24. I (to buy) a new car last week.
25. I (to buy) just a new car.
26. I (not to buy) a new car for three years.
27. Ow! I (to cut) my finger.
28. I (to cut) my finger last week, but it not (to heal) yet.
29. For generations, Nepal (to produce) fine soldiers.

30. For generations, Sparta (to produce) Greece's finest warriors
31. We (to live) in London since last September.
32. You (to be) in America?
33. All my family (to have) measles.
34. Mr Jones (to sing) in the choir for fifty years, and is still at it.
35. Professor Smith (to teach) at Yale for forty years, and is still going strong.
36. Professor Smith (to teach) at Yale for forty years, but (to retire) now.
37. The taxi (to come) at last.
38. You (to see) my slippers?
39. You (to see) where I left my slippers?
40. I (to visit) the Parthenon.
41. He (to write) several books.
42. I (to go) to America. (last year)
43. I (to visit) the Parthenon. (in 1980)

9.6.9 Further exercises with SINCE and FOR and the Present Perfect Tense

NB: Watch out for HAS in third person singular.

Exercise A. Note the examples first.

I have not seen him since June.
I have not seen him for six months.

1. Since the beginning of the year the child (to grow) considerably.
2. Since 1983 there (to be) a sharp increase in the number of road accidents.
3. Since his departure we (to have) no more trouble.
4. He (to mow) the lawn since six o'clock this morning.
5. She (to live) in this house since 1960.
6. He (to read) ten books since the beginning of the year.
7. Since the beginning of the Christmas celebrations there (to be) a festive atmosphere in this town.
8. I (not to see) him since Easter.
9. Since their quarrel they (to be) at loggerheads.
10. Since 1980 he (to buy) three cars.

Exercise B. Note the examples first. In which part of the sentence does the Present Perfect appear?

Since he had the operation his health has improved.
She has been waiting since the bell rang.

1. Since I last (to see) you I (to hold) five exhibitions.
2. Since war (to declare) a number of battles (to fight).
3. He (to send) me three postcards since he (to leave) on his overseas trip.
4. Since the new lecturer (to take) over at the beginning of the semester there (to be) a marked improvement in the students' work.
5. A number of changes (to effect) since the old government (to overthrow).
6. The police (to phone) me twice since I (to report) the burglary.
7. I (to wait) to hear your version of the story ever since I (to hear) the news.

8. Since water restrictions (to introduce) many boreholes (to sink).
9. She (to garden) since the sun (to rise).
10. Since these houses (to declare) unfit for human habitation many people (to move) out.

Exercise C. Note the examples first. Where does the continuous form of the Present Perfect appear?

Since I have been in this tutorial class, my work has improved.
Since I have been participating in sport, my health has improved.

1. Since I (to live) in this neighbourhood many changes (to take) place.
2. Since the police (to patrol) this area there (to be) no burglaries.
3. We (to have) no visitors since we (to live) in our new home.
4. Since he (to try) to learn English he (to acquire) a number of English-speaking friends.
5. We (not to quarrel) since we (to be) in the same team.
6. We (to have) three teachers since we (to study) English.
7. Since my neighbour and I (to be) at loggerheads, we (not to speak) a word to each other.
8. The bell (to ring) several times since you (to be) in the house.
9. Since my watch (to work) it (not to lose) a minute.
10. Since he (to teach) at this school the standard of the work (to improve).

Exercise D. These are mixed examples.

1. He (to attend) no lectures for the past six weeks.
2. Since he (to be) chairman the meetings (to be) orderly.
3. I (to try) to learn English for the past twelve years but (not to master) the language yet.
4. Since the news (to receive) we (to have) many telephone calls.
5. He (to lie) on the grass for the past hour. At the moment he (to gaze) at the clouds.
6. Since she (to be) my tutor my work (to improve).
7. Although Anne (to study) at the University for five years she (not to get) her degree yet.
8. Since the disturbance, stricter disciplinary measures (to take) against offenders.
9. How long you (to live) in this neighbourhood?
10. Since the burglary, a guard-dog (to protect) the property.
11. I (not to wear) the dress for three years.
12. For the past six years he (to strive) to attain his goal.
13. Since I (to be) a member of this club, I (to attend) twenty meetings.
14. He (not to have) a holiday since 1980.
15. Since the tenants (to evict) the house (to be) vacant.
16. Since he (to start) to speculate he (to lose) large sums of money.
17. Since he (to speculate) he (to lose) large sums of money.
18. They (not to visit) each other since they (to quarrel).
19. They (to quarrel) for the past hour.
20. A trustworthy and loyal friend, he (to cooperate) with us for years.

Answers to 9.6.9

Exercise A.

1. has grown
2. has been
3. have had
4. have been mowing
5. has lived
6. has read
7. has been
8. have not seen
9. have been
10. has bought

Exercise B.

1. saw ... have held
2. was declared ... have been fought.
3. has sent ... left
4. took ... has been
5. have been effected ... was overthrown
6. have phoned ... reported
7. have waited ... heard
8. were introduced ... have been sunk
9. has been gardening ... rose
10. have been declared .. have moved

Exercise C.

1. have been living ... have taken
2. have been patrolling ... have been
3. have had ... have lived
4. has been trying ... has acquired
5. have not quarrelled ... have been
6. have had ... have been studying
7. have been ... have not spoken.
8. has rung ... have been
9. has been working ... has not lost
10. has been teaching ... has improved

Exercise D.

1. has attended
2. has been ... have been
3. have been trying ... have not mastered
4. has been received ... have had

5. has been lying ... is gazing
6. has been ... has improved
7. has been studying ... has not got
8. have been taken
9. lived/been living
10. has protected
11. have not worn
12. has striven
13. have been ... have attended
14. has not had
15. have been evicted has been
16. has started ... has lost
17. has been speculating ... has lost
18. have not visited ... have quarrelled
19. have been quarrelling
20. has co-operated

9.7 PAST AND PAST PERFECT

I worked. I swam.
I had worked. I have swum.

The Past Perfect is formed by the use of had and the past participle. Please remember the irregular verbs for Past and Past Perfect. (1.9)

The Past and the Past Perfect form a very important sequence of tenses. The Past Perfect is used for a tense before the time of the Past. This sequence is used in history and in story-telling.

The Past is used for an action finished in the past - either a definite time in the past, or a series of actions in the past, with appropriate adverbials.

> I went to the gym every day last week.
> She wrote to him weekly for years.

The actions have stopped. Note the contrast with the Present Perfect.

> She has written to him weekly for years. (and still does so)

Here is a piece of narrative: note the tenses.

> Then the big bad wolf jumped out of bed and tried to gobble up Little Red Ridinghood. But she knew all about big bad wolves and, cool as a cucumber, she drew her Colt •45 from her little basket and drilled him right between the eyes. She had taken care to load and pack the gun early that morning. There is just no telling in these modern times!

9.7.1

Here are some passages from a history of England in the seventeenth century, when the famous civil war between Parliament and King Charles I took place. Note each use of tense, and note when the Past Perfect is used for an action that is earlier than the time of narration (which is already past). The Cavaliers are the King's party. The Prelatists are the supporters of the Church of England, the Puritans the opponents of the Church of England. The passage has been chosen because the events were long ago. It is deliberately, a fairly difficult passage. As you read it, underline every verb and note whether it is in the Past Tense or in the Past Perfect Tense.

But it was not enough that the Cavalier advance on London had been checked. The country was weary of the war, and a strong party even in the Capital was clamouring for peace by 'an accommodation with His Majesty,' not very different from surrender. In these straits Pym's last act of statesmanship was to negotiate an alliance with the Scots. After the satisfaction of their national demands, they had withdrawn their army to their own side of the Tweed in August 1641. They now undertook to send it back into England as the ally of Parliament. In return they demanded the reformation of the English Church upon the Scottish model.

The Parliament men could not accede to the demand in its entirety, for although they desired to abolish Bishops and the Prayer Book, and to introduce some lay element into the ecclesiastical organization, they were, like all Englishmen, jealous guardians of the supremacy of the State over the Church. There was the further difficulty that the Scots and their English partisans demanded the persecution of all unorthodox Puritan sects, even while the war against the Prelatists was still unwon. Only so, it was held by many, could they look for God's blessing on their arms.

Now popular Puritanism in England, during this period of its most rapid expansion, was markedly unorthodox, full of fresh individual vigour and variety, and breeding a hundred different forms of doctrine and practice. The great religious ferment of English humble folk which laid its strong hold on young George Fox and John Bunyan, taught men to think that -

New Presbyter is but Old Priest writ large.

Honourable members at Westminster would not indeed have thought twice about clapping into gaol all tinkers and shoemakers who took to prophesying, whether or not they were afterwards going to produce *Pilgrim's Progress* and the Society of Friends; but it was a more serious matter that the best English soldiers of all ranks from Cromwell downwards were the most rebellious against orthodoxy. 'Steeple Houses' and 'hireling ministers' were coming in for hard words from the hardest fighters. In half the regiments and on half the local committees that upheld the authority of Parliament, Independents were bearding Presbyterians, and Presbyterians were demanding the dismissal of Independents. For the Independents wanted a Church made up of free, self-governing congregations, not under the scrutiny of any general organization bound to enforce orthodox opinion and practice.

This quarrel in face of the enemy almost ensured the triumph of the King's armies. However, in the autumn of 1643 the Scots were for the most satisfied by Parliament itself taking the Covenant, and by vague promises of 'a thorough reformation' of the English Church 'according to the example of the best reformed Churches,' but also, as was inserted by way of safeguard, 'according to the word of God.' On these somewhat equivocal terms Pym purchased the aid of the Scottish arms, and died in December.

Next year the policy of the dead statesman bore fruit in the victory on Marston Moor. The three united armies of Cromwell's East Anglians, Fairfax's Yorkshire Puritans, and the Scots under Alexander and David Leslie, twenty-seven thousand in all, destroyed the forces of the northern Cavaliers joined to those of Rupert, numbering together eighteen thousand. It was by far the largest battle in the war. Rupert in person and his best troops of horse, hitherto unmatched, yielded before the impact of the Ironsides. At a blow the whole of Northern English was subjected to the Roundhead power.

Marston Moor was set off by the capitulation of Essex and all his infantry at Lostwithiel in Cornwall, whither he had rashly and aimlessly penetrated. Instead of trying to de-

stroy the royal forces, he had sought prematurely to overrun the royal territories, with fatal results. This disaster cleared the way for the rise of Cromwell. The older type of general, high in social rank, moderate in politics, and orthodox in religion, which had served Parliament well to begin the war, suffered at Lostwithiel an irremediable loss of prestige. The sectaries and 'russet-coated captains' who had reaped the bloody harvest on Marston Moor stood proportionately higher in the minds of the Parliament men. If it was a question of God's blessing, the sectaries seemed to have had the larger share of it that year.

9.7.2 The Past Continuous

There is a special use of the Past Continuous to show action that was taking place at a specific moment in the past, or a repeated action in the past.

Jack coughed/was coughing all night long.
She was washing her hair when the telephone rang.
At this time yesterday morning, I was writing grammar notes.
What were you doing at 10am yesterday?
I was walking home when I met him in the street.
When we arrived, they were having dinner.

The key is a combination of Simple Past and Past Continuous.

Please remember that the Past Continuous cannot be used for the stative verbs, as described earlier.

WRONG At six o'clock yesterday he was wanting to go home. (wanted)

9.7.3

Please remember that the Simple Past needs DO Support for questions and negatives.

I did not go to work, yesterday.
Did you go to work yesterday?

WRONG I was not going to work yesterday.

9.7.4 Exercise

Rewrite the incorrect sentences and fill in the necessary words.

a. We were in a difficult position because we were not knowing what to do.
b. When I was a small boy I was wanting to drive a fire-engine.
c. How fast (you to drive) when the accident happened?
d. How fast (you to drive) to get here from Durban so quickly?
e. I (to walk) home last night when I (to see) the fight.

Answers

a. ... we did not know what to do.
b. ... I wanted to drive.
c. were you driving.
d. did you drive.
e. was walking ... saw.

9.7.5 Exercise

Fill in the correct form of the verb.

1. The film was not very good. I (not enjoy) it.
2. The bed was uncomfortable and I (not sleep) well.
3. What (you to do) when it happened?

4. The car was unsatisfactory so we (to sell) it.
5. This time last year I (to live) in Cape Town.
6. What (you to do) last night at ten o'clock.
7. He (to be) on guard duty when the explosion happened.
8. While I (to work) in the garden, the phone rang.
9. I did not know who she was, although I (to see) her before.
10. The house was dirty. They (not to clean) for weeks.
11. Was he at the party when you arrived? No, he (to go) home.
12. We were driving along the road when we saw a car that (to stop).
13. When the boys got home, we could see that they (to play) in the mud from the state of their clothes.
14. The teams (to play) for about an hour when the game was interrupted by the rain.
15. We were good friends. We had been knowing each other for years. (Right or wrong? Why?)
16. For years I was wanting to see Naples but I never (to have) the chance. Now, at last, the moment (to come) (Right or Wrong? Why? Complete the verbs)

Answers

1. did not enjoy
2. did not sleep
3. were you doing/did you do
4. sold
5. was living (lived)
6. were you doing
7. was
8. was working
9. had seen
10. had not cleaned
11. had gone
12. had stopped
13. had been playing
14. had been playing
15. had known (stative verb)
16. wanted (stative verb) had the chance ... had come

9.8 FUTURE TIME AND THE FUTURE TENSES

The Future Tense and the Future Perfect Tense are formed by the use of shall and will.

1. I shall go.
2. You will go.
3. He will go.

1. We shall go.
2. You will go.
3. They will go.

1. I shall have gone.
2. You will have gone.
3. He will have gone.

1. We shall have gone.
2. You will have gone.
3. They will have gone

The above paradigm belongs to conservative grammars with shall used in the first person singular and first person plural. However, this rule is fading and, especially in non-formal use, will is frequently used.

To add to the confusion, shall and will are also sometimes used to express determination and legal obligation.

Will can be used for a polite request.

Will you be so kind as to ...

Would is also used like this.

Would you be so kind as to ...

Finally, certain forms expressing future time do not use shall and will.

9.8.1 Future without shall/will (Present Simple)

The train leaves at 10.00 tomorrow.

Here the Present Simple is used for a future time that is definite.

I am leaving tomorrow/leave tomorrow.
I am seeing him next week.

The going to form expresses a future with an element of determination.

I am going to pass this examination.
I have to pass this examination so I am going to work regularly.

9.8.2 Shall/will and determination or obligation

The convention used to be taught that if will was used with I or we, and shall with you, he and they, then great determination is expressed.

I will do it. I will, I will, I will ...

As the use of shall/will has become looser, one can no longer be certain that this convention will be understood.

What is important is that shall, in legal English, still expresses a powerful obligation.

The Trustees shall pay ...

Obviously, in biblical English, shall is important in the Commandments:

Thou shalt not bear false witness.

9.8.3 Future Simple with will/shall

Event
He will walk to school tomorrow.
I will/shall go to town tomorrow.
I will/shall leave in five minutes.

Habit
He will ride his bicycle to school next year.
He will study at Tuks next year.

A situation that will terminate
She will stay in residence until she finishes her degree

Future conditions
If you park there, you will get a fine.
If you do it, you will be sorry.

9.8.4 Future Progressive - will be +ing

Action that will be taking place

He will be running in the marathon tomorrow morning, so he will not be at work.

Duration in future

He will be working on his thesis for some time yet.
He will be riding to school at 7.30 tomorrow, when you are still having breakfast.

9.9 Future Perfect: will + have (and BY)

I shall have finished by this evening.
I shall have got there by the time you leave.
We shall have been living in Pretoria for ten years by the end of this month.

General comment

In all uses of future tenses, note the occurrence of adverbials of future time.

Exercise

1. By tomorrow I (to finish) my essay.
2. She already (to get) there by the time you arrive.
3. He (to work) on his thesis for some time yet.
4. He (to work) in his garden tomorrow morning, so he will not go to the office.
5. She (to stay) in residence until she finishes her degree.

Answers

1. will have finished.
2. will already have got there
3. will be working
4. will be working
5. will stay

General Tense Exercise

Fill in the correct form of the verbs in brackets.

1. I never (to read) a novel that (to bore) me as much as the one I (to read) last night.
2. By the end of last month he (to write) two English essays and by next week he (to write) two more. I (not to hear) from him since last Wednesday, but I (to understand) he (to read) *Hard Times* at present.
3. I'm sorry you (to get) lost coming here.
4. When I (to go) to see my friend last night, she (to play) bridge; she (to say) she (to play) since five o'clock.
5. I (to look) for a cent when I (to find) a rand.
6. You (to remember) my name or you (to forget) it?
7. Please wait here until she (to come).
8. They (to eat) and (to drink) everything by the time we get there.
9. Archimedes established the principle that a body plunged in a fluid (to lose) weight.
10. Last week a man (to die) after he (to drink) poison.
11. We hope that he (to do) the work by tomorrow.
12. We (to know) soon what progress he (to make) since last year.

13. I am surprised to see that my clothes (to lie) on the floor this morning as I certainly (to lay) them on the chair last night.
14. You must read this book. I (finish) it this morning. When you (to finish) it please give it to Joan who (also, to like) to read it.
15. I (to study) your notes while you (to be) out.
16. Since 1900 many people (to try) to climb Everest but they all (to fail) until Hillary (to attempt) it. Since then, many (to succeed).
17. After I (to see) you, I (to go) to town and (to find) that I (not to bring) an umbrella, so when the rain (to start) I had to shelter in the shops.
18. It is a long time since I last (to see) you.
19. Spring (to arrive) weeks early this year. Johannesburg (to have) its hottest August day since records (to keep).
20. While Jack (to dig) a well yesterday, he (to break) the spade.
21. When I (to see) you yesterday, you (to sit) in a café (to drink) tea.
22. 'You (to pay) the account yesterday?' 'No, when I (to come) home I (to realize) that I (to forget) to do so.'

Answers

1. have never read ... bored .. read
2. had written ... will write ... have not hear ... understand ... is reading
3. got
4. went ... was playing ... said ... had been playing
5. looked ... found
6. Do you remember ... have you forgotten
7. comes
8. had eaten and drunk
9. loses
10. died ... had drunk
11. will do
12. will soon know .. has made
13. were lying ... laid
14. finished ... finish ... would also like
15. studied / have studied ... were
16. have tried ... failed ... attempted ... have succeeded
17. saw ... went ... found ... brought ... started
18. saw
19. arrived ... has had ... have been kept
20. was digging ... broke
21. saw you ... were sitting ... drinking
22. Did you pay ... came ... realized ... had forgotten

10

CONDITIONAL CLAUSES

If I were a rich man,
Daidle deedle daidle
Digga digga deedle daidle dum
All day long I'd
Biddy biddy bum,
If I were a wealthy man!

We all know Tevya's song from *Fiddler on the Roof,* and we all sympathise. We **would** all like to be rich and idle. We all have day-dreams about what we **would** do **if** we won the Lotto. The great word is *if*. Hence a **condition** is involved. Sometimes the situation might be quite straightforward; sometimes it is unlikely (but possible) or speculative; sometimes the desired outcome is impossible, entirely imaginative, a matter of the past (**if only** ...).

This is a most important area of language, characterised by a set of conjunctions and by certain verb forms. This is the area of hypothetical meaning.

If I could just have a chance to continue the experiment a little longer,
I am sure that I should discover something interesting.

10.1

The two most important **conditional conjunctions** are **if** and **unless** (= if not). Others are: as if, if only, supposing, suppose, provided, providing, as long as, whether.

There is also the following, less frequent, set that takes us even further into the realm of the speculative: assuming (that), given (that), in case, in the event that, until, on condition (that), provided (that), providing (that), supposing (that).

The verb forms include were, would, may, might, could, had been, had, but also a range of other present, past and future forms, that will be illustrated in all the examples below.

10.2

Consider the following two sentences. The first is spoken by a presidential candidate in an election speech. The second is spoken by a schoolboy. Note the verb forms.

1. If I become President, I shall (will) abolish income tax.
2. If I became President I should (would) abolish school.

The first is possible and is presented as a fact - **if** ... **then**, even if we know that politicians make promises that they do not always carry out. The second is an expression of imaginative longing. The schoolboy has no immediate prospect of becoming president, but he is fed up with having to do homework.

Here is a third example.

3. Had I become President, I should/would have abolished income tax.

Here the candidate has failed to win the election. He is talking regretfully about the past, about what can no longer be (and may make his promises with impunity because he will not have to carry them out). Notice that the *if* is implied: 3 could have been phrased as:

If I had become President, ...

The **if** has been left out and the **I** and the **had** are inverted.

Here is a fourth example.

4. If he became President, I wonder whether/if he would really abolish income tax.

Here there is a measure of doubt. The man may not become President, first of all, but if he does, he may still not carry out his election promise. All things may still be possible, however, and wonders never cease.

10.3

Three main forms of conditional can be seen. The first is the **open condition**. It uses the simple present tense and the future tense.

If you park there, you will get a fine.
If you study regularly, you will pass.

Sometimes the present tense alone is used, especially for scientific statements and laws.

If you mix oil and water, the oil comes/will come to the top.
If you boil water, it vaporizes.
If he goes swimming, he always gets a cold.

The **if** in these examples can be replaced by **when**.

When you mix oil and water, the oil comes/will come to the top.
When he goes swimming, he always gets a cold.

In the open condition facts are stated or a situation presented. There are no nuances of doubt.

10.4

The second form of conditional presents a case that is more doubtful but still possible. The verb forms would, were, could, might, should are used, expressing what is unlikely or doubtful or speculative. Also the ordinary past is used.

If you parked there, you would get a fine.
If you studied regularly, you would pass.
If you were to study regularly, you would pass.
Were you to study regularly, you would pass.

Perhaps the person in question is not studying regularly. One needs to know a little more about the situation.

Note the possible inverted form, “were you to ...”, in the last one.

There is little difference between saying,

If you park there, you will get a fine

and

If you parked there, you would get a fine.

Perhaps the second one indicates a greater degree of uncertainty.

There is perhaps a perceptible difference between the following two statements:

If you study regularly, you will pass.
If you studied regularly, you would pass.

Perhaps the second one indicates that the person is not studying regularly, but one would need to know more about the situation.

Sometimes the **were** indicates a situation that is really impossible. When Tevya sings, "If I were a rich man ... I would ...", we know very well that he is not and that it is almost certain that he never will be rich. He is expressing a day-dream, a state of imagination. Take this statement.

> If Napoleon were alive today, he would be trying to conquer somebody or other.

It is possible to have **was** instead of **were**, but it may be slightly more colloquial.

Obviously, Napoleon is not alive today and there is no likelihood that he will conquer anybody. The proposition is impossible. One could, in fact, write:

> If Napoleon had been alive today, he would have been trying to conquer somebody or other.

This last version uses verb forms that clearly indicate impossibility - the **had been** plus **would have**.

10.5

It would seem, then, that there is no absolute, final clarity about meaning and verb forms when one is dealing with conditionals. There is, however, clarity about some of the impossible conditions, those with **had, had been** and **would have**.

> If you had worked regularly, you would have passed.
> If you had parked there, you would have got a fine.

Clearly, the person did not work regularly, and it is now too late, the consequences must be endured. Clearly, too, the person did not park in the danger zone, and so no fine was incurred.

10.6 EXERCISES

The following exercises are drills in the main forms of the conditionals not, in all the possible nuances. Study the following three sentence patterns carefully.

1. If you study regularly, you will pass.
   (Present Tense plus future)
2. If you studied regularly, you would pass.
   (Past plus **would**)
3. If you had studied regularly you would have passed.
   (Past Perfect with **had** plus **would have**)

Fill in the correct form of the verb in the brackets using the above three patterns.

1. If his year mark and his attendance (to be) satisfactory he (to sit) for the examination at the end of the year.
2. If he (to grant) matriculation exemption he (to follow) a degree course at the university.
3. If she (to consult) more reference works she (to gain) higher marks for her assignment.
4. The examiner (to award) me a pass mark if I (to write) legibly.
5. If I (not to study) the prescribed books intensively I (not to recognize) the excerpts.
6. The student (to gain) a distinction if he (to select) his questions more judiciously.
7. If I (to grasp) the underlying idea of the passage my précise (to be) more satisfactory.
8. Her essay (to have) greater merit if she (to avoid) clichés and vague generalizations.
9. If the lecturer (to speak) audibly the students at the back of the hall (to hear) him.
10. He (to find) the book on the shelf if he (to follow) the advice of the librarian and (to consult) the library catalogue.

11. If he (to participate) in sport, his academic studies (not necessarily to suffer).
12. If you (to consult) *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* you (to find) the following information concerning the word: its spelling, its pronunciation, its meaning and its etymology.
13. If I (to read) more books in the course of the year I (to expand) my vocabulary and (to improve) my comprehension.
14. If he (to pay) attention during the lecture he (to comprehend) the work.
15. If she (to study) more diligently she (to pass) the examination.

Answers

1. are satisfactory ... will sit
   were satisfactory ... would sit
   had been satisfactory ... would have sat
2. is granted .. will follow
   were granted ... would follow
   had been granted ... would have followed
3. consults ... will gain
   consulted ... would gain
   had consulted ... would have gained
4. will award ... if I write
   would award ... if I wrote
   would have awarded ... if I had written
5. If I do not study ... will not recognise
   did not study ... would not recognise
   had not studied ... would not have recognised
6. will gain ... if he selects
   would gain ... if he selected
   would have gained ... if he had selected
7. grasp ... will be
   grasped ... would be
   had grasped ... would have been
8. will have ... avoids
   would have ... avoided
   would have had ... had avoided
9. speaks ... will hear
   spoke ... would hear him
   had spoken ... would have heard him
10. will find ... follows
    would find ... followed
    would have found ... if he had followed
11. participates ... will not necessarily suffer
    participated ... would not necessarily suffer
    had participated ... would not have necessarily suffered
12. consult ... will find
    consulted ... would find
    had consulted ... would have found

13. read ... will/shall expand ... improve/will improve
    read (past) ... would/should expand ... would/should improve
    had read ... would/should have expanded ... improved - would/should have improved
14. pays ... will comprehend
    paid ... would comprehend
    had paid ... would have comprehended
15. studies ... will pass
    studied ... would pass
    had studied ... would have passed

10.7 SECOND EXERCISE

Fill in the correct form of the verbs in brackets.

1. If I pay the fine I (not to receive) a summons.
2. If you (to concentrate) on your work you would pass.
3. If he (to finish) the assignment in time he (to hand) it in tomorrow.
4. They would have been in time if they (not to delay) by the traffic jam.
5. If wishes were horses, beggars (to ride).
6. He (to enrol) for a course at the university if he (to pass) the matriculation examination last year.
7. If the student had enunciated the word clearly the misunderstanding (not to arise).
8. If the lecturer (to be) less alert he (not to spot) the forged signature on the attendance list.
9. If you major in English, two additional language courses (to required).
10. If I (to be) you I (to consult) my lecture notes.
11. He will graduate next year if he (to pass) all his subjects.
12. She (to trip) if she had not seen the obstacle.
13. If the lecturer (to deduct) marks for illegible handwriting some of the students may complain.
14. I (to have) the report ready if I had known that they required it urgently.

Answers

1. will not receive
2. concentrated ... NB *would* pass
3. finishes ... will hand (finished ... would hand)
4. had not been delayed
5. would ride
6. would have enrolled ... had passed (NB last year)
7. would not have arisen
8. had been ... would not have spotted
9. are required
10. were ... would/should consult
11. passes
12. would have tripped (NB had not seen)
13. deducts
14. would have had

10.8 SOME FURTHER POINTS ABOUT CONDITIONALS

There are a number of what the linguists call **speech acts** that depend on conditional forms. They are useful phrases in conversation, sometimes. Note the following list of examples.

If you don't mind my saying so, your slip is showing.
If I may be quite frank with you, you don't stand a chance.
If I may say so ...
If I may put it bluntly (be blunt) ...
If I may be personal ...
If you can be serious just for a moment ...
If I may interrupt ...
If you see what I mean.
If that is the correct term for it.

Note the following

If you can believe that, you'll believe anything.
He's ninety if he's a day.
The painting must be worth a fortune, if its worth a cent.
I'll be damned if I'll apologise.

Should you change your mind, no-one would blame you.
Could I but see my native land again, I should/would die happy.

10.9 THIRD EXERCISE

1. If I ... a rich man, I would build a big house.
2. ... I a rich man, I would/should build a big house.
3. If I (to become) President, I shall abolish income tax.
4. If I (to become) President, I should abolish school.
5. (to be) the President, I should have been more cautious.
6. (to have) I become President, I should have abolished taxes.
7. If you (to boil) water, it vaporizes.
8. If you (to mix) oil and water, the oil (to come) to the top.
9. If he goes swimming, he always (to get) a cold.
10. If you (to be) to study regularly, you would pass.
11. (to be) you to study regularly, you would pass.
12. If Napoleon (to be alive) today, he would be trying to conquer somebody or other.
13. If Napoleon (to be alive) today, he would have been trying to conquer somebody or other.
14. (to be) he really ill, I might be more sympathetic.
15. If you not (to drive) so fast, you would never have had the accident.
16. (to have) I (to know) he was ill, I would/should never have shouted at him.
17. I (to take) the children to the party today, if you (to take) them to school.
18. He (to get) there early if he catches the fast train.
19. I (to give) you R100, if you (to stop) smoking.
20. If I (to know) her name, I should tell you.
21. If the boss came in now, we (to be) in real trouble.
22. What we (to do) if I were to lose my job?

23. (to come) you earlier, we might have been able to help.
24. If I not (to be) so busy, I could have taken the day off.
25. If you (to like) a chocolate, please help yourself.
26. If you (to listen) carefully, you may learn something useful.
27. If you (to listen) carefully, you might learn something useful.
28. If you explained more carefully, I (may) understand.
29. If we (not to work) so hard, we could/might have missed our deadline.
30. If you heat a gas, it (to expand).
31. Unless you study hard, you not (to pass).

Answers to third exercise

1. were
2. Were I
3. become
4. became
5. Had I been
6. Had I become
7. boil
8. mix ... comes (will come)
9. gets
10. were to study
11. Were you to study
12. were
13. had been
14. Were
15. had not driven
16. Had I known
17. will take ... take (will take)
18. will get
19. will give ... stop
20. knew
21. would be
22. would
23. Had you come
24. were
25. would like
26. listen
27. listened
28. might
29. had not worked ...
30. expands
31. will not pass

10.10

Conditionals make extensive use of the group of verb forms that are called **modals**; should, would, could, may, might. These will be discussed in a separate section on modals later on, for modals have wider uses than just in conditionals. However, the sections below will illustrate modals in conditionals. These sections make no claim to be exhaustive or to cover all the subtleties and nuances that are to be found in this area of language. It is very difficult to devise a set of simple rules that cover all cases, so the method followed will be to give examples. Learn by observation and repetition.

10.11 SHOULD

If you should see her, give her my regards.

This is a little more tentative than

If you see her, give her my regards

If you should happen to finish early, let me know.
If he should be late, George could take his place.
If he should be there, give him my regards.

Again, all the above could be stated in a less tentative way. Look at the following examples.

If it should rain, I should stay at home.
If it rains, I shall stay at home.

If I should go, and the rest of them should find out, there would be trouble.

Compare

If I went, and the rest of them found out, there would be trouble.
If I go, and the rest of them find out, there will be trouble.

Here are some more.

If the guests arrive early, no-one will be there to greet them.
If the guests should arrive early, no-one would be there to greet them.

Note this change.

Should the guests arrive early, no-one will be there to greet them.

10.11.1

In all the above, it is possible to eliminate the **if** by inverting the word order and starting with **should** in the **if** clause.

Should you see her, give her my regards.
Should you happen to finish early, let me know.
Should he be late, George could take his place.
Should he be there, give him my regards.
Should it rain, I should stay at home.
Should I go, and the rest of them find out, there would be trouble.

10.11.2

Now look at this example.

1. If he writes the test he should do well.
2. If he writes the test he will do well.
3. If he wrote the test, he would do well.

Number 2 and 3 are positive that the person will do well, if the test is written. Number one could be interpreted as being a little more doubtful. However, the idiom of number one is also used to express a high probability of success. It all depends on the inflection of the voice. The inflection of the voice is important in the use of modals in conditionals, adding a complex range of nuances. These cannot, obviously, be conveyed in print.

It is worth pointing out that in the above example the **should** is not in the **if** clause (as is the case with all the other examples in this section) but in the main sentence. Here is another example of this, in a well-known formulation.

I should do it, if I were you.

10. 11.3

Here is a last example.

He will do it if he should get the time.
He will do it if he gets the time.
He will do it should he get the time.

10.11.4 Exercise

Put the following sentences in a more tentative form, using **should**. These sentences are taken from section 10.10, which you have just read, and are in the same order, so you can get the answers by going back to 10.10.

1. If you see her, give her my regards.
2. If you happen to finish early, let me know.
3. If he is late, George can take his place.
4. If he is there, give him my regards.
5. If it rains, I shall stay at home.
6. If I go, and the rest of them find out, there will be trouble.
7. If the guests arrive early, no-one will be there to greet them.

Now do the above sentences, inverting the word order and eliminating **if** by putting **should** at the beginning of the **if** clause.

For example: “If you see her” becomes “Should you see her”.

10.12 MIGHT / MAY

10.12.1

These two modals indicate possibility and capability.

Sometimes there is very little difference in their meaning.

If you eat up all your food, I may/might buy you an ice-cream.

I may/might do it, if I can find the time.
I may/might still do it, if I get the chance.
I may/might do it, if I feel like it.
I might do it, if I could find the time.

Note the following example, and note the word *conceivably*.

I may/might conceivably have taken the job, if it had been near home and better paid.

This is, of course, a matter of the past: the job was not taken. This is conveyed by the “had been” in the **if** clause.

10.12.2

Sometimes **might** indicates an impossible past, and **may** something that is also essentially a matter of the past.

I might have done it, if I had known how important it was.
I may have done it, but I can’t remember clearly.

The second sentence refers to a possibility that is already past. Compare the following, which indicates future possibility.

I may do it, if I remember to.

Therefore, one cannot neatly claim that **may** is present time, and **might** is a past form.

10.12.3

There can be gradations of possibility with **may** and **might**.

If the Blue Bulls can win/win/can manage to win this game, they may go on to win the Cup.

If the Blue Bulls could win/won/could manage to win this game, they might to on to win the Cup.

If the Blue Bulls could have won/had won/could have managed to win that game, they might have won the Cup.

The last one is obviously an impossible condition.

Here is another example of gradation of possibility.

He may do it, if we can motivate him.
He might do it, if we could motivate him.
He might have done it, if we could have motivated him.

Again, the last is an impossible condition: the person concerned did not do it, and it is too late.

10.12.4

Sometimes **may** and **might** are used in conditionals that imply a polite request, or a request for permission, or a plea.

If I may/might have a little more time, I should obtain better experimental results.
If I might have had a little more time, I should have obtained better experimental results.
I should like to have a second helping, if I may.
If I may/might take the car, I promise to bring it back within the hour.

Perhaps **might** is even politer than **may**. *Can* is possible in place of **may/might** in the above examples. With **can** the tone of pleading is less pronounced. **Could** could also be used. Perhaps it is a little more tentative than **can**, or suggests a stronger tone of pleading. **May** is probably better for polite requests.

10.12.5 Exercise

Use **may** or **might** as auxiliaries in the following sentences. You will find the answers in 10.12.1, 10.12.2, 10.12.3 and 10.12.4.

1. I ... conceivably have taken the job, if it had been nearer home and better paid.
2. If you eat up all your food, I ... buy you an ice-cream.
3. I ... (may + to do) it, if I had known how important it was.
4. I (may + to do) it, if I remember to.
5. If the Blue Bulls could have managed to win that game, they (may + to win) the Cup.
6. I (may + to do) it, but I can't remember clearly.
7. He (may + to do) it, if we can motivate him.
8. He (may + to do) it, if we could have motivated him.
9. If I (may + to have) a little more time, I should have obtained better experimental results.
10. If I ... take the car, I promise to bring it back within the hour.
11. I should like to have a little more, if I ...

10.13 CAN/COULD

10.13.1

As just indicated at the end of 10.12.4, **can** and **could** can be used in requests with **could** carrying tones of greater tentativeness, less confidence, than can. **May/might** would, however, be more polite.

> If I can/could have a little more time, I should obtain better experimental results.
> I should like to have a second helping, if I can/could.
> If I can/could take the car, I promise to bring it back within the hour.

10.13.2

Obviously **can/could** can be used to indicate a possibility or an ability to do something.

> If I can do it, will I get the job?
> If I could do it, would I get the job?

The second is a little more tentative, perhaps.

> If I could have done it, would I have got the job?

This is a matter of the past: the job has been given to someone else.

Degrees of tentativeness are shown in an example already given in 10.12.3 above.

> If the Blue Bulls can win/win/can manage to win this game, they may/will go on to win the Cup.
>
> If the Blue Bulls could win/won/could manage to win this game, they might go on to win the Cup.
>
> If the Blue Bulls could have won/had won/could have managed to win that game, they might have won the Cup.

Obviously, the last is an impossible condition - the game has been lost, and the Bulls will not win the Cup.

Greater uncertainty is shown by **could** instead of *can* in the following example.

> If I can do it, will I get the chance?
> If I could do it, would I get the chance?

Note how the **will** changes to **would** in sympathy with the **can** and **could**.

10.13.3

Notice the use of **only** with could.

> If we could only show that x = y then we should have a convincing proof.

10.13.3.1

Use **can** or **could** to complete the following sentences, expressing tentativeness. The answers are in 10.13.1 and 10.13.2

1. If I ... have a little more time, I should obtain better experimental results.
2. If I ... take the car, I promise to bring it back within the hour.

Using **can/could**, complete the following sentences. (Answers in 10.13.2)

1. If I ... do it, would I get the job?
2. If I ... have done it, would I have got the job?
3. If the Blue Bulls ... manage to win this game, they might go on to win the Cup.
4. If I ... do it, would I get the chance?

Fill in the missing verb form.

1. If we ... only show that x = y, then we should have a convincing proof.

Answer in 10.13.3

10.13.3.2

Fill in the missing verb forms.

1. He may do it, if we ... motivate him sufficiently.
2. He might do it, if we ... motivate him sufficiently.
3. He might have done it, if we ... ... motivated him.

Answers

1. can
2. could
3. could have

11

THE PASSIVE VOICE

In relation to the **Passive** as opposed to the **Active** we use the term **Voice**.

The dog bites the man. (Active Voice)
The man is bitten by the dog. (Passive Voice)

The mechanics of the change are fairly simple. The object in the active form becomes the subject in the passive (the man). The subject in the active (the dog) becomes the agent in the passive form, usually preceded by by. However, as will be stated again later, one does not always have to put in the phrase characterised by by and an agent. It can often be left out. The passive verb is formed by to be plus a past participle. (Please remember the forms of the irregular verbs in 1.9. Note the Past Participles).

I bite	I am bitten
I am biting	I am being bitten
I bit	I was bitten
I was biting	I was being bitten
I have bitten	I have been bitten
I have been biting	I have been being bitten
I had bitten	I had been bitten
I had been biting	I had been being bitten
I shall bite	I shall be bitten
I shall be biting	I shall be being bitten
I shall have bitten	I shall have been bitten
I shall have been biting	I shall have been being bitten

The underlined forms are very rarely used, for obvious reasons.

11.1

While the mechanics of the transformation are fairly simple, there can be problems with the use of the passive voice. Sometimes the passive cannot be used.

They have a nice house.
A nice house is had by them.

The second sentence just does not go naturally into the passive. The same applies to the following statements:

He lacks confidence.
The auditorium holds 5000 people.
John resembles his father.
The coat does not fit you.
She sang that song well.
John thought that she was attractive.
John ran the race well.

All these statements sound unnatural in the passive, although in some cases a special situation could justify the transformation.

11.2

The prepositional phrase with by for the agent does not always occur in statements in the passive voice.

People speak English all over the world.
English is spoken all over the world.

The second, in the passive voice, is actually the more natural way of making the statement, and it is entirely unnecessary to add "by people", the by phrase with the agent.

My briefcase has been stolen.
Someone has stolen my briefcase.

It is entirely unnecessary to replace the "someone" with a by phrase. In fact, the passive is probably the more natural way of describing the situation.

However, sometimes one does need the agent phrase introduced by by.

This poem was written by Keats.
This piece was composed by Beethoven.
The theory of relativity was discovered by Einstein.
The Sistine Chapel was decorated by Michelangelo.

The passive is often used to replace the phrase the people or the indefinite pronouns one, someone, they.

A very great proportion of uses of the passive is to replace such constructions. Note the following examples.

1. Someone has stolen my books.
   My books have been stolen.
2. No-one has opened that box for years.
   That box has not been opened for years.
3. No-one has ever beaten him at chess.
   He has never been beaten at chess.
4. Someone has given me a book.
   I have been given a book.
5. They will allow each boy a second ice-cream.
   Each boy will be allowed/is allowed a second ice-cream.
6. People speak English all over the world.
   English is spoken all over the world.

In all the above cases it is probably more natural to use the passive. The next section, 11.4, takes up the question of style. The Passive Voice, it is sometimes maintained, should be avoided. However, the above examples show it has a perfectly legitimate use.

11.3

There has been debate about the use of the passive. Some have maintained that the active voice is the mark of a simple and forthright style. However, there is legitimate use for both active and passive voice. The passive voice is not just an alternative obtained by manipulating the surface structures. It has a special place.

He spoke at great length: people asked him many questions.
He spoke at great length and was asked many questions.

Among other things, there is a special place for the passive voice in writing about processes and the physical sciences. This question will be taken up more fully right at the end of this section, in 11.13.

In part, the use of the active or the passive voice depends on what one wants to focus on, where one lays the emphasis.

> A pig was stolen by Tom, a hen by Dick and a sheep by Harry.
> Tom stole a pig, Dick a hen and Harry a sheep.
>
> A man and a woman walked past the gate and a dog rushed out and attacked them. The woman was not bitten but the man was. The dog was later put down.

In the following sentence, the passive is preferable.

> There's a new block of flats they are building down the road; perhaps you'd like somebody to introduce you to the landlord.
>
> There's a new block of flats being built down the road; perhaps you'd like to be introduced to the landlord.

Sometimes the conversion of surface structure from active to passive can cause a change of meaning.

1. Every schoolboy knows at least one joke.
2. At least one joke is known by every schoolboy.

Number 2 would seem to indicate that it is the same joke that is known to all. (With thanks to Quirk et al's *Comprehensive Grammar*.)

11.4 SCIENCE, ENGINEERING AND THE PASSIVE VOICE

In this area of use the passive is often to be preferred.

> When an inertial force and a couple are applied to a crankshaft, a higher chain force is achieved.

This is easier to express than the round-about phrasing of

> If you apply . . .
> If one applies . . .

Here is another example:

> Q. How does one make carbon dioxide?
> How is carbon dioxide made?
>
> A. Carbon dioxide is made/obtained by a combination of one part of carbon and two parts of oxygen.

In the following example note again the use of "is obtained . . . by".

> The stress in the stem of the test-piece is obtained merely by dividing the load recorded at each stage on the dial of the machine by the area of its cross-section.

Here are some examples from *Structures or why things don't fall down* by JE Gordon. The passive verbs have been printed in bold. Incidentally, let nobody say that engineers cannot write, or do not need to be able to write tight, well-formed, logical prose.

> In the embryo, bones begin as collagen, or gristle, which is strong and tough but not very stiff. As the foetus develops, the collagen is **reinforced** by fine inorganic fibres called osteones. These **are formed** chiefly from lime and phosphorus and have a chemical formula which approximates to 3 $Ca_3 (PO_4)_2$. Ca $(OH)_2$. In the fully reinforced bone the Young's modulus **is increased** about thirtyfold to a value of about 20,000 mn/m_2. However, our bones do not **become** fully **calcified** until some considerable time after birth.

> Just as stress tells us how *hard* - that is, with how much force - the atoms at any point in the solid **are being pulled** apart, so strain tells us how *far* they **are being pulled** apart - that is, by what proportion the bonds between the atoms **are stretched**.

Note in this sentence the clever use of the dash in combination with commas elsewhere. If only commas were used, then confusion would result. Notice also the neat balance between "Just as" and "so". Good for the engineers!

Thus if a rod which has an original length L **is caused** to stretch by an amount ℓ by the action of a force on it, then the strain, or proportional change of length, in the rod will be e, let us say, such that:

$$e = \frac{\ell}{L}$$

11.5

Processes need to be described by the use of the passive voice.

> The beans are picked in late summer and are left to dry in the sun.

11.6

Note the following useful formulations for academic writing:

> It is sometimes argued that ...
> A distinction can be made between ...

Note also, the following phrases.

> It is said that ...
> It is believed that ...
> It is expected that ...
> It is alleged that ...
> It is thought that ...
> It is considered to be ...
> It is reported that ...
> It is known that ...
> It is expected that ...
> It is understood that ...

11.7

The passive is useful in journalistic reporting. Here are two examples.

> It is reported that two people were injured in the explosion.
> Two people are reported to have been injured in the explosion.

11.8

Note the following uses of "supposed".

> You were supposed to clean the windows. (but did not)
> The windows are supposed to be cleaned every week.
> The train was supposed to arrive at 11:00 (but didn't)
> The train is supposed to arrive at 11:00 (and may actually do so)
> You are not supposed to park your car here.
> The film is supposed to be very funny.

11.9

Finally, note that the passive can sometimes be used for evasion or apology.

I'm afraid the work on your car won't be completed today.

This sounds a little better, perhaps, than saying:

We haven't finished your car.
You will have to wait until tomorrow.

11.10 PASSIVE WITH GET

The passive and a kind of pseudo-passive can be formed with **get**. The use of get is usually slightly colloquial.

The cat got run over (by a bus).
James got trapped by the speed-cops.
The house is getting rebuilt.
Such criticisms will get treated with the contempt they deserve.
The story eventually got translated into English.
He got taught a painful lesson. (it served him right)
How did that window get opened? (irritation)
I got delayed. I got hijacked.

Here are some examples of a kind of pseudo-passive with **get**.

We are getting bogged down.
I have to get dressed.
I don't want to get mixed up in that kind of business.
Your arguments get a bit confused here.
I'm getting a bit confused.

There are the phrases **get bored**, **get tired**, **get excited**, **get lost, get with it**.

11.11 EXERCISES

11.11.1

Put the following verbs into the passive form. You will find the answers at the beginning of this section.

I bite	I had bitten
I am biting	I had been biting
I bit	I shall bite
I was biting	I shall be biting
I have bitten	I shall have bitten
I have been biting	I shall have been biting

11.11.2

Rewrite the following sentences using the Passive Voice, which in many of these cases is probably preferable to the Active Voice. Note that the agent phrase with by can very often be left out.

1. No-one has opened that box for the last hundred years.
2. Has somebody invited you to lunch tomorrow?
3. People formerly used the Tower of London as a prison.

4. No-one has ever beaten him at tennis.
5. People speak English all over the world.
6. Someone has stolen my briefcase.
7. You must write the answers on one side of the paper only.
8. People must not take these books away.
9. They made this gun in Birmingham.
10. Somebody has cooked this fish exquisitely.
11. People will show the visitors the new building.
12. They will allow each boy a second helping of ice-cream.
13. They have made my uncle a captain.
14. They have promised us higher wages.
15. The Rector has promised us higher salaries.
16. Somebody has found the boy the people wanted.
17. An unseen hand opened the window.
18. They will send Cyril to prison.
19. Somebody had spilt tea all over the tablecloth.
20. The fire destroyed many valuable paintings.
21. People shan't speak to me as if I were a child.
22. People say that figs are better for us than bananas.
23. Her beauty struck me deeply.
24. They gave the thief a fair trial and sent him to prison.
25. They tell me that somebody has shot your uncle.
26. People say that tortoises live longer than elephants.
27. We haven't moved anything since they sent you away to cure you.
28. At the cocktail party people took no notice of the famous professor, but they made a fuss of his lovely young wife from the moment someone introduced her to the guests.
29. People no longer say that anyone inhabits the moon any more than Mars.
30. There's a new block of flats they are building down the road; perhaps you'd like someone to introduce you to the landlord.

Answers

1. That box has not been opened for the last hundred years.
2. Have you been invited to lunch tomorrow?
3. The Tower of London was formerly used as a prison.
4. He has never been beaten at tennis.
5. English is spoken all over the world.
6. My briefcase has been stolen.
7. The answers must be written on one side of the paper only.
8. These books must not be taken away.
9. This gun was made in Birmingham.
10. This fish has been exquisitely cooked.

11. The visitors will be shown the new building.
12. Each boy will be allowed a second helping of ice-cream.
13. My uncle has been made a captain.
14. We have been promised higher wages.
15. We have been promised higher salaries by the Rector.
16. The wanted boy has been found.
17. The window was opened by an unseen hand.
18. Cyril will be sent to prison.
19. Tea has been spilt all over the tablecloth.
20. Many valuable paintings were destroyed by the fire.
21. I shan't be spoken to as if I were a child.
22. Figs are said to be better for us than bananas.
23. I was deeply struck by her beauty.
24. The thief was given a fair trial and sent to prison.
25. I am told that your uncle has been shot.
26. Tortoises are said to live longer than elephants.
27. Nothing has been moved since you were sent away to be cured.
28. At the cocktail party no notice was taken of the famous professor, but a fuss was made of his lovely young wife from the moment she was introduced to the guests.
29. The moon is no longer said to be inhabited any more than Mars.
30. A new block of flats is being built down the road; perhaps you would like to be introduced to the landlord.

11.11.3

Fill in the passive verb forms in the following examples. These answers may be obtained (note the verb form) from 11.5 above.

1. The stress in the stem of the test piece ... (to obtain) merely by dividing the load recorded at each stage on the dial of the machine by the area of its cross-section.
2. In the embryo, bones begin as collagen, or gristle, which is strong and tough but not very stiff. As the foetus develops, the collagen ... (to reinforce) by fine inorganic fibres called osteones. These ... (to form) chiefly from lime and phosphorus and have a chemical formula which approximates to 3 $Ca_3 (PO_4)_2$. Ca $(OH)_2$. In the fully reinforced bone the Young's modulus ... (to increase) about thirtyfold to a value of about 20,000 mn/m_2. However, our bones ... (not to become) fully calcified until some considerable time after birth.
3. Just as stress tells us how *hard* - that is, with how much force - the atoms at any point in the solid ... (to pull apart), so strain tells us how *far* they ... (to pull) apart - that is, by what proportion the bonds between the atoms ... (to stretch).

11.11.4

Put the following into the passive. The answer may be found (note the verb form) in 11.8.

It is reported that two people were injured in the explosion.

11.12

The passive voice is necessary in scientific and technical writing. Look again at the various examples of engineering writing in 11.5, in which passive forms of the verbs are the most useful. The generalisation that the active voice is the mark of a simple and forthright style, and therefore that the passive should be avoided, is an overstatement. The passive is part of the linguistic armoury and has important uses.

Nevertheless, there is a debate. It is a debate that perhaps applies to all academic writing, but in particular it concerns scientific and technical writing. There is the convention that one should try to be impersonal and avoid the first person [I, we]. On the other hand, there are some persuasive opinions which argue for the unabashed use of the first person. Among other things, and it is an important point, pervasive avoidance of the first person can result in uncertainty as to who has done what.

There are no hard and fast rules. What we must do is to acquaint ourselves with the scope of the debate, and then use our intelligence, taking account of opinions that seem to be valuable and of traditions of usage.

The material that follows consists of two opinions that favour the use of the first person and that point out some of the problems of trying to be impersonal. The first dates from as long ago as 1960. It is by the Council of Biology Editors and is from the *CBE Style Manual.* The full citation is: Council of Biology Editors, Committee on Form and Style. 1972. *CBE Style Manual.* Third Edition. American Institute of Biological Sciences, Washington, D.C. pp 5-7. The second is a recent article of British origin by Rupert Sheldrake, called "Personally speaking". It is from *New Scientist*, 21 July 2001, pp 48/49. The two articles go slightly beyond the use of the passive, to discuss briefly one or two other techniques for achieving impersonality, all with their drawbacks, too. These useful and thought-provoking articles are owed to a colleague at Onderstepoort.

11.12.1 Voice - the CBE Style Manual

Write in the active voice unless you have a good reason for writing in the passive. The active is the natural voice, the one in which people commonly speak and write, and it is less likely than the passive to lead to ambiguity.

Avoid the "passive of modesty", a favourite device of writers who shun the first person singular. "I discovered" is shorter and less likely to be ambiguous than "it was discovered". When you write "experiments were conducted", the reader cannot tell whether you or some other scientist conducted them. If you write "I" or "we" ("we" for two or more authors, never as a substitute for "I"), you avoid the possibility of dangling or "hitchhiking" participles and infinitives, common in sentences written in the third person passive voice . . . do not substitute "the writer" for "I". "I" may embarrass the writer, but it is less likely to be ambiguous, as shown in the following example, in which "the writer" may be either Smith or the author of the two sentences:

> These analyses, according Smith, were inconclusive. The writer believes that the samples analysed were collected from areas unknown to him.

Any of the following substitutes could replace the second sentence, and no one but its author is in a position to know which is correct.

> I believe that the samples analysed were collected from areas unknown to me.
> Smith believes that the samples analysed were collected from areas unknown to him.
> I believe that the samples analysed were collected from areas unknown to Smith.

Although frequently misused and abused, the passive voice has justifiable functions in technical writing. It may serve when you believe the agent of action (the publisher in the example below) is irrelevant and need not be mentioned:

Darwin's *Origin of Species* was published in 1859.

It may serve when you wish to emphasize something or someone other than the agent. Whether you write "antibiotics are produced by fungi" or "fungi produce antibiotics" may depend upon whether you wish to emphasize antibiotics or the agent, fungi. The passive voice may sometimes help you avoid an unnecessary and perhaps awkward change of subject. Compare these sentences:

> This paragraph implies that the experiment performed itself or was performed by a robot.
> This paragraph implies that the experiment performed itself or that a robot performed it.

11.12.2 Personally speaking by Rupert Sheldrake

Why are schoolchildren still told to write up their science in the passive, as though the experiments happen of their own accord, asks Rupert Sheldrake.

"The test tube was carefully smelt." I was astonished to read this sentence in my 11-year-old son's science notebook. At primary school his science reports had been lively and vivid. But when he moved to secondary school they became stilted and passive. This was no accident. His teachers told him to write this way.

When I was at school, my science teachers made me write in the passive voice, but I had no idea it was still going on. Ever since I was a graduate student at Cambridge, I have thought the active voice - "I did" - far more appropriate in scientific writing than the passive - "it was done". Experiments do not mysteriously unfold in front of impersonal observers. People do science, and to portray it as a human activity is not to diminish it but to show it as it is.

The passive style is not only misleading, it is also alienating. A young medical student told me "it felt strange at first" when a lecturer asked her to write her reports in the active. "But then it felt liberating," she said. "Suddenly I could be myself again, after years pretending I wasn't there."

Recently I asked Frank Chennell, the coordinator of the Norfolk Teacher-Scientist Network (TSN), if he could find out how local teachers and scientists thought children should write science reports. Most teachers agreed that, in line with the national curriculum, younger children should adopt a direct style. But some believed that older pupils should use the passive. Most local scientists favoured the passive for research papers.

When Lord May, the president of the Royal Society, read the results of this survey in the TSN newsletter, he said he was "horrified" that the Norfolk scientists favoured the passive. "I would put my own view so strongly as to say that, these days, the use of the passive voice in a research paper is the hallmark of second-rate work," he says. "In the long run, more authority is conferred by the direct approach than by the pedantic pretence that some impersonal force is performing the research."

I soon found that May's strong views are shared by many other eminent scientists, including the Astronomer Royal, Sir Martin Rees. Bruce Alberts, president of the US National Academy of Sciences, has said he strongly favours the active voice.

Most scientific journals accept papers in the active voice and some, including *Nature*, positively encourage it. When I surveyed the current issues of 55 journals in the physical and biological sciences, I found only two that still required contributors to use the passive.

As far as I can tell, the passive style did not become fashionable in science until the end of the 19th century. It was meant to make science seem more objective, impersonal and professional. Before that, scientists generally used the active voice. Isaac Newton and Charles Darwin certainly did. The heyday of the passive in scientific literature was from 1920 to 1970. But while leading scientists have abandoned this convention, many science teachers still insist on it.

To find out more, I contacted the heads of science in 262 secondary schools: 212 state-maintained schools in Devon, Greater London (Camden, Ealing and neighbouring boroughs), Greater Manchester (Rochdale and Bury) and Nottinghamshire, and a random sample of 50 independent schools. I received replies from 172 of them.

Overall, 45 per cent of the schools said they encouraged the use of the active voice, while 42 per cent said they encouraged the passive. The remaining 13 per cent had no preference. There was a significant difference between state-maintained and independent schools: 58 per cent of the independent schools I surveyed encouraged the use of the passive, compared with 37 per cent of state schools. Geographically, the proportion of passive-inclined state schools ranged from 30 per cent in Devon to 41 per cent in London and Greater Manchester.

Some of those teachers who taught use of the active were enthusiastic advocates. Others said they used the active out of necessity, and one head of science in an inner-city comprehensive commented: "We're lucky to get them to write anything at all. It would be difficult to persuade students to write in a style so very different from normal speech." He implied that more state schools would use the passive if they could.

Some teachers promote the passive because they think examination boards require it. There is some truth in this. Of the three examination boards for England, two encourage the use of the passive for sixth-form exams. The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA), the government's guardian of educational standards in England, has no official position on the matter.

But most of the teachers who encourage the passive voice say they are simply following convention. Clearly, they believe that leading scientists and journals still prefer it to the active. This is an outdated view. "Primary and secondary teachers should, without any reservation, be encouraging all their students to be writing in the active voice," says May.

What would happen if the Royal Society officially endorsed the use of the active voice? Perhaps the QCA and the examination boards would follow suit. Then hundreds of thousands of science students could stop pretending that they were not really there during their experiments.

Science teachers in my survey who supported the active say it is "more natural". It "gives pupils ownership of their work" and "makes science more personal and pupils more involved". I agree. I believe the passive voice is alienating. It mystifies scientific practice and is ugly and cumbersome.

The active is better at communicating what scientists actually do. Above all, it is more truthful.

12

MODALS

The modals are a group of rather peculiar auxiliaries, apart from the usual auxiliaries, to be, have/has and do/does. This area is difficult for non-mother-tongue speakers, being highly idiomatic with many nuances and subtleties of tone and form in which, sometimes, the inflection of the voice is important.

The full modals are: shall/should, will/would, can/could, may/might, must. Other modals, perhaps not with full modal status, are: have to, need, to be able, ought to, dare, had better, used to.

The object in what follows is to try to limit the field, cut the technicalities and be as practical as possible. The distinction between full modals and semi-modals need not be gone into vigorously. Need and dare function as full verbs, as well. **Rather than the learning of rules, with many exceptions, the chapter presents patterns that have to be learnt, and tries to group the modals in terms of function and meaning.**

The modals express a great many important concepts: duty, compulsion, obligation, ability, possibility, permission, requests. At first sight it would appear that the modals exist in present and past forms, but they are often not really present or past forms and meaning is often not really a matter of present or past time. Should, for example, does not only have a meaning as a past form of shall, but all sorts of other connotations. The modals express a complex set of nuances that are often idiomatic in use, rather than strictly rule governed. **Might** is not always a past of **may**: it expresses greater uncertainty or greater politeness.

What follows contains some spoken and colloquial uses of various modals as well as some mainstream and essential uses. Some uses of modals are racy and, as has just been said, highly idiomatic and full of nuances. These uses are likely to be encountered in an English mother-tongue environment. Unfortunately, this makes what follows rather detailed and diverse. Colloquial and informal uses will be indicated. Various degrees of politeness and shades of strength of injunction are frequently involved, so mastery of the idiom is important.

12.1

Questions in the modals are frequently formed by subject verb inversion, but in some cases do is used. (Remember the section on Do Support). Broadly, it would seem that the full modals do not use Do Support, while the borderline modals sometimes use Do Support and sometimes not. As already stated, learn patterns rather than try to follow a rule.

May I go?
Need I go?
Must I go?
Ought I to go?
Ought I to have gone?
Should I go?
Should I have gone?
Can/could I go?
Have I to go? (Rare)
Do I need to go?
Do I have to go?
Have I got to go?
Did you used to go?
Dare I go?
Do I dare go?

Negatives are often done without Do Support, although with some verbs they are, or can be, done by both means.

Negatives are usually formed by putting not or n't after the modal. Obviously, the n't is used a lot in speech but only in informal writing.

I may not go.
I mayn't go.
I need not go.
I needn't go.
I do not need to go.
I did not need to go.
I must not go.
I mustn't go.
I ought not to go.
I oughtn't to go.
I ought not to have gone.
I oughtn't to have gone.
I should not go.
I shouldn't go.
I should not have gone.
I shouldn't have gone.
I cannot (can't) go.
I could not go. (couldn't)
I do not have to go.
I don't have to go.
I have not got to go.
I used not (usen't) to go.
I did not use to go.
I didn't use to go.
I dare not go.
I daren't go.
I do not (don't) dare (to) go.
I did not (didn't) dare (to) go.

12.1.1

There is an abbreviation with **have**, as well.

Could have	Could've
Should have	Should've
Might have	Might've
May have	May've
Need have	Need've
Must have	Must've
Ought to have	Ought to've

These abbreviations are used in speech, and are usually only written when speech is being represented by the writing.

12.2

Certain of the modals take **to**, others do not. The examples in 12.1 above already show this. The trouble is that some of these modals that take **to** sometimes do not take **to** in other situations.

The modals concerned are: ought to, have to, be able to, used to, need (to), dare (to). Note the following examples.

I ought to do it.
I ought not (n't) to do it.
I have to do it.
I have to. (I.e. strong obligation)
Do I have to? Have I to? (Rare)
I am able to do it.
I need to do it.
I need not do it. (i.e. no **to**)
You don't have to.
You needn't do it. (i.e. no **to**)
You don't need to do it.
You needn't. (no **to**)
Do you dare (to) do it (**to** optional)
He dared (to) go against prevailing opinion.
Don't you dare do it. (no **to**)
Don't you dare! (no **to**)
You dare! (no **to**)
I dare not go. (no **to**)
I don't dare go.

The main-stream modals, can, could, will, would, shall, should, may, might and must, do not take **to** afterwards.

12.3

The s in the third person singular also gives some trouble with modals. Most of the modals and semi-modals do not take an **s** if the subject is he, she, it, the cat, the dog etc.

He may do it.
He must do it.
He ought to do it.
He should do it.

Note the above as questions. Learn them as patterns.

May he do it?
Mayn't he do it?
Must he do it?
Mustn't he do it?
Ought he to do it?
Should he do it?

Note these negative patterns. Learn them as patterns.

May he not do it?
Mayn't he do it?
Must he not do it?
Mustn't he do it?

Ought he not to do it. (Note the placing of **not**)
Oughtn't he to do it?
Should he not do it?
Shouldn't he do it?

However, **have to, need** and **dare** often take the s, though sometimes not. Note the following patterns - learn them off as patterns.

He has to do it.
He needs to do it.
He dares (to) do it.
He does not dare (to) do it. (He doesn't dare do it.)
He dare not do it? (i.e. no **s**)
He doesn't need to do.
He doesn't have to do it.
He need not do it (no **s**)
He dare not do it. (no **s**)

Note that there is a difference between, "He does not have to do it" and "He need not do it". The latter has inversion of **need** and **not**, does not have Do Support and does not have the **s**. The same pattern applies to, "He dare not do it".

Note, and learn off, the following question patterns.

Has he to do it? (Fairly rare, possibly British)
Does he have to do it?
Doesn't he dare do it?
Dare he do it? (NB no **s**)
Need he do it? (NB no **s**)
Does he need to do it?
Doesn't he need to do it? (Note the place of **n't**)
Does he not need to do it? (Note the place of **not**)

A few remarks and observations about **need** and **dare**.

As stated earlier, **need** and **dare** are not only modal auxiliaries but can function as full verbs in their own right.

He needs new shoes.
Does he need new shoes?
He does not need new shoes.

One cannot say "Needs he new shoes?", or "He needs not new shoes".

He dares the risk of injury in his attempt to set a new record.
He does not dare the risk of injury ...
Does he dare the risk of injury

One cannot say, "Dares he the risk of injury?"

12.4 MEANING AND THE MODALS

In what follows, an attempt has been made to deal with the modals in terms of various groups of meanings, situations and functions.

12.4.1 Duty, compulsion, necessity, obligation, injunction, issuing of instructions

Must, have to, had better, need, are to, should, ought to

As is usual with the modals, this is an area full of nuances and pitfalls. However, it is a most important area of language that has (got) to be mastered. (Must be mastered, should be mastered, needs to be mastered?)

First let us take **must** and **have to** (have got to). They both express strong obligation, but there are some subtle differences.

1. You must (please) do it. You must (please) go now.
2. You have to do it. You have to go now.
3. I must go.
4. I have to go (I'm afraid).
5. Do it! Please do it. Won't/would you please do it?

Number 1 above implies a position of authority, even if **please** is used. The **have to** in number 2 suggests external circumstances, a regulation or an external situation. This is the usual implication of **have to**. We do not usually use **please** with **have to**. Have to is not a command so much as a statement of circumstances that require something. Number 3 above implies will and control on the part of the speaker. Number 4 implies, even regretfully (**I'm afraid**) an external set of circumstances that requires the speaker to go.

Number 5 is, of course, an imperative and not a modal - a direct command. Depending on the tone of voice and the situation, the command can be considerably softened, even to the point of becoming pleading instead, by the use of "please". The further use of **would**, the modal, adds to the pleading, making the imperative a question, instead.

Have to can lead to the question, "Do I have to?". The question implies that there are circumstances that require something. The question could be phrased "Have I to ...?", dispensing with the Do Support, but this is relatively rare and may be restricted to British usage. "Do I have to ... ?", with extra emphasis on the **have**, (Do I **have** to?) implies resistance or protest. The answer is either "Oh yes, you do!" or "No, not really" or "I'm afraid that you do". However, the question, with a level intonation, can be plain inquiry as to the state of affairs.

"You had better do it" implies a strong injunction - something is indeed advisable. "I had better go now" indicates that to stay would not be advisable. You'd better do it" or "You'd better" is rather colloquial and is threatening - the phrase is often accompanied by "or else ...", the "or else" being left hanging in the air as a nameless threat. The defiant reply is "or else what?", calling the bluff of the threatener. At this stage the exchange is beginning to turn into a slanging match and ceases to be a formal and business-like exchange. There is, however, a less definite use of **had better**, apologetic, or regretful. "Oh, I suppose I had better do it." **Had better** is illustrated further in the very last paragraph of this section.

There is little difference between **have to** and **have got to**. Perhaps **have got to** can sometimes be used colloquially for additional emphasis, with a strong stress on **got**. Generally, **got to** is a little less formal that **have to**.

Man, you gotta go!

The forms "Do I have to ...?", "Do I need to?", I don't have to" and "I don't need to", usually imply a general situation or habitual action. The forms "Have I got to?", "Need I?", "Must I?" "I haven't got to" and "I needn't" imply a particular occasion or situation at the moment of speaking.

Some patterns with **need** need to be a acquired (have to be acquired, should be acquired, must be acquired). **Need** is used in question forms and in various statements.

Need they make all that noise? (Irritation)
Do they have to make all that noise?
Do they need to make all that noise?

You needn't worry about tomorrow.
You don't have to worry about tomorrow.
You don't need to worry about tomorrow.

I need to get a new car.
I must/have to get a new car.

The hydrangeas need/have to be watered frequently.

More will be said about some important uses of **need** later.

Must is used for insistence in a well-meant way. “You must try some of this delicious paté.” “You just must go to see Kirstenbosch if you go to Cape Town”.

Must is also used for logical necessity. “There must be something wrong.” “She must have been in the garden and did not hear the phone ring”. **Must**, implying a kind of logical necessity can be used sarcastically. “If you must smoke, do it somewhere else.” “Must you do it?” “Must you!” Note that this is different from “Do you have to”, which still implies an external necessity, while **must** implies will on the part of the person concerned.

However, this distinction gets blurred in the following statements, in which the tone is also sarcastic or mocking. “You must be joking!” i.e. don’t be ridiculous. This can also be phrased, “You have got to be joking.” i.e. I can’t believe what you say. Oddly, these formulations, depending on the context, can also be vaguely sympathetic - I can believe what you have just told me - how awful or unfortunate!

Obviously, the rather informal uses of **must** outlined in the last three paragraphs above are very different from the powerful injunction of “You must” presented earlier.

There is a possible distinctive South African use of **must** that lacks the connotation of will and compulsion. “What must (should) I wear?” “I must run down to the shops quickly.” Jean Branford, in her *A Dictionary of South African English* records a comment of 1959: “The idea of compulsion in the word *must* is frequently absent in the Cape idiom”. Branford remarks that a phrasing such as “This form must be filled in ...” is typical of South African “officialese”. Perhaps “should” would be slightly preferable. Perhaps the Afrikaans **moet** should not (must not?) always be translated as **must**. Here is another example from Branford: “Anybody who can help identify the woman must phone Det. Sergeant X at ...” “Should” or “should please” would be preferable. While Branford’s dictionary of 1978 (third edition 1987) has an entry for **must**, the much bigger and more recent *A Dictionary of South African English on historical principles*, strangely, has no entry under **must**. We face a kind of contradiction with these South African uses of **must**: on the one hand we have a weaker idea of compulsion; on the other the excessive use of **must** in “officialese”.

Should and **ought to** are more tentative than **must** and **have to**. There is room for a little doubt as to whether the injunction will be carried out or not. Strictly speaking, **should** and **ought to** are unsuitable for an absolute rule or regulation which has to be obeyed. Strangely, **shall** is well established in tradition legal usage for something that has to be done. The statement, “It should work”, implies that it very likely will, but might not. If you said, “It is going to work” or “It will work”, the statement is more definite. “Should” is used for giving advice, so is “ought to”. “You (really) should/ought to do it” is strong advice, is an injunction of a kind, but is not as definite as, “You must do it:, or “You have to do”. “You should not have done it” or “You ought not to have done it” obviously imply that it has been done and that the advice has come too late. British dialectal use has the rather comic form, “You didn’t oughter” for “You shouldn’t have” or “You ought not to have,” or “You oughtn’t”.

For a strong injunction or instruction there are also the forms, “You are to ...”, “You are not to ...”. If I say: “I am to sit for an examination next week”, the situation requires this - I have to. A military command could run: “You are to capture the bridge and hold it until relieved.” A powerful instruction could read: “The bearer of this letter is to receive every assistance”. Those who receive the letter have to obey.

It is necessary to return to **must** and **have to**. There are some difficulties with past and future forms. **Must** lacks both these, so **have to** has to be used. Earlier it was explained that there are differences of connotation between **must** and **have to**. With the past and future, these can sometimes become a little blurred. **Must** can also be used with a future connotation, without resorting to **have to**.

Yesterday I had to go to town.
Tomorrow I have to go to town.
Tomorrow I must go to town.
Next year I must diet, and drink less.
Next year I will have to go for retraining.

Afrikaans-speakers sometimes have trouble with the past of **must**, using **should** instead. Superficially, **should** looks like a past tense of **shall**. However, "I should do it" implies something in the future. **Should** is, in any case less strong than **must** or **have to**. There are two possibilities, with different implications.

I should have done it.
I had to do it.

The first implies an obligation that was unfulfilled. The second is an obligation that was performed in the past.

Must have is indeed a past form, but with a particular connotation. It expresses logical necessity, a use of must that was dealt with a little earlier in this section. It is not a normal past tense.

I must have done it, but I can't remember clearly.
I must have had the wrong information.

Should have is rather different from **must have**.

I should have been finished by now.
He should have arrived by now.

The first of the above implies that the speaker has not finished or has not managed to finish because of some or other circumstance. The second indicates a likelihood, but not a certainty.

The negative of **must** and **have to** also has its peculiarities. **Must not** is a negative prohibition implying authority in the speaker. **Must not** is also used to state very strongly what should not be done - this use is sometimes accompanied by **just**.

You must not break the rules.
There are some things that one just must not do.

The negative of **have to** has completely different connotations from the above. Look at the following examples.

You do not (don't) have to do it.
You need not (needn't) do it.
You do not need to do it.

Here there is lack of necessity, not a prohibition. In the case of the first example there is a possible nuance that depends on the inflection of the voice in spoken English. If extra emphasis is put on **have** the implication could be irritation on the part of the speaker or, alternatively, that it might be better to do it nevertheless.

There are some important nuances of **need** in past time. The use or not of Do Support is vital.

You didn't need to go.
You needn't have gone.

The second one implies that the person did in fact go, although it was not necessary. The first expresses two possibilities: which is intended is determined by the context and the facts of the case. The person might have gone or might not have gone. In either case, there was no necessity.

You did not have to go.

In this case, again, the person might or might not have gone: meaning is determined by context.

To conclude this rather complicated matter of compulsion and necessity and the related use of the modals, there are a few idiomatic turns of phrase that had better be briefly mentioned. (Note the use of **had better** here: it is slightly apologetic. On other occasions it could be more definite.) There is the conversational "I must say, however, ..." by which one adds a further point or expresses an opinion. Then there is the rather rare, perhaps humorous and slightly archaic, "I needs must ...", and the idiomatic expression, "Needs must when the devil drives" i.e. in a bad situation one **had** better do something. (Here **had better** has a stronger meaning than the meaning just above.)

Revision of 12.4.1

The following examples test the most essential points.

Use a modal - must or have to - in the following sentences.

1. I am not going to take no for an answer. You ... do exactly what I say.
2. Considering the circumstances, it looks as if you ... do what the regulations require.
3. Use the word better to show strong necessity.
   I ... ... go now, or I shall be missed.
4. Use must to show logical necessity.
   I know she is at home. I wonder why she does not answer the telephone. There ... ... something wrong.
5. Use must to urge somebody to do something.
   You ... go to Kirstenbosch, if you are in Cape Town.
6. Your orders are that you ... capture the bridge and hold it until reinforcements arrive. Use something other than must.
7. Use two modals that are less strong than must or have to.
   You ... practise your music more regularly.
8. Use something other than have to.
   Do they ... ... make all that noise?
9. Use something other than don't have to.
   You ... ... worry about tomorrow.
10. Express unfulfilled obligation.
    I ... ... done it.
11. Express an obligation that you fulfilled.
    I ... to do it.
12. I ... ... done it, but I cannot remember.
13. He ... ... arrived by now.
14. Express that you in fact did go, although it was not necessary.
    I ... ... gone.

Answers

1. must
2. have to
3. had better
4. must be
5. must
6. are to
7. should, ought to
8. need to
9. need not
10. should have/ought to have
11. had
12. must have
13. should have
14. need not have

12.4.2 Requests, permission and orders

May, might, can, could, will, would, should

Modals are involved in the making of requests, in asking for permission and, to a limited extent, in giving orders. There are gradations of authority, politeness and humility that are important.

The existence of present and past forms in the modals listed above is sometimes illusory: **may, might**, for example, can show differing degrees of tentativeness rather than present and past time.

I may do it.
I might do it.

The first indicates uncertainty, the second greater uncertainty.

Can I have a look?
May I have a look?
Might I have a look?

These, again, show gradations of tentativeness.

One of the chief uses of the modal **may/might** is to make polite requests. In South Africa there is, however, a tendency to use **may** incorrectly. **May** is normally used with the first person, I/we, not with the second person, **you**.

WRONG May you please help me?

This is normally

Please help me.
Would you please help me?
Would you be so kind as to help me?

Can is possible, but is less polite.

Can you please help?

Could is polite.

Could you please help?
Could you help me?

May is used for requesting permission for oneself, or on behalf of somebody else, and for giving permission.

1. May I go now?
2. May he go now?
3. You may go now.

Might could be used for greater politeness in 1 and 2, but if it were used in 3 the meaning would be very different.

You might go now

This would express uncertainty as to whether the person **should** or **is able to** go at that point in time.

You might go now, but on the other hand, you might go tomorrow.

Could can be used in the above sentence in place of **might**.

The second person is used in replying to a request.

May I have this?
May I keep this?
May I go now?
May I come in?
May I sit down?
Please may I keep this?
May I please keep this?

These may all be used with **please** in addition. The reply to these is:

You may.
Of course you may.
Please do.
Certainly.

It depends how friendly you want to be. Negative replies could be:

I'm afraid not.
I regret you may not.
Sorry, you may not.
You may not.
No you may not.
No!
No fear!
Certainly not!

A fairly frequent granting of permission would be:

You may have it, if you look after it very carefully.

Can and **could** could/can be used in place of **may** in all the above requests. **Can** is the least formal. It is frequently used. Some traditionalists don't like it. The following conversation is possible.

Can I go now?
You can, but you may not.

What about **might**? **Might** is more tentative, polite, humble, than **may**. In other words, **may** and **might**, in this area of use, are not present and past tense, but express degrees of politeness or tentativeness. The same goes for **will/would** and **can/could**.

Might I come in?
Might I suggest that ...?

The last of these two is useful, as a tactful way of prefacing a suggestion, perhaps one that is likely to be unpopular.

Of course, **may/might** can be used ironically. This use is devastatingly illustrated in Chapter 39 of Dickens's novel *Great Expectations*. The returned convict questions the arrogant and spendthrift young Pip about the sources of his mysterious wealth. The convict is himself the secret benefactor. It is one of the most devastating scenes in English literature.

> "May I make so bold," he said then, with a smile that was like a frown, and with a frown that was like a smile, "as to ask you **how** you have done well, since you and me was out on them lone shivering marshes?"
>
> "How?"
>
> "Ah!"
>
> He emptied his glass, got up and stood at the side of the fire, with his heavy brown hand on the mantelshelf. He put a foot up to the bars, to dry and warm it, and the wet boot began to steam; but he neither looked at it, nor at the fire, but steadily looked at me. It was only now that I began to tremble.
>
> When my lips had parted, and had shaped some words that were without sound, I forced myself to tell him (though I could not do it distinctly), that I had been chosen to succeed to some property.
>
> "Might a mere warmint ask what property?" said he.
>
> I faltered, "I don't know."
>
> "Might a mere warmint ask whose property?" said he.
>
> I faltered again, "I don't know.
>
> "Could I make a guess, I wonder," said the Convict, "at your income since you come of age! As to the first figure, now. Five?"
>
> With my heart beating like a heavy hammer of disordered action, I rose out of my chair and stood with my hand upon the back of it, looking wildly at him.

"May I make so bold as to ask": the convict is ironically pretending lower class humility and respect. The **may** turns to **might**, even more humble, in the questions that follow: "May I be so bold" or "May I make so bold", as the phrase traditionally goes, is perhaps slightly archaic but could still possibly be used today.

Will and **would** need some comment.

> Will you do it?
> Will you give me your support?
> Would you do it?
> Would you give me your support?

These questions are not without their possible emotional overtones, but are basically request for facts and information. **Would** adds an additional dimension of pleading.

> Will you please do it?
> Will you please go?

These are very close to commands. **Would** could soften the injunction somewhat but would still be fairly definite.

> "You have been messing around all morning, wasting time. Now will you please get on with your job."

If **would** were used in the above, it could still convey authority or irritation, although perhaps slightly softened.

Can and **could** have some strange nuances.

You can go now.
You could go now.

The first gives permission - it is a less formal way of saying, "You may go now." The second one is completely different - it does not grant permission, excepting very obliquely. It implies a complicated set of circumstances.

You could go, but it might be better if you did not.
You could go, it might be worth trying.
You could go now, but you could stay.

To conclude, a discussion of the Zulu word *cela* might be helpful. It means to *ask for* or *to beg*. It implies a polite request. One occasionally encounters Africans who have been wrongly taught that the English equivalent is **I want**. Better alternatives would be:

I should like ...
Would you give me ...
Please may I have ...

All in all, the language area of request and permission is a hazardous one in English and translations from other languages, whether Zulu or Afrikaans or anything else, may easily miss the mark.

POSSIBILITY AND CAPABILITY

This is another area in which the modals are used. The modals involved are: can, could; to be able; may, might. You are referred to the chapter on Conditionals as back-up to some of what follows.

Possibility but uncertainty is expressed by **may/might**.

I may be able to do it.
I might be able to do it.
I may have done it - I cannot remember.
He may arrive tonight.
I may go tomorrow.
I might go tomorrow.

Might instead of **may** might possibly express a greater degree of uncertainty, but this is not definite.

I may be responsible.
I might be responsible.

It is possible to use **could** in place of **may** and **might** in the above sentences.

I could be responsible.

The implication is that it is possible but not certain.

May/might expressing possibility is found in a lot of **if** clauses to express a conditional.

I may be able to do it, if I have the time.
I might have done it, if I had had the right tools.

The second is an unfulfilled condition. Note here, that **might** is used as a past tense with **had had** in the **if** clause.

However, **may** and **might** are interchangeable in the first sentence.

I may/might be able to do it, if I have the time.

Might is not a past tense here, but expresses greater uncertainty.

Certainty is expressed in the unfulfilled past by **should/would**.

I should/would have succeeded, if I had had the right tools.

Here the tentativeness of **might** is replaced by the certainty of **should/would**, that is to say if the right tools had been available. **Should/would** has necessarily the past tense, to go with the **had had** of the **if** clause.

Note the use of modals for the future in the following sentences.

1. I shall/will succeed if I am given the right tools.
2. I should/would succeed if I were given the right tools.
3. I may/might succeed if I am given the right tools.
4. I may/might succeed if I were given the right tools.

Sentence 1 is open and positive. Sentence 2 is less certain, and the **were** in the **if** clause implies uncertainty that the right tools will be given. Sentence 3 expresses uncertainly about succeeding. Sentence 4 expresses uncertainty not only about succeeding but about whether the tools would be forthcoming (the **were given**).

Now look at the following sentences.

1. I can finish it if I am given the tools.
2. I could finish it if I were given the tools.
3. I could have finished it if I had been given the tools.
4. I will/shall be able to do it if I am given the tools.
5. I would/should be able to do it if I am given the tools.
6. I would/should have been able to do it if I had been given the tools.
7. I may/might be able to do it if I am given the tools.
8. I might have been able to do it if I had been given the tools.

Numbers 1, 2, 3 above use CAN to express ability or possibility. **Can/could** is one of the chief ways of expressing possibility, ability or capability. No 2 is slightly less certain than No 1. No 3 is obviously an impossible or closed condition with **could have** in the main sentence and **had been** in the **if** clause.

Now look at 4, 5, 6. There, **to be able** is used. **Can** and **to be able** are both important verbs for expressing ability.

I can do it.
I am able to do it.
I could do it.
I was able to do it.

There is really no difference in meaning between these sentences.

NB There is a South African tendency to use both **can** and **to be able** together.

I can be able to do it.

This is totally unnecessary and is probably the consequence of faulty teaching.

Also, if one looks at the eight sentences given above, it becomes plain that we cannot say **may/might can; may/might** is followed by **to be able:** I **may be able to**.

Also **can** cannot be preceeded by **will**. One cannot say: “I will can”, but must say “I will be able”.

Furthermore, **used to** has to be followed by **to be able**.

I used to be able to run long distances.
I could run long distances.

Number 7 and 8 of the sentences above express greater tentativeness through the use of **may/might**.

Number 3, 6 and 8 express impossible, closed conditions. The **if** clauses all have **had been given**. The main sentences use the "past" form of the modal and **have**: could have finished; would/should have been able; might have been able.

One of the contexts in which **can** and **to be able** can not be used interchangeably is shown by the following sentence.

He was able to climb halfway up, but then he got stuck.

It is doubtful if **could** could be substituted for **was able**. Another way of expressing the same idea would be to use **to manage**.

He managed to climb halfway up, but then he got stuck.

Another possible difference between **could/can** and **to be able** is shown by these two sentences.

I could put it where I liked.
I was able to put is where I liked.

The first might imply permission, the second ability.

Another context in which **to be able** is possibly to be preferred to **can/could** is in the sentence:

1. You have been able to do it all along.
2. You could have done it all along.

Sentence 1 expresses ability. Sentence 2 would indicate some form of negligence or avoidance of obligation.

A consideration of the modals used to express ability or capacity would not be complete without mention of their comic use at the climax of Gilbert and Sullivan's *The Pirates of Penzance*. WS Gilbert, who wrote the words, is one of the notable wits and humourists of English.

The heroine is called Mabel, a rather unlikely name for a heroine. The hero is Frederick. Unbeknown to Mabel, he is bound in loyalty to the Pirates, and he is "the slave of duty". He arrives with a group of comic policeman to rescue, it is thought, Mabel and her numerous sisters, and their father, Major-General Stanley, from the ferocious pirates.

Major-General: Frederick here, Oh joy, oh rapture!
Summon your men and effect the capture.
Mabel: Frederick, save us!
Frederick: Beautiful Mabel, I would if I could but I am not able.

Quite possibly, Gilbert chose the unlikely name Mabel to get his bathetic rhyme. All ends well, of course. The sergeant of police invokes the name of Queen Victoria and the pirates submit. They turn out to be young noblemen who have gone wrong and Major-General Stanley's daughters are delighted at these socially advantageous matches.

There are a few points to do with modals that need to be added.

12.4.3 Rather, as soon, just as well

I might just as well come at 11.00.

This implies that it is immaterial to the speaker.

I'd (I would) (just) as soon come at five.

The change makes no real difference. No strong preference.

I'd rather come at 11.00 (than another time).

This expresses a clear preference.

12.4.4 Habit

He would always sit in the same chair.
He always sat in the same chair.
He always used to sit in the same chair.

The following expresses a habit that is irritating:

He will whistle through his teeth as he works.

12.4.5 Volition

See the paragraph on the Zulu *cela* at the end of the previous section on polite requests.

"I want ..." can, depending on the situation, be a little blunt.

I should/would like ...
I would rather ...
I should prefer to ...

are useful phrases.

12.4.6 Laws Regulations Constitutions Procedure

Modals are involved in this area, particularly **must** and **have to**. There is, also, the specialised use of **shall** as implying an absolute obligation. **Shall**, in this use, is used with second and third person, and not just first person.

The trustees shall pay ...

Sometimes rules, regulations and matters of procedure are expressed merely by using the simple present, but this usage is open to question.

The committee sees to the day to day running ...

It might be better to use a phrase such as

It is the duty of ...
It is the function of ...
It is the responsibility of ...

Should, in this area, probably does not carry enough force or specificity.

May is used in certain contexts that imply discretion.

The Senate may, if it deems fit, ...

12.4.7 Tentativeness or politeness

There is a stack of useful turns of phrase (with thanks for Quirk's et al *Comprehensive Grammar* 4.63).

Could I see your driving licence.
I wonder if I might borrow some coffee.
Would you lend me a dollar.
I'd be grateful if somebody would hold the door open.
There could be something wrong with the switch.
Of course, I might be wrong.
Could you (please) open the door.
You could answer these letters for me.

12.4.8 Past time in reported speech (thanks to Quirk et al, *Comprehensive Grammar* 4.60)

In this situation the "past" forms of the modals have to be used as past.

You can/may do as you wish.
She said we could/might do as we wished

The King can do no wrong
In the seventeenth century it was seriously argued that the King could do no wrong.

It may rain later.
We were afraid that it might rain later.

What can be done?
Nobody knew what could be done.

The plan will succeed.
I felt sure that the plan would succeed.

Will you help me?
I wondered if he would help me.

Shall I open the window?
She asked if she should open the window.

12.4.9 Some interesting past time constructions (Quirk et al *Comprehensive Grammar* 4.61)

There were no rules: we could do just as we wanted.
In those days, a transatlantic voyage could be dangerous.
Few of the tourists could speak English.
(Note the **could** here is used for permission, possibility, ability)

Later, he would learn his error.

This use is part of a historical narrative. It **predicts** what would happen after a certain point in the past, but what happens is still in the past.

The old lady would sit continuously in front of the TV.
(habitual prediction)

We tried to borrow a boat but no one would lend us one.
(willingness)

He *would* leave the house in a muddle.
(insistence, a bad habit).

12.5 EXERCISES ON MODALS

12.5.1

Write the following in the full form

1. I oughtn't to have gone.
2. I can't go.
3. I usen't to go.
4. I needn't have gone.

Write the following using **n't**

5. I could not go.
6. I dare not go.
7. I do not have to go.

Answers

1. I ought not to have gone.
2. I cannot go.

3. I used not to go. I did not used to go.
4. I need not have gone.
5. I couldn't go.
6. I daren't go.
7. I don't have to go. I haven't to go. (Rare)

12.5.2

Turn the following into questions, then into negatives.

1. He may do it.
2. He must do it.
3. He ought to do it.
4. He should do it.

Answers

1. May he do it? He may not do it. He mayn't do it.
2. Must he do it? He must not/mustn't do it.
3. Ought he to do it? He ought not/oughtn't to do it.
4. Should he do it? He should not/shouldn't do it.

12.5.3

Put in the negative and as a question.

1. He dares to do it.
2. He has to do it.
3. He needs to do it.

Answers

1. He does not/doesn't dare do it. He dare not do it. Does he dare do it?
2. He does not/doesn't have to do it. Does he have to do it?
3. He needn't /need not do it. He does not/doesn't need to do it. Need he do it? Does he need to do it?

12.5.4

Turn these into questions.

1. He has to do it.
2. He dares to do it.
3. He needs to do it.

Answers

1. Has he to do it? (Rare) Does he have to do it?
2. Does he dare to do it? Dare he do it? (NB no **s**)
3. Does he need to do it? Need he do it? (NB no **s**)

12.5.5

Which of these are correct? Rewrite the doubtful ones.

1. You have to please go now.
2. You must do it. Circumstances require it.
3. I must go, I'm afraid.
4. You must do it. It is my instruction.
5. You had better do it, or there will be trouble.

Answers

1. Wrong. You must please go now.
2. Wrong. You have to do it. Circumstances require it.
3. Wrong. I have to go, I'm afraid.
4. Right.
5. Right.

12.5.6

1. Use a modal to express strong insistence that a tourist ("you") should visit Kirstenbosch.
2. Use a modal to express logical necessity that something is wrong.
3. Use "must" to express sarcasm or irritation about somebody's desire to smoke inside the house.

Answer

1. You (just) must go to see Kirstenbosch.
2. Something must be wrong.
3. If you must smoke, go outside.

12.5.7

What is your comment on the following uses of **must**.

1. I must run down to the shops quickly.
2. Anybody who can identify the person must phone Sergeant X at ...

Both may be South African. 1. uses **must** for weak compulsion. 2. uses **must** when **should**/or **is requested** might be better.

12.5.8

Which is the strongest of these?

1. You should do it.
2. You ought to do it.
3. You must do it.

Answer

3

12.5.9

Is the following correct?

You are to do this as soon as possible, it is very urgent.

Answer

Correct: “are to” is a strong injunction.

12.5.10

Put the following sentence into the future and into the past:

You must do this as soon as possible.

Future You will have to do this as soon as possible.
Past You had to do this as soon as possible. You should have done this as soon as possible.

12.5.11

Correct the following:

Last year I should do it.

Answer

There are two possibilities.

Last year I should have done it. (but did not)
Last year I had to do it. (may or may not have actually done it)

12.5.12

Fill in possible correct forms, using modals.

1. He left a long time ago. He ... arrived by now.
2. I ... finished by now, but got distracted.
3. I ... had the wrong data. The experiment did not work.

Answer

1. He should have arrived by now.
2. I should have been finished ...
3. I must have had ...

12.5.13

Give two possible negatives of:

You have to do it.

1. You do not have/don’t have to do it.
2. You need not do it.

12.5.14

Give two negatives of the given sentences, one of which indicates that the person actually did go.

You needed to go.
You had to go.

Answer

1. You didn’t need to go. (may not have gone)
2. You needn’t have gone. (but did)
3. You did not (didn’t) have to go.

12.5.15

Make a polite request for help in as many ways as you can.

Answer

Would you please help me?
Please help me.
May you please help me? (WRONG)
Would you be so kind as to help me?
Can you please help me? (less formal)
Could you please help me?

12.5.16

Using the verb "to have a look", request "to have a look" in various degrees of politeness and tentativeness.

Answer

Can I have a look?
Could I have a look?
May I have a look?
Might I have a look?

12.5.17

Using a modal, make a request in various degrees of politeness that somebody ("you") should "do it".

Answer

Will you do it?
Will you please do it?
Would you do it?
Would you please do it?
Wrong May you please do it.

12.5.18

Give somebody, "you", permission to go.

Answer

You may go.
You can go. (less formal)

12.5.19

Give some polite alternatives for "I want to have it."

Answer

I should like to have it.
May I have it?
I should like it?
Would you (please) give it to me?
Please may I have it.
May you please give it to me? (WRONG)

12.5.20

1. Give somebody permission to go.
2. Ask if somebody else (he) has permission to go.

Answer

1. You may go. You can go. (Less formal)
2. May he go? Can he go? (Less formal)

12.5.21

Reply in the affirmative and negative in various degrees of warmth and friendliness to the request.

May I have this?

Answer

You may
Of course you may
Certainly
Please do
I'm afraid you may not.
Sorry, you may not.
I regret you may not.
You may not.
No, you may not!
Certainly not!
No.
No fear! etc

12.5.22

Suggest the possibility of "being able to do something" or of "going tomorrow" in two degrees of uncertainty.

1. I ... be able to do it.
2. I ... be able to do it.
3. I ... go tomorrow.
4. I ... go tomorrow.

Answers

1. may
2. might
3. may
4. might

NB: "Can be able" would be WRONG.

12.5.23

Use the modals **shall / will** and **may**, **should / would** and **might**, in the main clause.

1. I ... succeed if I am given the right tools.
2. I ... succeed if I were given the right tools.

3. I ... succeed if I am given the right tools.
4. I ... succeed if I were given the right tools.
5. I ... succeeded if I had been given the right tools.
6. I ... succeeded if I had been given the right tools.

Answers

1. will/shall
2. would/should
3. may/might
4. may/might
5. would/should have succeeded
6. may/might have succeeded

12.5.24

Use **can**, **could**, **could have**

1. I ... finish it if I am given the tools.
2. I ... finish it if I were given the tools.
3. I ... finished it if I had been given the tools.

Answers

1. can
2. could
3. could have

12.5.25

Use **shall / will**, **should / would**, **should / would have**

1. I ... be able to do it, if I am given the tools.
2. I ... been able to do it, if I had been given the tools.
3. I ... be able to do it, if I were given the tools.

Answers

1. shall/will
2. should/would have been
3. should/would

12.5.26

Use **may** or **might**

1. I ... be able to do it, if I am given the tools.
2. I ... be able to do it, if I were given the tools.
3. I ... have been able to do it, if I had been given the tools.

Answers

1. may/might
2. may/might
3. might

12.5.27

Are the following right or wrong?

1. I can do it.
2. I can be able to do it.
3. I am able to do it.
4. I could do it.
5. I was able to do it.
6. I could be able to do it.

Answers

2 and 6 are wrong. You cannot have both **can** and **be able**.

12.5.28

Are the following possible?

1. I may can do it.
2. I may be able to do it.
3. I might be able to do it.
4. I might could do it.

Answer

2 and 4 are wrong. May/might can be combined with **to be able**.

12.5.29

Is the following correct?

He could climb halfway up, but then he got stuck.

Answer

No: **to be able** must be used. OR. One could say: “He managed to climb halfway up ...”

12.5.30

Are the following correct?

1. You have been able to do it all along.
2. You could have done it all along.

Answer

Both are possible. Number 2 may indicate that it has not been done.

12.5.31

Which of these expresses a clear preference?

1. I might just as well come at 11:00.
2. I’d just as soon come at 11:00.
3. I’d rather come at 11:00.

Answer

No 3

12.5.32

Which of the following expresses irritation at the habit?

1. He would always sit in the same chair.
2. He always sat in the same chair.
3. He always used to sit in the same chair.
4. He will always sit in the same chair.

Answer

4, and possibly 1.

12.5.33

Put the following into reported speech, using the past tense.

1. You can/may do as you wish.
2. The King can do no wrong.
3. It may rain later.
4. What can be done?
5. The plan will succeed.
6. Will you help me?
7. Shall I open the window?

Answers

1. She said we could/might do as we wished.
2. It was thought that the King could do no wrong.
3. We were afraid that it might rain later.
4. Nobody knew what could be done.
5. He said that the plan would succeed.
6. I asked if he would help me.
7. She asked if she should open the window.

12.5.34

Which of these shows irritation at a bad habit?

1. The old lady would sit continuously in front of the TV.
2. We tried to borrow a boat but no-one would lend us one.
3. He would leave the house in a muddle.

Answer

3

12.5.35

Which is the best in a legal document?

1. The Trustees shall pay ...
2. The Trustees should pay ...
3. The Trustees must pay ...

Answer

2. is weak. 1 and 3 are functional. **Shall** is frequently used in this way in legal documents.

12.5.36

Make this statement clear.

The committee keeps control of the finances.

Answer

It is the duty of the committee ...
The committee must ...
The committee shall ...

13

PRONOUNS

Pronouns are that group of words that stand in place of nouns:

PRO+NOUN = in place of a noun

> The girl ran into the road. She narrowly missed being hit by a car, but managed to get to the other side. Then she disappeared into the crowd, who were totally unaware of the drama taking place under their noses.

In the above passage, we start with **the girl**. When she is referred to subsequently, the pronoun **she** is used. **She** is used because it is the feminine form of the pronoun and "agrees with" or matches the feminine noun **the girl**. If we had **he** or **it**, rather than **she**, meaning would be severely disrupted. English makes gender distinction for certain nouns, and the pronouns that stand in place of these nouns therefore has to have the feminine form. Not all languages make this distinction of gender for nouns and pronouns. For instance, the indigenous African languages of South Africa have a noun class system that is not based on gender. Speakers of these languages sometimes have difficulty with the English pronouns, not using the right gender equivalent.

Then **the crowd** is mentioned. The crowd is described by means of the relative clause which starts with the **relative pronoun** who. The relative pronouns, which introduce descriptive clauses, have been discussed in the section on syntax. Then **their** is used. It is a possessive pronoun, and relates to the **crowd**. The **noses** are the noses of the crowd. The crowd is here regarded as a gathering of many individuals, and therefore as a plural concept. Hence the plural possessive pronoun **their** is used, rather than the singular form, **its**.

From the foregoing it can be seen that there has to be a match or correspondence or **agreement** between the pronoun and the noun for which it stands. The technical term for the noun for which the pronoun stands is the **antecedent**. It means the thing that goes before or in front of. **Ante** means "before". It must not be muddles with "anti", which means "against". An "anti-aircraft gun" is obviously a gun used against aeroplanes. An "antihistamine" combats histamines. In poker, if you "up the ante", you increase the stakes, the money put down **before** the hand begins. For the record, **ante** comes from Latin, **anti** from Greek. If you describe something as **antediluvian** it means that it comes from before the Flood, it is very old or from a long time back.

The antecedent, then, is the noun that precedes a pronoun. If a pronoun is used, it must be clear what it refers to. Also, the pronoun must "agree" with the noun: the pronoun must be singular or plural, and it must be masculine, feminine or neuter. (He, she, it; his, hers, its) Agreement and relation of pronoun to antecedent is one of the basic conditions for clear writing.

13.1

Here is another example of incorrect use of pronouns. It comes from a notice that was stuck up in the toilets on the U.P. campus.

> Please leave the restrooms as you would like to find it.

Where is the error (the "solecism", if you want a grand word for a language mistake)? The problem is that "restrooms" is plural, while the pronoun used in place of this antecedent is **it**, which is singular. **Them** should have been used, instead.

> Please leave the restrooms as you would like to find them.

13.1.1

The above error is an interesting one because it illustrates a problem that may bother Afrikaans-speakers. In Afrikaans usage, **dit** and perhaps **dis**, can sometimes be used for a plural concept, even though Afrikaans has **hulle** and **hul**, which are plural forms.

13.2

It follows that the various forms of the English pronoun must be known. Study the table that follows.

	People							Things	
	1st person	2nd person	3rd person masculine	3rd person feminine	Interr. pronoun	Relative pronoun	3rd person neuter	Interr. pronoun	Relative pronoun
Subjective	I we	you you	he they	she they	who	who	it they	what	which
Objective	me us	you you	him them	her them	whom	whom	it them	what	which
Possessive	my our	your your	his their	her their	whose	whose	its their	of what	of which
Reflexive	myself ourselves	yourself yourselves	himself themselves	herself themselves	- themselves	-	itself	-	-
Demonstrative	mine ours	yours yours	his theirs	hers theirs	-	-	its theirs	-	-
Indefinite	anybody, anyone, anything, nobody, nothing, everybody, some, others, one, another								
NB:	All the indefinite pronouns, except **some** and **others**, are singular								

Note also the following:

It is my book. The book is mine.
It is your book. The book is yours.
It is his book. The book is his.
It is her book. The book is hers.
It is our book. The book is ours.
It is their book. The book is theirs.

13.2.1

Notice that the **third person** has separate forms for masculine, feminine and neuter. Notice also that the **subjective** forms are used when the pronoun is the subject, and the objective forms are used when the pronoun is the object. The possessive forms are used, obviously, if ownership or possession is indicated. The objective form is used after a preposition.

He bit the dog. (He = subject)
The dog bit him. (Him = object)
Whose dog was it? (Who is the owner of the dog?)
It was his dog. (He was the owner of the dog.)
The dog belonged to him. (**him** after **to**)
She owned the cat. It was her cat. The cat loved her.

13.2.2

Whom/whom causes some trouble. **Whom** is the objective form. It should be used when it is the object of a sentence or after a preposition.

1. Who has come?
2. Who(m) did you see?
3. To whom did you give the book?
4. Who(m) did you give the book to?

There may be a slow process of language change going on in relation to **whom**. The conservative answer to the who/whom problem in the above sentences would be to use **whom** wherever it is indicated. In sentence 1. **who** is the subject so there is no problem. Perhaps sentence 3 is a clear enough case. But in 2 and 4, and especially in 4, general use often breaks the rule.

13.2.3

If you knock at a door and the person inside asks "Who is it?", do you reply "It is I" or "It's me? The first is, strictly speaking, grammatically correct, but everybody says the second. "It is I" is pedantic. However, because teachers have made a fuss about this matter, people have somehow got the idea, born on anxiety, that there is something wrong with **me**, and they use **I** (the subjective form) when **me**, (the objective form), is called for. "Between you and I" should be "between you and me".

13.2.4

There are fairly frequent errors with the following:

its	it's	
whose	who's	
his	he's	
there	there	there's

Remember that the apostrophe can do two things: it can show possession, and it can show that a letter has been left out.

That is the boy's book.
Don't do that (Do not ...)

It is a problem. The form it's = it is. Its (without the apostrophe) = of it.

It's a breeze.

A convention was established that **its**, without the apostrophe, was to be used for the possessive.

whose = of whom
Whose dog is that?
Who's = who is.
Who's going to come with me?

Very often, **who's** is used as a possessive instead of **whose**.

His is the possessive.
He's means **he is**.
It is his dog. He's a vicious beast. (That is to say, if the dog is a male).

Their and **there** are just spelling confusions.

They are their books.
There they are.

Their is a possessive pronoun: **of them**. **There** indicates a place, or the existence of something. **There's** means **there is**.

You may know the song:

> There is a tavern in the town,
> And there my dear love sits him down,
> And drinks his wine 'mid laughter free,
> And never, never thinks of me.

13.2.5

This may be a good place to say something about:

this	these
that	those

This is his book.
These are his books.
Whose book is this?
Whose books are these?
Whose book is that, over there?
Whose books are those, over there?

There are three problems with this group of pronouns.

1. The plural of **this**, **these**, is frequently mispronounced in South Africa. It should be pronounced as if it were spelt **theeze**. The vowel is long, and there is a **z** sound at the end, not an **s** sound. A common South Africa mispronunciation is to make the vowel short, and to make an **s** sound at the end. The vowel in **this** is short, and the **s** is as in **s**illy, or **s**ick (which also have **short** vowels). The result is, that **this** and **these** are pronounced as if they are pretty much the same. What then happens is that people forget that there is a plural of **this**, **these** (theeze). What then happens is that people also start writing **this** when **these** is needed.
2. People just do not (don't) seem to know that **that** has a plural, **those**. Again, **those** has a **z** sound.
3. **This** can be used to refer to a specific item.

   This is precisely what I want!

It can also, in the presentation of an argument, be used to refer to what has been discussed previously.

> All this means, then, that ...

When **this** is used to refer broadly to what has been said before, it must be clear what the **this** refers to. Watch out for this use of **this**, and check that the reference is indeed clear.

Beware of elementary errors such as:

> This things is ...

Things is plural. The plural form **these** should be used, and the verb should be plural - **are**.

13.3

As has been stated earlier in this section, clarity of argument depends, among other things, on a clear relationship between pronoun and antecedent. Here is a bit of weak student writing in which the problem is reference of pronoun. The student is discussing a scene in a novel, **Hard Times**, by Charles Dickens. Bounderby is a factory owner, Stephen is a "hand" (i.e. an industrial worker) in one of his factories. Bounderby has just fired Stephen.

> Stephen, stunned, said that he could not find work elsewhere. Bounderby's power and his hold in Coketown is shown when Stephen said that he could not find work elsewhere they were completely dependent on him.

Where does the **they** come from, suddenly? What is its antecedent? And what is the antecedent of **him**, is it Bounderby or Stephen? **They**, in fact, refer to all the workers of Coketown. They student who wrote this passage wanted to say that the workers as a group were totally dependent on Bounderby for employment, hence Stephen was also dependent on Bounderby and would not be able to get work elsewhere. **Him** is meant to refer to Bounderby, but could just as easily refer to Stephen. As you can see, the correction of these difficulties of reference of pronoun to antecedent in fact requires quite extensive rewriting.

Incidentally, the above piece of student writing exhibits another error that has nothing to do with pronoun and antecedent. It is an error of tense that was discussed in the section of tenses. (See 9.5.3).

When one discusses a literary work, and especially if one is commenting on a particular scene or passage, one should use the Simple Present Tense. Just a reminder! The student has here made the common error of using the Past Tense.

Here is another example of faulty pronoun agreement.

> Mr Bounderby has no idea of the bad circumstances with which the working class has to be content. He is not prepared to improve it.

Obviously, the **it** at the end should be **them** to agree in number (singular or plural) with **circumstances**.

Here is a piece of student writing on a scene from another book, **The Europeans**, by Henry James. The father, Mr Wentworth, is a rather strict and severe man, the youngest daughter, Gertrude a shade rebellious. They are an American family in Massachusetts, the area that was originally settled by the Puritans. Now they are being visited by some cousins from a branch of the family that left America and went to settle in Europe. These cousins bring with them a culture that Mr Wentworth has difficulty in assessing. This is what the student writes.

> Because Gertrude is considered difficult, restless and unsettled, her father is trying to protect her. He warns his family against 'peculiar influences'. 'I don't say they are bad". Although he denies it, the fact that he mentions it shows that he had considered it.

The problem with the passage is the frequent use of **it** in the last sentence, and the uncertainty as to what the various **its** refer to: what are the antecedents? The passage really needs quite extensive rewriting. Perhaps the **its** should not be used at all. This student tried to take too many short cuts.

> Although he denies that the influence of the cousins from Europe is bad, the fact that he talks of 'peculiar influence' shows that he has considered this possibility.

13.4

Always be careful of the little word <u>it</u>. It is so easy to use as an escape from full and clear expression. Also, always check whether the singular <u>it</u> or the plural <u>they/them</u> is required. Perhaps, also, in referring back to something (provided the reference is clear) <u>this</u> might be more useful than <u>it</u>. This is not to suggest that <u>it</u> should be avoided, just that it should clearly relate to an antecedent and that it should not be used, as above, as an ill-advised short cut. As has been said earlier, clear relation of pronoun to antecedent is one of the necessities for coherent writing.

13.5 THE FUSED PARTICIPLE

There is a rather strange structure that involves the use of the possessive form of the pronoun. In English, the participle (e.g. swimming) can function as a noun.

Swimming keeps me fit.
Jogging is a popular sport.
Studying requires discipline

One can, therefore, say

My swimming keeps me fit.
I enjoy swimming (my swimming).
Your studying requires discipline.
Your going makes me sad.

You can say

By swimming he regained his health.
The examining (examination) of student by an external examiner is required by regulation.

Could we then say:

His staying caused us inconvenience?

The general tendency would be to write or say:

Him staying caused us inconvenience.

Here are some other examples.

My doing my work must not be prevented.
You may rely on my doing all I can.
You may object to his doing so, but his actions are justified.

Sometimes an apostrophe is needed.

The necessity for students' being taught communication is neglected.
Charitable people's providing of meals for the aged and destitute is admirable.

Traditional grammars require the possessive form in such cases. Popular usage is, however, uncertain.

You may rely on me doing all I can.
You may object to him doing so, but his actions are justified.

Traditional grammars would want **my** and **his**.

The use of the objective form, (**me**, **him**) in the above examples, rather than the traditional (and perhaps more logical) possessive form (**my**, **his**) has been called by some grammarians the *Fused Participle.*

Do the following examples.

I do not like (you/your) staying up late.
His supporters are overjoyed at (him/his) winning the election.
There is no excuse for (him/his) taking your car without permission.

13.6

In the exercises that follow consider what form of the pronoun is needed. Consult the chart that has been given earlier.

1. Must the pronoun be singular or plural?
2. Must it be masculine, feminine or neuter?
3. Is the subjective or objective form needed?
4. Is the possessive form needed?

Remember that the indefinite pronouns such as **everybody**, **anybody**, are usually singular.

Watch out for the possibility of the Fused Participle.

Remember that in the case of **who/whom** there can be uncertainty, and that popular usage may not be the same as that recommended by traditional grammars. The same applies to the Fused Participle.

13.7 EXERCISES

13.7.1 Exercise A: Fill in the pronouns

1. The man ran into the road. _1._ narrowly missed being hit by a car, but managed to get to the other side. Then _2._ disappeared into the crowd, _3._ were totally unaware of the drama taking place under _4._ noses.

2. Please leave the restrooms as you would like to find .....

3. **Correct what is needed**

3.1 Whose coming with me?

3.2 It's a breeze.

3.3 It's he's book.

3.4 He came to visit you and I.

3.5 To who did you give the book?

3.6 Those are there books.

3.7 This things is a nuisance.

4. **Correct what needs correcting. Rewrite, if necessary.**

Bounderby is the owner of the factories in Coketown. The workers fear him. Stephen, a model worker, is unjustly fired. They are completely dependent on him. Mr Bounderby has no idea of the bad circumstances with which the working class has to be content. He is not prepared to improve it.

13.7.1 Answers to Exercises A

1.1 He

1.2 he

1.3 who

1.4 their

2. them (not **it**)

3.1 Who's (Who is)

3.2 It's a breeze.

3.3 It's his book.

3.4 ... you and me.

3.5 To whom (if you want to be traditionally correct)

3.6 ... their books.

3.7 These things are ...

4. ... the workers are completely dependent on Mr Bounderby ... He is not prepared to improve these circumstances.

Reasons
Stephen is the last person mentioned.

They relates to the workers, not to Stephen, nor to Bounderby. **Him** should relate to Bounderby but Stephen is the last person to be mentioned - therefore state whom is meant, don't use a pronoun.

Circumstances is plural, therefore the pronoun must be the plural **them**, not **it**. However, is the antecedent **circumstances** or **the working class**? Repeating the noun makes things clearer.

13.7.2 Exercise B: Choose the correct form from those in brackets

1. The girls (who/whom) I saw you with are friends of (me/mine/my).
2. (Whom/who) do you think should be punished?
3. The article mentions only two players, (he/him) and (I/me).
4. You and (he/him) must decide (who's/whose) turn it is to wash the dishes.
5. His son, (who/whom) all the boys like, is a prefect.
6. No one was quite sure for (who/whom) the warning was intended.
7. The band is now playing the tune (it/they) (has/have) practised all week.
8. I am sure it was not (she/her) (who/whom) you saw.
9. (He/him) and (I/me) can manage without (she/her) interfering.
10. We dislike people (who/whom) we think know us too well.
11. Jane is the girl (who/whom) we think knows us too well.
12. We should not mock those (who/whom) we know can do no better.
13. Both of (they/them), Smith and Magadi, were expelled.
14. It was (I/me) who was to blame.
15. There is no excuse for (him/his/he) taking your car without your permission.
16. Let you and (I/me) be friends!
17. Between you and (I/me), I do not trust him.
18. It was Sophie (who/whom), I suppose, won the prize.
19. It was (he/him) we saw in town yesterday.
20. Each boy had (his/their) own task.
21. Every man is expected to do (his/their) duty.
22. Neither of the trackers saw (each other/the other).
23. They blame Mohamed and (she/her) for what has happened.
24. (Anyone/any one) could make a mistake of this nature!
25. (Anyone/any one) of these tools is suitable.
26. She is a loyal friend on (who/whom) I can depend at all times.
27. To (who/whom) should this be given.
28. (Who/whom) should I give this to.

13.7.3 Answers to exercise B

1. who ... mine
2. Who
3. him ... me
4. he ... whose
5. whom
6. for whom
7. it ... has OR they ... have
   It all depends on whether the **band** is regarded as a singular entity or as a group of a number of people.
8. her ... whom
9. He and I ... her
10. who
11. who
12. who
13. them
14. I (traditionally correct)
15. his taking (traditionally correct)
16. me (strictly, I)
17. me
18. who
19. he
20. his
21. his
22. the other
23. her
24. Anyone
25. Any one
26. whom
27. to whom
28. Who (usually, but not traditionally correct)

13.7.4 Exercise C: Fill in the missing pronouns

1. ... of these poems have you read?
2. You have a lot of fruit. Please give me ...
3. I have mislaid my tools. Have you ... to lend me?
4. The man ... you wish to see has just left.
5. They should do the work ... and not depend on other to help them.
6. My parents disapproved of ... leaving home because I was young and inexperienced.
7. The boy with ... I was travelling was my nephew.
8. Mr Brown, ... son is in my class, is our neighbour.
9. Here are two shawls. Choose ... you like.

10. The house, ... was gutted by fire, has been demolished.
11. He is a famous artist, about ... many books have been written.
12. Give this to ... you please.
13. There are two books on the table. Please place ... on the shelf.
14. ... are the disadvantages of this system?
15. The child has fallen and hurt ...
16. ... do you think will win the race?
17. You should study during the day. I do not like ... staying up so late.
18. Cats, ... are nocturnal animals, often rove about at night.
19. You children should tackle the work ...! Do not ask your parents to solve ... problems.
20. His supporters are overjoyed at ... winning the election.

13.7.5 Answers to Exercise C

1. which
2. some
3. any
4. whom (traditionally correct)
5. themselves
6. my (traditionally correct)
7. whom
8. whose
9. which one or which
10. which
11. whom
12. whom
13. them
14. what
15. itself/herself/himself
16. who
17. your (traditionally correct)
18. which
19. themselves ... your
20. his (traditionally correct)

14

COUNTABLE AND UNCOUNTABLE NOUNS

(AND SOME PROBLEMS WITH ARTICLES)

14.1

Suitcase is a "countable" noun. You can talk of **a suitcase**, **the suitcase**, and of the noun in the plural - **suitcases** and **the suitcases**. A countable noun, therefore, can be counted. It has a plural form, and it can take the full range of **articles**, (**a/an** the **indefinite article**, used only for singular nouns, and **the**, the **definite article**, used for both singular and plural nouns).

Luggage is an "uncountable" noun. You cannot talk of "a luggage" and you cannot make it plural - "luggages". It can take **the**, the definite article - "the luggage has been lost". **Baggage** works in the same way. **Luggage** or **baggage** may consist of many suitcases, but these uncountable nouns do not take a plural, or the indefinite article.

14.1.1

Some problems with countable and uncountable nouns occur also with **many, few, much** and **little**. You can have **many** or **few** suitcases but **much** or **little** luggage or baggage. **A lot of** can, however, be used with both countable and uncountable nouns - a lot of suitcase, a lot of luggage. You cannot have **many** or **few** luggage or baggage, and you cannot have **much** or **little** suitcase or suitcases.

14.1.2

If you look up a noun in a dictionary, the dictionary will quite possibly tell you whether the noun is countable or uncountable. All over the world, learners of English have trouble with countable and uncountable nouns.

14.1.3

There are two questions, then.

1. Does a noun take a plural?
2. Can the noun be preceeded by **a/an**, the indefinite articles, which implies a **single object**. The matter of the **articles,** which give a lot of problems to those for whom English is not the mother tongue (and to some mother tongue speakers, too), will be dealt with more fully in a separate section. However, the matter of articles and uncountable nouns will be partially dealt with in this section.

14.1.4

Here is alist of some of the uncountable nouns.

accommodation	grass	permission	traffic
advice	information	poetry	travel
baggage	knowledge	progress	work
bread	lighting	publicity	understanding
cheese	luck	research	health
chewing gum	luggage	rubbish	weather
equipment	money	spaghetti	work
furniture	news	thunder	

Watch out, in particular, for

advice
information
knowledge

Many substances or things that exist in mass are uncountable:

spaghetti, rice, macaroni, sugar, salt, wheat, flour, cement, paper, glass, petrol, wood, tobacco.

On the other hand, we can put a plural on beans, peas, grapes, lentils.

News is uncountable. **Fact/facts** is countable.

News looks like a plural, but is not.

What is the news?
The news is that ...

You cannot talk of **a news**. You can talk of **a bit of news** or **a piece of news**, but then the **a**, the indefinite article, goes before **bit** and **piece**. You can have **a fact**, and **facts**. You can have **much news** or **little news**, but **many facts** or **few facts**. You can have **the facts**.

14.1.5

One can never touch the English language without finding exceptions and variations to rules. Take **knowledge**.

He has specialized knowledge which few others have.
He has much knowledge of obscure subjects.

But, look at the following: the **a**, the indefinite article, is used:

A knowledge of mathematics is needed for engineering.
He has a great knowledge of medieval manuscripts.

Alexander Pope wrote:

A little knowledge is a dangerous thing,
Drink deep, or taste not the Pierian spring,
Where shallow draughts intoxicate the brain
And drinking rather sobers us again!

Sometimes the pattern can change if the word changes its meaning. A little time ago we considered **baggage** and **luggage**. If you talk of **a baggage** you are talking of something totally different: **a baggage** is a jocular and disrespectful term for a pert young woman, perhaps of dubious moral probity. Flanders and Swan, the British comedians of a generation ago who did the show **At the Drop of a Hat**, had a joke punning on the two meanings of **baggage**: trying to smuggle in 125 pounds of excess baggage. (I wonder if she suffocated in the suitcase?)

Shakespeare wrote that:

"The quality of mercy is not strained".

But one can use the phrase **a mercy**.

It is a mercy that he arrived late,
and so missed the trouble.

Macbeth talks of:

"sleep that knits up the ravelled sleeve of care".

However, one can ask: “Did you have a good sleep”.

It is, in fact, quite possible, with a slight shift of meaning, for many uncountable nouns to be used with **a/an** or to take a plural.

Glass breaks easily.
The glass in the window shattered.
A glass of water.
He drank two glasses of water.
The glasses are in the cupboard.
I can’t find my glasses.

The statue is carved from stone.
A rolling stone gathers no moss.
The field is full of stones.

Beer is a healthy drink.
Have a beer.
Five beers please, barman.

Whiskey, honey and oatmeal are needed for athol brose.
Have a whiskey.
I want a bottle of whiskey.

Here is another example.

Education is the key to the nation’s progress.
Education is a national priority.
An education is always desirable.
A good education is an advantage.

14.1.6

A little earlier you were warned about **advice** and **information**. In South African usage one not infrequently is confronted with:

He gave me a good advice.
He gave me some good advices.
He gave me some informations.

Sometimes you will come across:

He gave me some few advices.

It must be stressed that one is likely to come across these in non-mother-tongue English world wide. There are, obviously, two errors involved: firstly the use of a plural form for a noun that is not generally used in the plural; secondly, the use of the indefinite article **a** for nouns that do not constitute single objects.

The **some few** is a conflation of **some** and **a few**: either would be adequate by itself. He gave me some advice/a little advice. You cannot have **few advice**. But you can have: “He gave me a few tips”. However, even the word **advices** has occurred in one famous literary context, in Robert Burns’s celebrated comic poem **Tam O’Shanter**. The poet, at one stage, turns with mock gravity to the respectable wives and says:

Ah gentle dames! It gars me greet (makes me weep)
To think how many counsels sweet
How many, lengthened, sage advices
The husband frae the wife despises.

Perhaps he just needed the plural **advices** to rhyme with **despises**. Note also **counsels**, not usually used as a plural.

14.1.7

To sum up, then. Nouns are countable or uncountable (mass, abstract, substance). The boundaries can sometimes, alas, be a little vague. Uncountable nouns do not usually appear in the plural, and do not usually take **a/an**, the indefinite article. Depending on circumstances, **the** can be used in front of uncountable nouns.

The complex use of the articles, (**the, a/an**) will be dealt with in the next section. Some more will sometimes have to be said about countable and uncountable nouns in that section.

14.1.8

Note the following patterns. Note those that are wrong.

Have you any information?
Have you some information?
Have you a lot of information?
Have you a little information?
Have you much information?
Have you no information?
How much information have you?
Have you many information? WRONG
Have you a few information? WRONG
Have you any informations? WRONG
Have you got the information?
Have you got an information? WRONG
Have you enough information?
Do you need more information?
He has the most information about the subject.
Have you any other information?
This information is helpful.
Whose information is this? Who gave it to you?
My information conflicts with yours.
Have you informations? WRONG

14.1.9

Which are right and which wrong? Correct the incorrect examples.

1. I have many luggages.
2. I have many suitcases.
3. I have much luggage.
4. I have few luggage.
5. I have a suitcase.
6. I have a luggage.
7. I have little luggage.
8. I have a lot of luggage.
9. I have a lot of suitcase.

10. The luggage is few.
11. Have you any accommodations?
12. He gave me a good advice.
13. He gave me many good advices.
14. I have much news to tell.
15. I have a few facts to state.
16. He has many knowledges.
17. A knowledge of mathematics is necessary for engineering.
18. A little knowledge is a dangerous thing.
19. The quality of mercy is not strained.
20. It is a mercy that it was all over so quickly.
21. He gave me some informations.
22. He gave me some few advices.
23. He gave me a few tips.
24. He has few informations.
25. Have you got any accommodations?
26. The lodge offers luxury accommodation.

14.1.10

1. Wrong. I have a lot of /much luggage.
2. Right.
3. Right.
4. Wrong. I have a little/some luggage.
5. Right.
6. Wrong. I have some luggage.
7. Right.
8. Right.
9. Right.
10. Wrong. There is only a little luggage.
11. Wrong. Have you any accommodation?
12. Wrong. He gave me good advice.
13. Wrong. He gave me much/a lot of good advice.
14. Right.
15. Right..
16. Wrong. He has much knowledge. (a deep knowledge)
17. Right.
18. Right.
19. Right.
20. Right.
21. Wrong. He gave me some information.
22. Wrong. He gave me some advice/a little advice.

23. Right.
24. Wrong. He has a little information. He has not much information.
25. Wrong. Have you got any accommodation.
26. Wrong. The lodge offers luxury accommodation.

15
ARTICLES

15.1

The definite article : the
The indefinite article : a, an

The area of the articles is one that gives a lot of trouble to learners of English throughout the world. Russian has no equivalent, Chinese has an equivalent that is very different, the indigenous African languages of South Africa have no equivalent. Norwegian puts **the** after the noun, not before it, as in English: boken = the book, knivet = the knife. In Norwegian one has to remember whether to put **et** or **en** before or after the noun. In French one has to remember whether it is **le** or **la** or **un** or **une**. In German one wrestles with **die der das**. Fortunately at least, with the English articles one does not have to wrestle with grammatical gender, and this is a great simplification in comparison to many languages. This was not always so; in Old English (Anglo-Saxon) there was an incredibly complex declension of **the**.

In general, the Western European languages have some equivalent to the English article. Afrikaans is fairly close, although there are some points of difference that result in characteristic mistakes. In an institution such as the University of Pretoria, with students drawn from various sources locally and abroad, and a teaching staff that are largely not English first language users (although generally very competent) problems with the articles are likely to be encountered at some time or other. Errors in articles can result in scrambled messages.

NB. In pronunciation, except for special situations, the articles are <u>unstressed</u>. See the section on pronunciation, and 15.4.2 and 15.8.

15.2

It is worth mentioning that the articles occur, when they do occur, at the beginning of a noun phrase.

Dog
A dog
A bad dog
A very bad dog

The noise came closer.
The terrifying noise came closer.
The strangely terrifying noise came closer.
The distinctive noise of a Volkswagen came closer.

15.3

Some grammar books say that defects in the use of articles do not really obstruct meaning. However, articles do affect meaning and messages can become obscure or baffling.

1. A dog is a good companion.
2. Dogs are good companions.
3. The dog is a good companion (but not the cat).
4. The dogs are good companions.
5. The dog is a four-footed beast.

Sentence one gives a general truth. Sentence two gives a general truth, making more or less the same statements as sentence 1. Sentence 3 refers to a specific dog. Sentence 4 refers to a specific group of dogs. No 5 is scientific: the dog indicates a species. The implications and situation behind each sentence are different and the clue is largely in the use of the articles.

15.4

The terms **indefinite** and **definite** article broadly indicate the uses of **a/an** and **the**. **The**, the definite article, is used when the noun indicated or object that the noun points to is known and has already been defined. But this is far from being the end of things.

15.4.1

A/an = one. It cannot be used for plural nouns. It can also not usually be used for uncountable nouns. **Some** and **any** sometimes act as plurals for **a/an**.

A dog has come into the garden.
Some dogs have come into the garden.

We do not know the dog, or where it comes from. The dog has not been the subject of earlier conversation.

The dog that came in a few minutes ago has now left.

We know which dog is being referred to.

We cannot talk of **a honey**, meaning the stuff that comes in jars from beehives. **Honey** is uncountable, a substance, like sugar, petrol, metal, oatmeal. We can say: "Pass the honey, please." The jar is on the table. With an adjustment of meaning we can, however, tell a pretty girl: "You're a honey." The uncountable noun is here treated as countable.

We can say: "I want (should like) some honey for my bread. Have you any honey?" Reply: "there is some honey in the cupboard." Very often, **any** is used in negative statements. "I haven't got any honey, I'm afraid." "There isn't any honey, I'm afraid."

We can ask for "help", not "a help". But we can tell somebody that s/he has been "a great help". We can have "a good sleep".

We talk of the abstract, uncountable noun "knowledge" without **a/an**. "Knowledge is necessary." "We need adequate knowledge." But we can also say: "A knowledge of mathematics is needed for engineering." And if the situation is yet more specific, we can say: "He has the necessary knowledge." Alexander Pope wrote:

A little knowledge is a dangerous thing.

We can go to the supermarket to buy **shampoo**. But we ask the assistant (if we are lucky enough to find one) for "a shampoo for dry hair". We buy **coffee** from the supermarket (again, if we are lucky) but we go next door to the café and order "Three coffees please." **In other words, given the circumstances, uncountable nouns can become countable. This changes the pattern of articles.**

When we refer to somebody's profession we usually use **a/an**.

He is a doctor.
She is an engineer.
He is an architect.

You ask: "Have you got a pen." You tell somebody: "Don't go out without a coat." We talk of "half a kilo", or "half a pound". We might reply: "I haven't got a pen."

15.4.2

When do we use **a** and when **an**? It puzzles a lot of people. **An** is used before a vowel **sound**. The sound is important, not the letter. Don't be confused by spelling.

An apple
An hour
An honest man
An MP
A/an hotel
A/an historian
A university
A union
A united effort
A useless gadget
A hat
A horrible experience
A member of parliament

In **an hour** and **an honest man** the **h** is not pronounced.

However, at a moment of great significance, we say "the hour has come".

Mark Anthony, in his celebrated speech over the body of the assassinated Caesar, repeats with increasing sarcasm:

For Brutus is an honourable man.

The first sound in MP is a vowel sound, even if the writing is an **M**. **Hotel** and **historian** are interesting cases. Today we should probably use **a** and pronounce the **h**, but fifty years ago it was still educated practice to drop the **h**, so the first sound would be a vowel. **U**niversity and **union** actually have a sound that is not a vowel at the beginning, even if the first **spelling letter** is a **u**. Imagine that they are spelt with a **y** at the beginning as in **young**, **yeti** or **yobbo**. (If you want the full explanation, the sound represented **in spelling** by **y** is actually what is called a **semi-vowel**, for which the **phonetic symbol**, a little confusingly, is [j]. It starts as a consonant and glides rapidly to a vowel position.)

The pronunciation of **a** in **a/an** calls for a little comment. It is frequently mispronounced as the sound in **play**. In fact, it should be a neutral, vague **uh**. This is because it is usually an unstressed word, and so the vowel is the so-called **neutral vowel**. This matter of **vowel reduction** to the neutral vowel in unstressed syllables or words will be gone into more fully in a later section. **A** is pronounced like **play** only on very rare occasion when stress is given to the **a**. Take the sentence:

This is a reason.

Said with no stress on **a**, this is a mere statement of fact. Said with stress on **a**, so that the vowel becomes the sound in **play**, the innuendo is that the reason is not very satisfactory, and that, perhaps, there might be other reasons, as well.

15.5

Now for **the**, the **definite article**.

15.5.1

It can be used with plural nouns and singular nouns. **A/an** can be used only with singular nouns.

The animals are coming,
Two by two,

The elephant and
The kangaroo

The animals are coming,
Four by four,
The old hippopotamus
Stuck in the door. etc.

15.5.2

When we use **the**, the implication is that the noun is known and is an item of common understanding among those involved.

A stray cat is in the garden.

We do not know the cat.

Little Johnny, stop torturing the cat.

The cat is obviously the domestic pet - the whole family understands the frame of reference.

Cats are nice pets.

Notice that there is neither **a** nor **the** before **cats**. The implication is completely general.

The cat needs feeding.

We know which cat it is - it usually makes for the kitchen at five in the afternoon.

The cats need feeding.

Again, we know these cats.

A man and a woman entered the room. The woman sat on the chair and the man stood at the window, looking out.

At first, the man and woman are unspecified. However, once we know who are being referred to, we use **the** and not **a**.

We were expecting a man to arrive. However, when a man walked in through the door, we realised that he could not be the man we were expecting.

The is used for the man already referred to, who has now become specific as being the man who is expected, while an unspecified, new man walks in.

15.5.3

The, unlike a/an, can be used in front of uncountable nouns.

Pass the salt, please.
Where is the butter?
The advice given was sound.
The knowledge gained was useful.
The experience gained was invaluable.
The accommodation was excellent.
The luggage was eventually found.

15.6

Experience is an interesting word to play around with, as it oscillates between countable and uncountable.

1. Experience is necessary for this job.
2. It was an unpleasant experience.
3. The experience gained was invaluable.
4. He had many strange experiences.

Sentence 1 uses **experience** as a general, abstract noun, so there is no article. Sentence 2 uses **experience** as a countable noun, so a/an can be used. The same applies to sentence 4: countable nouns can be used in the plural, uncountable not. In sentence 3 the noun **experience** is uncountable: it can therefore take **the** in front of it, but could not take **a/an**.

15.7

Many nouns, when used to imply generality, do not have **the** in front.

Books are a problem. They need space.
The book was a most important invention.
Cats are nice pets.
The cat, as a species, is very varied.
Salt gives taste to food.
Pass the salt, please.
Life is a breeze.
The life of an academic is toilsome.
Let there be light.
Light is needed for photosynthesis.

15.7.1

The is used before classes of people.

The poor are always with us.
He hath put down the mighty from their seat
And hath exalted the humble and the meek.
He hath filled the hungry with good things,
And the rich he hath sent empty away. (The magnificent)
The Wretched of the Earth: Franz Fanon
None but the brave deserve the fair.

15.7.2

The following bit of student humour will help to reinforce certain "scientific", classificatory uses of **the**.

Chorus Oh, we're off to see the Wild West Show,
The elephant and the kangaroo-oo-oo–oo.
Never mind the weather,
As long as we're together,
We're off to see the Wild West Show

Ringmaster: Now here, ladies and gentlemen,
we have the Ooh-Aah Bird.

Chorus: The Ooh-Aah Bird?

Ringmaster: Yes, the Ooh-Aah Bird!
The Ooh-Aah Bird lives at the
South Pole and lays square eggs.

You can all guess the rest.

15.7.3

English tends not to use **the** in front of abstract nouns: life, science, nature, sport, education, death, beauty.

South Africans are keen followers of sport.
"Nature" means something different in Wordsworth from what it does in Shakespeare.
Life is a walking shadow,
A poor player that struts and frets
His hour upon the stage, and
Then is heard no more (*Macbeth*)

But: If bread is the staff of life, then the life of the staff is one, long loaf.
Science has advanced greatly in this century.

Afrikaans, like German, Norwegian and French, would tend to put the definite article in front of these words: die natuur etc.

15.7.4

English does not usually put **the** or **a** in front of abstract nouns.

Beauty is truth, truth beauty (Keats)
Men fear death as children fear to go in the dark. (Bacon)
Beauty is in the eye of the beholder.

However, on particular occasions, an article is possible.

A terrible beauty is born. (Yeats: *Easter 1916*)
The beauty of the scene was indescribable.

15.7.5

Most, does not usually have **the** in front of it.

Most birds can fly.

Afrikaans, and certain other European languages, need the definite article in front: die mees ...

However, **the** is placed in front of most in the construction:

The most that we can expect is a moderate improvement.

15.7.6

We talk of 'the doctor" when we say "I am going to the doctor". This implies the usual doctor one goes to, an identified doctor. However, in an emergency we would send out the message: "Is there a doctor in the house?"

15.7.7

Gaol (jail) presents some instructive patterns.

He spent three years in gaol.
The judge sent him to gaol.

If you land on the wrong square in the game of Monopoly, you will be told:

"Go to gaol."

If you say to somebody, "I will meet you in gaol", the implication is that you will both be serving sentences. However, if you say "I will meet you in/at **the** gaol", then the **the** indicates a particular building. **College, hospital, university, church** follow similar patterns.

We attend church. We are church-goers.
We attend the church just down the road.

Pull out the stopper, lets have a whopper.
But get me to the church on time. (Alfred Doolittle)

15.7.8

Some illnesses can take **the**.

I have flu / the flu.
I have measles / the measles.
I have the plague.
I hate him like the plague.

But the dying Mercutio says:

A plague on both your houses. (*Romeo and Juliet*)

However, we say:

I have a cold
I have a headache
I have a thrombosis

We say:

I have appendicitis
I have diabetes

Toothache is very variable. We say:

I have toothache
I have the toothache (rare)

In the USA, apparently, one says: "I have a toothache".

15.7.9

Musical instruments usually take **the**.

She plays the violin, the piano, the trombone, etc.

But we take **violin lessons**.

15.7.10

Titles are often accompanied by **the**: the President, Prime Minister, the Queen, the Ayatollah. We say, however, that somebody is elected President, Prime Minister. The incumbent of an Anglican living used to be called **the vicar**. In referring to them by name, we say President Mbeki, Queen Elizabeth, President Bush, Chairman Mao. A letter to a member of the House of Lords in Britain should be addressed to: The Lord .... And there is that character in a nonsense story, "the grand Panjandrum himself, with the button on the top". Certain single malt Scotch Whiskeys have names preceded by **The**,

The McCallum, The Glenlivet: the appendage is most significant and not to be ignored.

15.7.11

We talk over **the telephone**, somebody is **on the line** and must be spoken to immediately. However, when we move into a new house, we often have to wait for **a telephone**. On the other hand, we sit and wait for **the telephone** to ring.

15.7.12

We refer to **the oldest** and **the youngest**. He is **the best**. In other words, superlatives usually take **the**. Of course, it does not quite work with **the mostest**.

15.7.13

Place names present some complexity.

the Altantic
the Pacific

the Himalayas
the West Indies
the Rhine
the Thames
the Congo
the Amazon
the Sahara
the Netherlands (but Holland)
the People's Republic of China
the United States
the United Kingdom (but Great Britain)
the British Museum
the Louvre
the National Gallery
the Tate
the Ritz
the Grand Hotel
the Great Northern

Names of ships, boats and aeroplanes very often have **the**:

The Golden Hind
The Victory
The Nan Shan
The Cutty Sark
The Titanic
The Long Serpent
The Nellie

15.7.14

We say that we like to holiday in **the mountains** or by **the sea**, that we prefer **the country** to **the town**. We talk of **the weather**. However, we say: He went to sea at fourteen", meaning that the lad became a sailor.

15.7.15

We refer to **the sun** and **the moon** and **the stars**. Constellations often have **the**: the Southern Cross, the Pleiades, the Great Plough, the Scorpion (but Scorpio). Orion's Belt is without **the**. Individual stars are usually without **the**: Neptune, Saturn. But there is the North Star.

15.7.16

We refer to a celebrity as **the** when we want certainty. "My name is Bond, James Bond." "Not **the** James Bond?" The Welsh have a nice habit of distinguishing people by their occupations, so you have "Jones the bread" who delivers the bread, as distinguished from "Jones the milk".

15.8

Pronunciation of **the** (like a/an) can cause trouble. **The** can be pronounced either "thuh" or "thee". "Thuh", is mostly used. "Thee" is used before vowel sounds (don't be confused by the spelling) and for unusual stress e.g. **the** James Bond.

the hour (thee)	the MP (thee)
the honest answer (thee)	the university (thuh)
the apple (thee)	the cat (thuh)

15.9 EXERCISE ONE

What article would you put in front of the following noun phrases? Do you always need an article? **Some** and **any** can sometimes be used.

1. She is ..... engineer.
2. He is ..... doctor.
3. Is there ..... doctor in the house?
4. I must go to ..... doctor.
5. Have you got ..... pen?
6. Will you go ..... university when you leave school?
7. Is there ..... university in this town?
8. I am going to ..... university this morning.
9. The job will take you ..... hour.
10. I ..... help.
11. You have been ..... great help.
12. I need ..... shampoo.
13. I need ..... shampoo for dry hair.
14. ..... cat is in the garden.
15. Johnny, stop tormenting ..... cat.
16. ..... cat needs feeding.
17. He is ..... man we were discussing.
18. We must find ..... man to do this job.
19. Pass ..... salt, please.
20. ..... cats need feeding.
21. ..... knowledge gained was useful.
22. ..... cat, as a species, is very variable.
23. I have ..... cold.
24. He steered by ..... North Star.
25. If bread is ..... staff of life, then ..... life of ..... staff is one long loaf.

15.9.1 Exercise One: Answers

1. She is an engineer.
2. He is a doctor.
3. Is there a doctor in the house?
4. I must go to the doctor.
5. Have you got a pen?
6. Will you go to university when you leave school?
7. Is there a university in this town?
8. I am going to the university this morning.
9. The job will take you an hour.
10. I need help.
11. You have been a great help.

12. I need (some) shampoo.
13. I need a shampoo for dry hair.
14. A cat is in the garden.
15. Johnny, stop tormenting the cat.
16. The cat needs feeding.
17. He is the man we were discussing.
18. We must find a man to do this job.
19. Pass the salt, please.
20. The cats need feeding.
21. The knowledge gained was useful.
22. The cat, as a species, is very variable.
23. I have a cold.
24. He steered by the North Star.
25. If bread is the staff of life, then the life of the staff is one long loaf.

15.10 EXERCISE TWO

Are these right or wrong? Correct those that are wrong.

1. The life is a breeze.
2. The salt gives taste to food.
3. Dogs make good pets.
4. The life of an academic is toilsome.
5. An experience gained was invaluable.
6. It was a unpleasant experience.
7. A book was a most important invention.
8. The light is needed for photosynthesis.
9. Man and women entered the room. Woman sat on chair and man stood at window looking out.
10. Animals are coming
    Two by two
    Elephant and
    Kangaroo
11. A knowledge is necessary.
12. The little knowledge is a dangerous thing.
13. The most birds can fly.
14. Most that we can expect is a modest improvement.
15. The judge sent him to the gaol.
16. I am going to doctor.
17. Have you got pen?
18. I play violin.
19. I am taking the violin lessons.
20. She is talking on telephone.
21. We need new telephone.
22. I prefer country to town.

23. I went to an university.
24. He is oldest.
25. He is a lover of the nature.

15.10. 1 Exercise Two: Answers

1. Wrong. Life is a breeze.
2. Wrong. Salt gives taste to food.
3. Right.
4. Right.
5. Wrong. The experience gained was invaluable.
6. Right.
7. Wrong. The book was a most important invention.
8. Wrong. Light is needed for photosynthesis.
9. Wrong. A man and a woman entered the room. The woman sat on the chair and the man stood at the window looking out.
10. Wrong. The animals are coming
    Two by two
    The elephant and
    The kangaroo
11. Wrong. Knowledge is necessary.
12. Wrong. A little knowledge is a dangerous thing.
13. Wrong. Most birds can fly.
14. Wrong. The most that we can expect ...
15. Wrong. The judge sent him to gaol.
16. Wrong. I am going to the doctor.
17. Wrong. Have you got a pen?
18. Wrong. I play the violin.
19. Wrong. I am taking violin lessons.
20. Wrong. She is talking on the telephone.
21. Wrong. We need a new telephone.
22. Wrong. I prefer the country to the town.
23. Wrong. I went to university or I went to a university.
24. Wrong. He is the oldest / eldest.
25. Wrong. He is a lover of nature.

16

DICTIONARIES

Dictionaries come in many shapes and sizes, and tailored to different kinds of users. At the most formidable there is the huge *Oxford English Dictionary* (the OED) of many volumes. At the other end of the spectrum are the very useful dictionaries designed to help learners of English, such as the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, or the *Collins Cobuild*, or the *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary.*

16.1

Let us start with the OED. It is a work of massive scholarship initiated by the epic endeavours, from about 1879 onwards, of Sir James Murray, a Scot whose formal education ceased at fourteen. At first the dictionary was called *The New English Dictionary on Historical Principles* and it later became *The Oxford English Dictionary*. Obviously there have been a number of editors since Sir James Murray's time, and keeping the OED up to date has been a major undertaking. Not only have the main volumes been revised steadily, but a number of supplementary volumes have come into existence. These must not be neglected when one looks for information from the OED. The Supplements (OEDS) were absorbed into the main Dictionary in 1989. Watch out for them, nevertheless. It all depends which version of the OED is available to you. Among other things, the Supplements deal with English as a world language, and with the English of, for example, the USA, or Australia. Revision has continued since 1989.

The OED should be a standard work of reference for all students and teaching staff. What, then, is the kind of information that it gives? The OED is an *etymological* dictionary. *Etymology* is the study of the origins and derivation of words and this, apart from being fascinating itself, is sometimes a great aid to understanding the meaning of a word. On the other hand, the meanings of words change, and one needs more than the origins of words to understand meaning. In fact, the meaning of a word can change considerably with time. This process is called *semantic change*. *Semantics* is the study of meaning. It can be important to know how the meaning of a word has changed historically. The OED provides this information, too, illustrating the meanings of words from their earliest recorded existence up to modern times by means of *textual citations*. This means that not just definitions of a word's meaning are given, but examples from the first recorded use up to modern times, taken from suitable texts.

When one consults the OED, therefore, one is confronted with much more than just definitions of the words; one is given detailed etymological meaning and a vast array, chronologically arranged with dates and sources, of examples of how the word has been used, by way of citations. If one needs a complete overview of the history of a word and how it has been used, then the OED is the essential source.

The etymological information needs some explaining. English has had a most varied and complex history, and has drawn its vocabulary from a wide range of sources. Some of this history will be gone into in more detail, later. However, some information about the codes used will be given here.

OE	=	Old English ie Anglo Saxon
ON	=	Old Norse
N Fr	=	Norman French
Lat	=	Latin
Gk	=	Greek

There are many more. The original word in, for example, Latin, will be given. Then, as has been explained already, a chronological list of the ways in which the word has been used in English will be given.

The 1989 edition has 20 volumes and contains more than 600,000 word forms. Obviously, nobody uses a vocabulary of this size in practice. Shakespeare had an active vocabulary of about 20,000 words. We all have passive vocabularies that are larger than our active vocabularies, but nobody knows all the words in the OED!

16.2

There is a single volume microprint version, with a magnifying glass. The computer disk has also made the whole of the OED available in compact form. The next step down from the OED is the *Shorter Oxford Dictionary*. It used to be a very large one volume book, but is now a two volume dictionary. Perhaps this is the dictionary that should be physically present in every academic department. The 20 volume OED belongs in the reference section of the Library.

The Shorter Oxford Dictionary follows the same pattern as the OED. It gives the derivation of words, it gives examples of use and it gives the pronunciation. In comparison with the OED the quantity of citations has been greatly reduced while the number of words, although still very large, has had to be enormously reduced. Large though the *Shorter Oxford* is, there are times when one has to go to the OED. The *Shorter* is, however, adequate most of the time.

16.3

The next one down in the Oxford series is the *New Oxford English Dictionary*, a very substantial, one volume work. It came out in 1998. It tries to concentrate on the modern forms of the language but gives some etymological information. It gives definitions of words but not necessarily citations of actual use. It does not always give pronunciation but otherwise gives much useful information, including something about non-standard or regional uses of words. For example, it notes briefly the typical South African use of *motivate* and *motivation*. In an ideal world, the *New Oxford English Dictionary* should be available for consultation along with the OED or the *Shorter*. It is a most interesting, useful, up-to-date and innovative dictionary.

16.4

Somewhat smaller than the *New Oxford* is the *Concise Oxford*. It gives etymology and pronunciation and is still very substantial in the number of words that it covers. It is a useful and fairly reasonably priced dictionary that the individual can afford to buy. Very recently, a specifically South African version of the *Concise* has been brought out. It includes 1500 specifically South African words. The problem is that South Africans probably already know these words and would not need much help with them, while they might need help with the 1500 words from international standard English that have had to be left out to make way for the South African words. In a sense, this dictionary brings coals to Newcastle.

16.5

If one wants to find out about the vocabulary (lexis) of South African English, one should go to the *Dictionary of South African English on historical principles*. It is produced by the Oxford University Press, but is not titled an "Oxford" dictionary. However, the coda to the title, "on historical principles", shows that it is in the grand tradition of the OED.

Naturally, the origins of the words cannot be traced back to Anglo-Saxon or Old Norse or Norman French. However, these words have their fascinating histories. There are about 5000 of them. Many are the names of plants and animals. The entries are, where possible, backed up by citations and an

attempt to explain or trace origins. One can get some unusual insights into South African history from this dictionary: try looking up "Africaander", for example.

16.6

At roughly the same size as the *Concise* is the excellent one volume dictionary produced by Collins. There are a number of other fascinating and helpful dictionaries by other publishing houses, including the Cambridge University Press and Penguin, of the same size or smaller. The dictionary field is highly competitive and innovative.

16.7

Then we have the kind of dictionary represented by the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* or by the *Collins Cobuild*. These are extremely useful dictionaries for everyone, not just for advanced learners of English. They do not give etymological information but definitions of words and examples of use, but not citations. They give help with pronunciation and with all sorts of other things. Naturally, the extent of the vocabulary treated is limited, but it is still very useful. The explanations of words are themselves couched in a limited vocabulary, ensuring that the explanations can be easily understood. This list of words used for explanation is printed as an appendix, and makes a useful target vocabulary for the learner of English. This is quite clearly the dictionary that should be possessed by many students, and it is a most useful dictionary to have on one's desk for quick consultation before one reaches for the heavier volumes.

16.8

A word is needed about *bilingual dictionaries*. They obviously have their uses and are essential in a bilingual situation. However, they need to be supplemented by a fuller dictionary with examples of use and citations from texts. It is one of the characteristics of English that it has an extensive vocabulary with many words with meanings that are near to each other but do not have quite the same connotations and shades of meaning. A full English dictionary needs to be consulted so that precisely the right words can be chosen, and sometimes embarrassing mistakes can be avoided.

These remarks apply to the use of a *thesaurus*, too. A thesaurus tends to give a list of words that are "synonyms". However, there are in English very few real synonyms. There are always slight differences of connotation and shades of meaning, and examples are needed with explanations of multiple meanings. The hazards of the English vocabulary can be illustrated by a well-worn and somewhat sexist joke in which a group of men with defective English discuss the wife of one of their number who cannot have children. "She is impregnable". "No she is inconceivable". "No, no, she is unbearable." What they want is either "infertile" or "barren" - the latter, however, is also a little harsh in its overtones, even if accurate. One can go badly astray if one does not consult a full dictionary. As an exercise, look up the following words:

to impregnate
impregnable
pregnant
to conceive
inconceivable
conception
misconception
to bear (with)
bearable
unbearable
to bear children

16.9 DICTIONARY AND PRONUNCIATION

In the foregoing, mention has been made that certain dictionaries, in fact most, give help with pronunciation. How is this done? It is usually done by means of some kind of *transcription* into *phonetic script*, a special set of symbols that accurately renders the *sounds* of pronunciation. It goes without saying that the spelling of English is not *phonetic*: English spelling is a poor indicator of pronunciation. The spelling of Afrikaans or of Zulu is far more phonetic than the spelling of English.

The problem with the phonetic alphabet is that one has to learn it, and learn the precise sound that is represented by each symbol. Dictionaries usually give a list of the symbols used, with words to illustrate the sounds. However, one still has to know the correct pronunciation of the illustrative words, before one knows accurately the sounds that are intended.

In addition, the set of phonetic symbols given by English dictionaries usually relates to the system of pronunciation that is called Received Pronunciation, which is far from representing the range of accents that exists in Britain itself, let alone throughout the world. Nevertheless, Received Pronunciation is a useful benchmark, and the learner of English could do worse than to attempt an approximation to Received Pronunciation. This all needs competent teachers and adequate exposure to sound models of English at a young age, when accents are most easily acquired.

There is one detail of the phonetic transcriptions that dictionaries give that is indeed worth noting carefully, and that is the mark that shows where the *stress* goes. The rhythm of English is characterised by stressed and unstressed syllables. This is much less the case with French or the indigenous African languages. The stress mark is a short, thick vertical mark that is placed in front of the syllable that gets stressed. Take the following words:

1. me'chanic
2. me'chanical
3. 'mechanism

In 1 and 2 the stress is on the second syllable, the *chan*. In 3 the stress shifts to the first syllable, the *me*. Many people get this wrong, and still put the stress on the second syllable.

When one looks up a word in a dictionary, it is indeed worth the effort to note which is the stressed syllable. Some more will be said about pronunciation a little later.

16.10

A few more words are needed to conclude this section on dictionaries. There is a distinguished tradition of American lexicography. In 1828, long before Sir James Murray started his massive dictionary, Noah Webster produced *An American dictionary of the English language*. The name of Webster has stuck to the major American dictionaries, long after the demise of Noah Webster himself, culminating in *Webster's New International Dictionary*.

Finally, no discussion of the tradition of the lexicography of English would be complete without mention of the notable dictionary that Dr Samuel Johnson produced in 1755. It is famous for its terse, trenchant definitions. For instance, he describes a *patron* as:

> One who countenances, supports, or protects. Commonly a wretch who supports with insolence, and is paid with flattery.

Dr Johnson hoped that his dictionary would help to fix the language and make for greater correctness, but he knew that one could not stop languages from changing. As he wrote:

> It remains that we retard what we cannot repel, and that we palliate what we cannot cure.

The history of lexicography is, among other things, the history of constant endeavour to keep dictionaries up to date.

In his dictionary, Dr Johnson, with wry humour, defined a lexicographer as:

> A harmless drudge.

17

THE ENGLISH VOCABULARY

A discussion of the vocabulary of English follows naturally from a discussion of dictionaries, and leads naturally to a discussion of the extraordinary history of the development of English. The main point is that English is a mongrel language that has developed its vocabulary from a wide variety of sources. Hence the vocabulary is rich and complex. A feature of this complexity is that there are many groups of words that are near synonyms but not quite synonyms. Therefore, one must understand the shades of difference of meaning and the different contexts in which words are appropriate. Another way of putting this is to say that one must understand the *connotations* of a word, the shades of meaning attached to it, before one can use it correctly. There is a difference between *referential* or *denotative* meaning, and connotative meaning. In addition, one's choice of words of different origin can result in differences of style and *register*.

As said in the previous section (on dictionaries), one must be careful about how one uses the list of synonyms that one gets from a thesaurus. Although they may broadly have the same referential or denotative meaning, the connotations, the undertones or overtones, may not be the same. In fact, one can make pretty dreadful mistakes by choosing the word with the wrong shade of meaning. The solution is to use a full dictionary (with examples of use) along with the thesaurus. The same problem can occur with bilingual dictionaries, which tend to give a list of words without very much information as to precise contexts of use.

The reason for the extent of the vocabulary of English and for its complexity of near synonyms is that a Germanic language, Anglo-Saxon or Old English, over many centuries borrowed words from Latin, French, Greek and various other sources, while very often retaining Germanic words for the same object. Words are slippery things, and different words came to have different connotations. We are faced, apart from the differing origins of words, with the fact of semantic change.

The situation can be illustrated by considering the pair of words **lovable** and **amiable**. **Loveable** is of Old English origin (lufian = to love) and **amiable** is borrowed from French. In fact, the word *aimable* exists in modern French, and means in French what is meant in English by **lovable**, rather than what is meant in English by **amiable. Loveable** and **amiable** are not precise synonyms in English. **Amiable** means of a pleasant, friendly disposition. **Lovable** has a stronger meaning - a person or quality one can love. The range includes the sexual. **Amiable** is not a sexual word. Perhaps **likeable** would be a closer synonym for **amiable**, or **pleasant**. **Loveable** and **amiable** are certainly not interchangeable although, as has been said above, **loveable** may be the word you want to translate the French *aimable*. It is all a matter of finding *le mot juste*.

Loving and **amorous** make an interesting pair. **Amorous** carries a connotation of the comic or ridiculous. If one refers to a young man in love as an **amorous swain** one is poking fun at him. **Amorous** is overdone. Very often, in fact, pairs of French/Latin and Germanic words represent stylistic differences as well as just differences of meaning, although this is certainly not always the case. The French/Latin word (*Romance* would be another term) is sometimes the grander word.

The possibility of catastrophe and also of elevated and plainer style are illustrated by a story told by James Boswell about Dr Samuel Johnson. A group including Boswell and Johnson, were discussing a woman. Johnson said: "The woman had a bottom of good sense". Boswell narrates: "The word 'bottom' thus introduced, was so ludicrous ... that most of use could not forbear tittering." Said Johnson: "where's the merriment?... I say that the woman was fundamentally sensible."

The two expressions *at bottom* and *fundamentally* indicate how the Latin word can be grander, the native English word plainer. In this case the plainer word was thought by the company to be a little too plain, hence the tittering.

Dr Johnson had a liking for the Latinate that sometimes led him astray. Talking of the play *The Rehearsal* he said: "It has not wit enough to keep it sweet". Boswell narrates: "This was easy - he therefore caught himself and pronounced a more rounded sentence; 'It has not vitality enough to preserve it from putrefaction'." This is hardly an improvement, but it does show what can be done with the varied resources of the English vocabulary. Beware grandiloquence!

Dickens could use the variety of *register* possible in English, along with other tricks of speech, to create character. David Copperfield, in the novel of that name, is sent to London while still a small boy by his cruel stepfather, Mr Murdstone, to earn his living and is lodged with Mr Micawber.

> "My address", said Mr Micawber, "is Windsor Terrace, City Road. I - in short," said Mr Micawber, with the same genteel air, and in another burst of confidence - "I live there".
>
> I made him a bow.
>
> "Under the impression," said Mr Micawber, "that your peregrinations in this metropolis have not as yet been extensive, and that you might have some difficulty in penetrating the arcana of the modern Babylon in the direction of the City Road - in short," said Mr Micawber, in another burst of confidence, "that you might lose yourself - I shall be happy to call this evening, and install you in the knowledge of the nearest way."

Those two famous Victorian schoolmasters, H.W. and F.G. Fowler, offer some interesting guidance on good style in the opening page of their grammar book *The King's English* (first published in 1906). The term "the King's English" is often ignorantly thought to indicate a very special, elevated form of English. The Fowlers say: "Any one who wishes to become a good writer should endeavour, before he allows himself to be tempted by the more showy qualities, to be direct, simple, brief, vigorous and lucid."

This is the opening sentence of the book. The authors then offer five rules.

> Prefer the familiar word to the far-fetched.
> Prefer the concrete word to the abstract.
> Prefer the single word to the circumlocution.
> Prefer the short word to the long.
> Prefer the Saxon word to the Romance.

They say that the last is the least important. By "Romance" they mean words of Latin and French origin. It is important to note that the last is the least important. In the end, good sense must be the arbiter.

It is possible to overdo the attempt to rely entirely on the Germanic sources of the English vocabulary. There was a romantic, late nineteenth century, linguist called William Barnes, who wrote a book called *Speechcraft of the English Tongue*. One can see from the title what he was trying to do: *speechcraft* for *grammar* or *linguistics*; *tongue* rather than *language*.

William Barnes objected to the word *omnibus* (Latin = for everybody - our modern *bus*) because it came from Latin, and proposed the word *folkwain* (wain = wagon). In fact, he had discovered the word *volkswagen*! However, *folkwain* did not catch on, and we still have *omnibus*, abbreviated to *bus*. Barnes also wanted the term *preposition* to be replaced by the phrase - *markword of suchness*. Thank goodness for loan words! A much earlier proponent of the conscious cultivation of Germanic elements in the English vocabulary also put forward some startling proposals. Instead of the Latin/French *impregnable* (which is perfectly well adapted to English) he put forward "ungothroughsome", and for

inconceivable not-to-be-thought-upon-able. Was he really serious? We do not have to make a fetish of the basic Old English (Anglo-Saxon) elements in the English vocabulary, as the Fowler brothers, sensible as they were, most certainly understood. As they said (on the second page) "we want to write English, not Saxon".

The above extravagant proposals do, however, show what can be done to create new words, using the Anglo-Saxon sources of English. The Anglo-Saxons, faced with the Latin theological term *trinity*, created the English equivalent *threeness*. However, the Latin word survived as a *loan word*, and the Saxon did not. When faced with the grammatical term *praepositio*, from which we get the modern *preposition*, the Anglo-Saxons coined the term *forsetynnis*, which is obviously the Afrikaans *voorsetsel*, showing the cousinly relationship of English and Afrikaans. However, again, the Latin loan word survived, the Saxon disappeared. Anglo-Saxon, (or Old English) had a capacity to create new words from native elements. The convenience of borrowing from Latin or French has caused this creative capacity to languish somewhat.

English is, then, a Germanic language, a cousin of Afrikaans in fact, which has borrowed an enormous number of Latin and French words, and Greek words, and words from many other languages, too. This has brought into existence a complex vocabulary with many partial synonyms. It has also made possible considerable variations in style. English is a language which in terms of vocabulary, can be tricky and in which one can make mistakes. Look again at the joke about *unbearable* in 16.8. English is also a language with which one can have a tremendous amount of fun.

17.1 EUPHEMISMS AND DOUBLESPEAK

One effect, but not always a desirable effect, of the variety that exists in the English vocabulary, is the possibility of *euphemism*. The term "euphemism" means a "speaking well" of something. It is one of those indispensable intellectual and technical words that English has borrowed from Greek. (The prefix *eu* means "good" or "fine"). Euphemism is the art of finding a word that makes something unpleasant, embarrassing, bad or wrong seem better. Dead civilians in war are called "collateral damage". You do not kill, murder or bump-off, you *terminate* or *liquidate*. To put the political opposition in a death camp is to "eliminate undesirable elements". You do not kill the enemy, you "service the target". Establishing a tyrannous regime after a revolution is to "liberate". To get rid of staff is to "normalise". Julius Caesar had a good one: to destroy a tribe of hostile Gauls was to "pacify" them. Euphemism is the language of politicians, spindoctors (that colourful and expressive recent addition to the English vocabulary), bureaucrats, academic administrators and purveyors of political correctness.

At a more mundane level you can call a rat-catcher a "rodent exterminator"; you can "crap" or "shit" or "excrete" or "defecate"; you can "pee", "pass water", "relieve yourself" or "urinate"; you can "die", "snuff it", "kick the bucket", "pass on" or "expire"; you can say that a short person is "vertically challenged".

You will notice that the elaborate, high-sounding, evasive or polite (genteel?) euphemism is very often but certainly not always a word of Latin origin. Once again, however, this is no reason to avoid all words of Latin origin. One could hardly write English if one did so. Remember the Fowler brothers' statement that "we want to write English, not Saxon". In addition, perhaps, some euphemisms, depending on the circumstances, are justified, necessary, useful. However, we should be on the look-out for the wrong kind of euphemism. We should do well to note, too, that the Latin or Greek word is very often the technical or scientific word, and that such words have their particular and necessary niche in the vocabulary.

18

VOCABULARY BUILDING, COMPREHENSION AND WORD FORMATION

A little insight into word formation and word structure in English can help build vocabulary and help with reading comprehension when one encounters a new or unfamiliar word. Students, and not only those for whom English is a second language, should be made aware of the most elementary aspects of the formation of words.

This is the area of linguistics known as *morphology*. The word itself is a useful example: *morph* has to do with form, *ology* is the suffix that comes from the Greek *logos* (for word or knowledge) that is such an essential component of technical and intellectual vocabulary.

It is not the intention to go into morphology except in the briefest and most rough and ready fashion. Morphology looks at the *morphemes* of a word, those segments of a word that have meaning. Morphemes are divided into "free" morphemes, which can stand alone, and "bound" morphemes, which need to attach themselves to a free morpheme and cannot stand alone. Another set of terms that are roughly equivalent are a "base" or "root" and the "affixes", bits that are added on. The affixes are divided into prefixes, which come before the base, and suffixes which are tacked on after the base. The word "prefix" itself obviously consist of the base "fix", and the prefix "pre", meaning "before". If you spot the structure, and know that *pre* indicates something that is in front of and not behind, you can see that a "prefix" is what is attached to the front of a word.

Suffix is a little trickier. It is actually *sub + fix* but phonetic change (a process called *assimilation*) has caused the *b* of *sub* to be modified to an *f*. *"Subfix"* is a little awkward to say, and "suffix" disposes of the problem. *Sub* means "below" or "after", hence suffix goes after the base. Something similar has happened with *affix*. It is actually "adfix" but the *d* has been assimilated to the *f*. Therefore, phonetic change that has affected spelling may sometimes slightly complicate one's recognition of some of the elements.

One can also occasionally be misled by rogue words. Take *disgruntled*, for example. It would appear that *dis* is a prefix and that the base or root is *gruntled*. Unfortunately, *gruntled* does not really exist, except as what is called a "back-formation" of *disgruntled*. In any case, *gruntled* is hardly ever used - only perhaps as a joke. PG Wodehouse, for example, said of one of his characters that although he was not actually disgruntled, you could not say that he was really gruntled, either.

Gentlemen, gentlemanly and *ungentlemanly* are interesting examples for discussion. Is the base *man* or *gentleman*? *Gentle* can stand by itself - it is a free morpheme. It is not a prefix or a suffix. *Gently* is a possible word, with *gentle* as the base. Perhaps we could say that *gentleman* is a compound word that can then have prefixes and suffixes added to it. English is full of compound words. However, one can see how English can build words: *gentle* and *man* are joined and then *un* and *ly* are added, turning a noun into an adverb. A gentleman behaves in a gentlemanly way, not in an ungentlemanly way. Further developments of a word by adding prefixes and especially suffixes are called *derivatives* of the original word.

A straightforward set of examples of prefixes added to a base would be:

compose
depose
impose
propose
transpose

A set of different words with the same suffix would be:

troublesome
burdensome
lonesome
cuddlesome
winsome

The last may puzzle people - it is not a very common word. However, the *win* is actually the Anglo-Saxon word *wynn*, meaning “joy” or “happiness”.

To sum up then, one can build words by combining bases to make compound words, and by adding prefixes and suffixes, that is to say affixes. And, once one has tumbled to the secret, one can understand words by recognising which are the prefixes and suffixes that have been added to a base.

If one goes back to the rather comical but intriguing “Germanic” creations described in section 17 one can see that the Germanic (Anglo-Saxon) elements in the vocabulary have a potent capacity for word creation.

un go through some = impenetrable
not-to-be-thought-upon-able = inconceivable

They are ingenious combinations of base and affix, or of bound and free morphemes. But then the words of Latin/French origin also have their morphological structures:

im + penetr + able
in + con + ceiv + able

Note too, that our friend who was intent on ridding English of the debased Latinate elements and on returning to healthy Saxon elements, in not-to-be-thought-upon-able, actually had to add the Latin/French *able* at the end.

In short, to know and to be able to identify the prefixes and suffixes is a help to understanding English and to using English. However, one cannot create *ad libitum*, if William Barnes will excuse the dog Latin.

18.1

One aspect of the developing of *derivatives* from words or bases, by means of prefixes and suffixes, is the effect on pronunciation, in particular the phenomenon of shifting stress. English is, as the linguists put it, a “stress-timed” language. Rhythmically, English consists of stressed and unstressed syllables. But, the stress can sometimes shift, depending on the way in which elements are added to a word. In the following examples, the stress is indicated by the ' that is placed in front of the stressed syllable.

'photograph
photo'graphic
pho'tography

me'chanic
me'chanical
'mechanism

una'vailable
unavaila'bility

'logic
'logical
'illogical
illogi'cality

'morpheme
mor'phology
morpho'logical

phi'lology
philo'logical

'colony
'colonize
coloni'sation
post-co'lonial

'category
cate'gorical

e'conomy
eco'nomical
eco'nomics

18.2

Prefixes and suffixes change the meaning of words and can change the word class, too, turning verbs into nouns, or adjectives into nouns. That important academic and scientific suffix *ology*, from the Greek *logos* (meaning a word), is used in the names of different branches of knowledge. To be able to recognise the prefixes and suffixes, and to understand their meanings and functions, is an aid to deciphering the meanings of words and an aid to vocabulary building.

For example, *happy* can be given the opposite meaning by adding *un*: unhappy. *Ante* means before or in front of as in *antecedent*, while *anti* means against, as in *antiseptic*. What is not *normal* is *abnormal*, what is not *logical* is *illogical*. By adding *al* to *remove*, we turn it into a noun: removal. By adding *ness* to the adjective *sweet*, we turn it into a noun: sweetness. *Conceive* gives some interesting derivatives. From the verb *conceive* in the sense of "to understand" or "to grasp an idea", we can add the suffix *able* and the prefix *in* to get *inconceivable*, an adjective that indicates that something cannot be grasped or understood. In the original Latin the *con* was also a prefix but this rather tends to get obscured in English.

Therefore, it is worth being able to recognise the prefixes and suffixes of English. To this end, a list of prefixes and suffixes is given here, taken, with some small modifications, from *A reference book of English* edited by Ridout and Clarke, Macmillan, 1970.

prefix An affix placed before a root to modify its meaning and so build a new word, e.g.: *pre*paid, *un*cover, *im*port, *ex*port, *trans*port. Here are the main prefixes in English, with examples of their use:

a- : abide, awake, amoral, abridge, abreast
ab- : abnormal, absolve, abuse, aborigine (-al)
ac- : acknowledge, accustom, accountant, acclaim, account
ad- : administer, adventure, adjoin, adjunct
af- : affix, affirm, affinity, affluence, afford
an- : annul, announcer
ante- : antediluvian, antechamber, antechapel
anti- : antiseptic, antithesis, antidote, anticlimax
be- : begrudge, besiege, begone, behalf, befriend
bi- : bilingual, bilateral, biped, biplane
co- : co-operate, co-ordinate, co-opt, copartner
com- : combat, combine, commemorate, commingle, commiserate

con- : concede, concourse, condescend, condole, confederate
counter- : counterbalance, counterfoil, countermand, counterpart
de- : debar, debase, decompose, default, depend
dis- : disarrange, disbelieve, discredit, dislodge, displace
en- : enlarge, enlighten, enable, enrich
ex- : exchange, exclaim, export, express
hyper- : hypercritical, hypersensitive
il- : illogical, illegal, illiterate, illegible
im- : immortal, immovable, impersonal, impious, import
in- : incapable, incivility, inclement, incoherent
mis- : misadventure, misbehave, miscalculate, misfortune
non- : nonaggression, non-sequitur, non-political
post- : post-war, postdate, postgraduate, postscript
pre- : precaution, preconceive, predetermine, premature
pro- : pro-French, pro-consul, prolong
re- : react, rebound, reform, rekindle, reinstate
sub- : subconscious, subdivide, subheading, sub-lieutenant
super- : superabundant, supercharged, super-human, superimpose
un- : unaware, unbending, uncover, untiring, untruth

suffixes A suffix is added at the end of a word or stem to produce a new derivative word, e.g.: length, lengthen; wide, widely; conscious, consciousness.

The following list contains all the main suffixes in use in the English language, apart from suffixes used in the formation of plurals, case endings, declensions and non-finite parts of verbs:

-able : used to form adjectives from verbs, giving the meaning of *able* or *liable*, or *worth to be ..... ed*, e.g.: marriageable, distinguishable, insupportable, valuable
-al : forms nouns and adjectives, e.g.: nouns: removal, acquittal; adjectives: musical, fatal, official.
-age : forms nouns: breakage, carriage, usage.
-an (ean) : forms adjectives, meaning *pertaining* or *belonging to*, e.g.: suburban, Shakespearean, Euclidean.
-ance : forms nouns from verbs with the meaning of *the state or quality of*, e.g. perseverance, endurance, ignorance, deliverance.
-ant : forms nouns with meaning of *agent* or *doer*, e.g.: assistant, accountant.
-ate : forms verbs from nouns or adjectives, e.g.: estimate, hyphenate, formulate, liquidate, validate.
-ation : forms nouns from verbs, with the meaning of *the act or state of*, e.g.: emendation, consideration, exclamation, damnation, temptation.
-dom : forms nouns from nouns, with the meaning of *rank, domain* or *condition*, e.g.: kingdom, serfdom, martyrdom, earldom.
-en : forms verbs from adjectives with the meaning of *to make*, e.g. soften, lighten, thicken. Also forms adjectives expressing material, e.g.: golden, wooden, woollen.
-ence : indicating a state, e.g.: permanence, corpulence, concurrence, precedence, transference.
-er : forms nouns from nouns, adjectives or verbs, to give the meaning of *one who performs the action, person belonging to a place* or *instrument* or *object that does something*, e.g.: follower, gardener, Londoner, foreigner, paper-cutter, decanter.
-ess : feminine formation as in goddess, lioness, countess, giantess, governess, adventuress.
-ful : forms adjectives with the meaning of *full of* or *having the quality of*, e.g.: beautiful, masterful, tasteful, wasteful.

-fy : forms verbs with the sense of *to make, to make into, to produce*, e.g.: amplify, classify, purify, stupefy.
-hood : forms nouns of condition or quality, e.g.: motherhood, fatherhood, manhood, statehood.
-ible : forms adjectives with the meaning *that can be .....ed*, e.g.: contemptible, digestible, divisible, legible.
-ion : forms nouns of condition, action e.g.: abstraction, constitution, delegation, speculation, suggestion.
-ish : forms adjectives meaning *belonging to, in the nature of*, of sometimes with the meaning of *somewhat*, e.g.: boyish, girlish, foppish, bookish, greenish, reddish.
-ism : forms nouns from adjectives, suggesting a disposition to be what the adjective describes, e.g.: barbarism, socialism, idealism, modernism, spiritualism.
-ist : forms nouns meaning an *agent, believer* or *one who follows* and *practises*, e.g.: violinist, atheist, fatalist, cyclist, organist, specialist.
-ise : is the suffix ending of a small group of words of which the most common are: advertise, chastise, compromise, despise, disguise, enterprise, exercise, supervise, surprise.
-ity (ty) : forms nouns meaning the *quality of being what the adjective describes*, e.g.: liberality, formality, humility, reality, universality.
-ive : forms adjectives from verbs meaning *to have the nature of, tending to*, e.g.: impressive, active, coercive.
-ize : forms verbs from nouns and adjectives, e.g.: civilize, patronize, equalize, realize, sympathize. (See -ise, ize.)
-less : forms adjectives meaning *without, devoid, free from*, e.g.: witless, useless, guileless, countless, fearless.
-ly : (a) an adverbial suffix, e.g.: cruelly, beautifully, quickly, slowly, etc.
(b) an adjectival suffix, e.g.: kingly, scholarly, soldierly, lovely.
-ment : forms nouns with the meaning of *the act of* or *the means of*, e.g. atonement, amendment, requirement, payment.
-ness : forms nouns expressing a state or quality, e.g.: sweetness, bitterness, tiredness, laziness, etc.
-ology : from Greek *logos*, a word - means the study of something, a branch of knowledge.
-or : forms nouns with the meaning of *agent* or *instrument*, e.g.: editor, surveyor, donor.
-ory : forms adjectives meaning *the state* or *quality of*, e.g.: compulsory, perfunctory, illusory.
-ship : forms abstract nouns with the meaning of *the quality of* or other nouns meaning *the status* or *office of*, e.g.: hardship, salesmanship, scholarship, lordship.
-some : forms adjectives with the meaning *productive of* or apt to be, e.g.: quarrelsome, lonesome, wholesome, awesome.
-th : forms nouns from verbs and adjectives: growth, health, stealth, truth, width.
-ure : forms nouns from verbs: closure, seizure, departure, mixture.
-y : (a) forms adjectives meaning *having the character* or, *composed of*, e.g.: milky, thorny, slangy, bluey, misty.
(b) forms nouns from verbs: delivery flattery, discovery.

18.3

The list of suffixes above mentions the suffixes used for "plurals, case endings, declensions and non-finite parts of verbs". These are suffixes of a different kind. They are the survivals of a complex set of grammatical declensions that existed in Old English and which have been considerably simplified over the centuries.

s	noun plural	dog/s
's s"	possessive	the dog's bone

s	third person singular	he runs
ing	present participle	barking
ed t	past tense and past participle	dreamed dreamt
en	past participle of certain verbs	chosen
er	comparative of the adjectives	sweeter
est	superlative	sweetest
en	plural of some nouns	children

These grammatical inflections should be known. However, for word-building purpose it is really the preceding lists of affixes that should be known. The functions of these affixes in changing words into different word types and in modifying meaning should be understood.

18.4

One can *bear* something. The something is therefore *bearable*. If it cannot be born, then it is *unbearable*. *Bear* is a verb. *Unbearable* and *bearable* are adjectives. From a historical and etymological point of view it is interesting to note that *un* is a prefix from Old English / Anglo-Saxon, while *able* is a suffix from French/Latin. They are both thoroughly acclimatised to English. It is quite usual to find prefixes, suffixes and roots from different sources combined.

An example of the combination of elements from varying sources is in the fairly recent words for large shops. (Incidentally, English is still growing, and the various ways of creating new words are in full operation. As if there weren't enough words in English already!) We used to have a *market*. A certain kind of shop became known as a *supermarket*, adding a Latin prefix. Eventually this ceased to be good enough and *hypermarkets* appeared, using a Greek prefix which was thought to be yet more impressive than *super*. We have *superman*: one day, perhaps, we might get *hyperman*. In the meantime, we have *hypertext*. Some people are *hyperactive*.

Some interesting variations occur. We have the verb *to educate*. It comes from Latin. Somebody who is not educated is *uneducated*: a Germanic prefix and a Latin base. However, someone who cannot be educated, who is totally resistant to education, is *ineducable*: a Latin prefix and Latin/French suffix.

We say that something is *inconceivable*. However, what cannot be accepted is *unacceptable*. The text of the *American Declaration of Independence* has certain variations: some texts talk of *unalienable* rights, others of *inalienable* rights. The latter has won.

Another very interesting and important case is the two words *uninterested* and *disinterested*. There is a lot of muddle about these two words. *Uninterested* means lack of interest. *Disinterested* implies a very important quality, lack of concern for one's own personal gain. A *disinterested* person acts out of pure motives. Unfortunately, *disinterested* is sometimes used to mean *uninterested*. Furthermore, the opinion is sometimes expressed by would-be liberal linguists that it is pedantic to insist on the difference. The loss to English would be great. If the word disappears, the concept might disappear. Then our moral sense would be the poorer. Naturally both words can take the *ly* suffix, turning them into adverbs ("he acted disinterestedly") and both can take the *ness* ending, turning them into nouns ("this disinterestedness was an example to us all"). These two suffixes are both of Germanic origin.

18.5 COMPOUND WORDS

Not only can English create new words by using affixes but, obviously, new words are created by compounding of existing words. Compound words are the combination of two free morphemes, or two bases or roots i.e. the components can stand alone (or could at one time have stood alone). The problem here is that some words exist as compounded words without a hyphen, some are compounded with a hyphen and similar allocations exist as two separate words. The only solution for this is to consult a dictionary.

For example, one has *daytime, daylight, daybreak,* but a *day-school*, a *day-dream* and finally *day care*, as two words. One has a *sleepwalker*, but a *sleeping-bag*. One can even have *get-at-able*, although *un-go-through-some* never caught on.

One can have a *breakthrough*, a *raspberry*, a *countdown*, and fairly recently, *cybernetics*, and even more recently *cyberspace, cyberpunk* and a whole lot of other combinations with *cyber*, which has rather taken off, or come loose from its moorings. But this is what happens with language.

What seems to have happened is that the word *cybernetics* was invented, derived from the Greek *kybernetes*, a steersman or a governor and *kybernan*, to steer. The Latin word *gubernator* (from which we get *governor*) is related. The word was invented for the science of automatic control systems. The adjectival bound form *cyber* was derived, not very accurately, from *cybernetics* by the process called "back-formation", and has been applied with gay abandon, (a phrase that may begin to come under review). So we have *cybercafe, cyberflirtation,* (which takes place in cybercafes or in *cyberspace*), *cybersex, cybersquatter, cyberterrorism*. The oddest is a *cyberchondriac*. A *hypochondriac* is somebody unnecessarily or excessively concerned with his/her health. Here we have the prefix *hypo* (not to be confused with *hyper*). *Cyber*, it has been argued above, is not really a prefix but an adjective, hacked off from *kybernetes*. The prefix *hypo* can have the adjective *cyber* substituted for it. A *cyberchondriac* is somebody who diagnoses himself with the help of the electronic media and then goes to the doctor to explain his ailment and get treated. Incidentally, it took three dictionaries to deal adequately with *cyber* - the *Shorter Oxford*, the *New Penguin English Dictionary* and a dictionary of classical Greek. Dictionaries are fascinating things, and one dictionary is often not enough.

18.6

The invention of new words can indeed pay scant attention to etymological origins. In South Africa we have the word *parkade*, meaning a place where one parks one's car. This is a play on *arcade*. An arcade was originally a gallery with arches and pillars, the word being derived from the Latin *arcus*, a bow or an arch. Arcade came to mean a passage or avenue between buildings (which may not have arches) and from this we got an *amusement arcade* which again, may or may not have arches. Then some bright spark with a penchant for word-play but no sense of origins popped a *p* on the front. Parkades do, in fact, have pillars, but no arches, generally speaking.

19

A BRIEF HISTORY OF ENGLISH

English is a mongrel language, a combination of Anglo-Saxon, French, Latin, Greek and various other languages. How did this happen? A time chart is a good beginning. Dates are approximate.

19.1 CELTIC BRITAIN

Britain was inhabited by a Celtic-speaking nation. Celtic Britain was colonised by the Romans, hence the remains of Roman settlements, Roman roads and Hadrian's Wall intended to keep the Scots out. However, the Romans withdrew in 410 AD. Note the name **Britain**. The Roman name was **Britannia**. The name is related to Bretagne, the area in north-west France where Breton is still spoken and can, apparently, be understood by speakers of Welsh.

19.2 449 AD

The invasion started of various Germanic tribes from north Europe. Britain was conquered and the Celts forced into the West and North, where Celtic (Welsh and Gaelic) is still spoken today. This is the beginning of "English", a low Germanic language. The name now changes to **England**. One of the tribes that invaded was the Angles, and they gave a name to the country and to the language. The Anglo-Saxons were Christianised. The important date is 597, when a certain Augustine arrived from Rome. The result was a flourishing monastic culture, and Old English had to cope with the impact of Latin.

19.3 800 AD

Anglo-Saxon England was gradually invaded by various groups of Vikings, speaking Old Norse. The north and east were settled and the Anglo-Saxon dialects were influenced by Old Norse. Surviving Anglo-Saxon (Old English) texts are mainly from the south and west. King Alfred was the king who succeeded in keeping the Norse invaders at bay. For a time, however, England was ruled by Danish kings, notably King Canute or Knut, who is supposed to have commanded the tide not to come in, while his flattering courtiers got their feet wet.

449 - 1066 The Old English Period

19.4 THE NORMAN CONQUEST

This event is absolutely crucial. The Normans were derived from a Scandinavian group who had settled in the north of France and become absorbed and French-speaking. However, this was Norman French, not Parisian French. William, Duke of Normandy, felt that he had a claim to the English throne, invaded, and defeated King Harold Godwin (who was killed) at the Battle of Hastings. England came to be ruled by a Norman-French feudal aristocracy. The Anglo-Saxons were a conquered nation. Norman-French became the language of the rulers. There were later borrowings from Parisian French, too. The Kings of England did not speak English for 300 years. Particular areas of borrowing were administration, military affairs, the law, the church, but many other borrowings took place. This is the great watershed in the development of English. English ceases to be a homogeneous Germanic language. While remaining heavily regional and dialectal, there were in due course some signs that the East Midland dialect (which included London) was gaining a cultural, economic and administrative ascendancy. It was the dialect of Geoffery Chaucer (d.1400), the foremost poet of the period. Most people have heard of *The Canterbury Tales*.

1066 - 1450 The Middle English period

19.5 1450 - 1700 THE EARLY MODERN PERIOD

The Early Modern Period is the English Renaissance. The revival of classical Latin (not medieval Latin) and of Greek resulted in a considerable borrowing of new words. This is the period of Shakespeare (1564 - 1616). It is the period, too in which a discernable standardising began to become observable in written texts. Caxton came to London in 1476 and printing assisted the process of standardisation. Puttenham, a sixteenth century writer, talks of the language of the court and of the shires sixty miles round London as offering a useful standard.

19.6 1700 TO TODAY: THE MODERN PERIOD

The eighteenth century produced a number of linguists who were concerned with what they considered "correctness". Modern linguists tend to make fun of them, and they were certainly wrong a lot of the time, but the movement was helpful in a way in making English a more coherent prose medium. Obviously, language is forever changing, is never totally fixed: the shibboleths of yester-year have tended to cease to be a matter of concern. Nevertheless English continues to face new challenges as a world language and it is worth preserving the international written standard as a very necessary means of communication. English in print, world wide, shows a remarkable consistency.

English has, of course, continued to borrow freely from a wide variety of languages, among which Latin, Greek and French have continued to be prominent, very often for scientific and technical purposes.

19.7 DIALECTS

English has always been very dialectal. It is totally incorrect to consider the dialects of English as branching off from a central standard language. However, from time to time, in English, certain regional dialects have tended to gain cultural and administrative dominance, the region usually being London and its surroundings.

In the Old English period, northern dialects were different from southern. The Viking settlements in the north and east further affected dialects in these areas.

This dialectal situation passed into the Middle English Period, with signs that the East Midland dialect was achieving a position of prominence. This continued in the early modern period, helped by printing. Caxton, the printer, wrote in 1490.

> And certaynly our language now used varyeth ferre from that which was used and spoken when I was borne. For we englysshe men ben borne under the domynacyon of the mone, which is never stedfaste but ever waveryuge, wexynge one season and waneth and dyscreaseth another season. And that comyn englysshe that is spoken in one shyre varyeth from a nother.

The statement bears witness to language change and to a printer's concern about language varieties and whether he ought not to maintain some kind of "correctness". A hundred years later, Puttenham advises:

> ye shall therefore take the usuall speach of the Court, and that of London and the shires lying about London within 60 myles, and not much above.

There is still a great variety of dialects in English and one has to mention Scots, a powerful variety with its own literature and a long history. Universal state education from 1870 and the media forces have all tended to reduce the power of regional dialects, but English in England, especially spoken English, is still very varied. In the nineteenth century a uniform southern based educated accent, with middle and upper class affiliations appeared. It was called by Daniel Jones, a pioneer figure in the study of phonetics, Received Pronunciation. It was the accent adopted by the BBC. It is a lot less

powerful than it once was. However, it was the accent that had usually been used as the model for teaching English as a foreign language throughout the world, and has probably had a useful cohesive effect in keeping spoken English generally comprehensible.

English in England is characterised by dialectal diversity. English in the world today is characterised by many regional varieties. However, there is also the very powerful and remarkably uniform written standard. Lord Quirk is on record as saying that standard English can be spoken with any accent - in 1993 he described Bill Clinton, FW de Klerk and Nelson Mandela as all being speakers of standard English.

19.8 GRAMMAR

Old English (Anglo-Saxon) was a heavily *inflected* language - that is, it had a very complex system of word endings. Fortunately for us, historical forces caused the decay of this system. Old Norse, the language of the Vikings, was also highly inflected, but the endings were different so muddle occurred. After the Norman Conquest, because Anglo-Saxon was neglected, the process of decay continued. By Chaucer's time, most of the endings had disappeared, except for an *e* that occurred at the ends of words. The system of relationships signalled by the inflections was replaced by a relatively fixed word order that showed what went with what. Today, we have the *s* for plurals, with *en* in some words, the *ed* or *t* to show past tense, the *!s* for possession, the *er* and *est* for comparative and superlative forms of adjectives, that bothersome *s* in the third person singular of verbs that causes so many Concord errors, and the *ing* ending of the present participle. These are the remains of an enormously complex system, and the learning of English is greatly the simpler as a result.

LOAN WORDS

In the rest of this section, something will be said about changes in the English vocabulary from the Old English Period onwards, largely as a result of the borrowing of words.

19.9 THE OLD ENGLISH PERIOD

The Saxon tribes were converted. Latin was the language of the Church, and Old English had either to create new terms out of its own resources or borrow new words (loan words).

The Greek *euangelion* (*eu* = good), Latin *evangelium*, was matched by the creation of *godspel*, which is, simply, "good news". This has become the modern English *gospel*. There is a modern translation of the Bible that is called the *Good News Bible*! So the Anglo-Saxons dealt with this problem. But what about this baffling notion of the Trinity? Old English was fertile in its capacity to create new words: *Threeness*. However, while *godspel* survived, *Threeness* did not, and it was later replaced by *Trinity* from French and Latin.

What about the third person of the Trinity, called in Latin the *Spiritus Sanctus*? The Saxons had the word *ghast* (ghost) for *spirit* and the word *halig* (holy) (Afrikaans: heilig). The term Holy Ghost survives into modern English, along with Holy Spirit (a mongrel). If one looks *ghastly*, one looks as pale as a ghost. One can be *aghast*, as if one has just seen a ghost. Shakespeare's Juliet refers to Friar Laurence, her father confessor, as her *ghostly father*, but this one has not survived. What a pity! However, one can still "give up the ghost".

Apart from new words to do with Christianity, the Anglo-Saxons had to wrestle with learned concepts. The Saxons, for preposition, invented the word *forsetennys* (c.f. Afrikaans *voorsetsel*) but it did not survive. The Old English for an astronomer is *tungolwita*. *Wita* is a man who knows. *Witan* is to know (c.f. Afrikaans *weet*). This cluster of words has an interesting history. We still have the word *wit*, a humorous sharpness, and *witticism*, a joke or clever saying. A man can be known as *a wit*, a person who makes clever remarks. Oscar Wilde, when asked by a custom's official whether he had anything to declare, said that he had nothing to declare but his genius. In the seventeenth century, however, *a wit*

had a deeper meaning, one who knows, in other words, an *intellectual. Wit* meant *intelligence*. This meaning survives faintly in the term *mother wit* and in the phrase "use your wits".

What we see happening is the formation of pairs of words, from OE (Old English) and Latin: a wit, an intellectual; wit, intelligence. This is a feature of English - pairs of words or groups of words with Anglo-Saxon and Latin sources. One has to be careful, however. Very often there are subtle differences of meanings, and the pairs or related groups are not true synonyms.

19.10 THE VIKING SETTLEMENT

As already explained, the influence of Old Norse, the language of the Vikings, was mainly in the north and east. If you see a place name ending with *by* it was a Viking settlement. *Ham, tun* and *borough* are Saxon place name morphemes. However, the general vocabulary of English owes a debt to the Viking inheritance. *They, them* and *their* are Old Norse forms that have ousted the Saxon equivalents. That *s* in the third person singular of verbs is from Old Norse, in place of *eth* from Old English. The two existed side by side for a long time - Shakespeare uses both - but the *s* won out. We get the word *husband* from Old Norse (shades of Hagar the Horrible). The words *law* and *outlaw* are Norse borrowings - those savage pirates had a well-developed system of law. So we have the Norse group: law, lawful, unlawful, unlawfulness, outlaw; alongside the Latin group, legal, illegal, illegality, legality.

Very often, words with a *k* are of Norse origin - *skin*, for example. If you get off *scot-free*, you have the Vikings to thank (scot = tax). If you look up at the *sky*, so did the Vikings. If you feel *weak*, the Vikings did so before you.

19.11 THE NORMAN CONQUEST AND MIDDLE ENGLISH

This is the great watershed in the history of English. English ceased to be a homogeneous language and became a mongrel. At first words from Norman French were borrowed. Later words from Parisian French. Sometimes the same word was borrowed twice over and acquired different meanings.

Take the word *cattle* and the phrase *goods and chattels*. Cattle is a Norman French borrowing. At first it meant "possessions", generally. The exclusively bovine connotation was a later development. *Chattels*, also meaning possessions, was a much later borrowing from central French - it is, however, the same word. Actually, if we add *capital*, borrowed from Latin, we have a triplet of related words. Chaucer says of a poor widow in one of his stories, "for litel was hir catel and hir rente." *Catel* means possessions, *rente* means income. *Cattle*, however, came to mean property on the hoof, what the Anglo-Saxons had called *feoh* (Afrikaans: vee). The Anglo-Saxon also had *cu* (cow). Now the cow or ox in the pasture became *beef* (boeuf) on the French overlord's table, the sheep became *mutton*, the calf, *veal* and swine, *pork*. What the Saxon farm labourer herded changed name in the hands and mouth of the French chef up at the castle.

Other double borrowings from French are warden, guardian; warrant, guarantee; catch, chase.

However, more important are the pairs from Saxon and French, or Saxon and Latin. Of course, many Saxon words disappeared, replaced by French words, and many entirely new words were borrowed from French. The French contribution to English is enormous and sampling can really not do justice to it.

Early written records soon after the conquest show the impact of French and of the Norman conquest in rather grim ways. The Norman feudal overlord was in control and the "English" were a conquered race. Earliest sources show *prison, justice, forest*, *tower.* Somebody was having a hard time.

Other words are *battle, charity, miracle, procession.* Some of these show that the church had been taken over by the Normans, too. And so had the law courts: *plaintiff, defendant, tort, court* itself.

Most of the early borrowings are so well-absorbed that one is hardly aware of their French origin. As stated above, often the Saxon word survived and the French equivalent was borrowed. These pairs are a feature of English vocabulary. Similarly, pairs came into existence, over the centuries, of Saxon and Latin borrowings. It must be remembered that the words in these pairs developed different connotations, hence the richness and subtlety of the English vocabulary, and the possibility of varied stylistic effect.

A simple pair is *board* and *table*. The former is rather archaic, now, but we still have the term *boarder,* one who eats at one's table and pays (as opposed to *guest*). Other pairs are *unbelievable* and *incredible*. There is an enormous list that is related; a believer, belief, unbeliever, credulous, incredulous, a creed. Other words, from other sources, can be added to the list: to gull (to cheat: archaic), a gull, the current gullible (easily cheated - a nice pair with *credulous*) and then, from Greek, sceptic, sceptical, cynic cynical. To *gull*, in the above sense is of obscure origin; a sea-gull is of Welsh origin.

Pairs that have occurred earlier in these notes are wit, intelligence; unthinkable, inconceivable; truthfulness, veracity; wandering, peregination (Mr Micawber's word). To deem, to judge, doom, judgement, form a nice group. Hearty and cordial are a nice pair. Stink and stench are Saxon; odour, perfume, scent, fragrance, aroma, are French or Latin, borrowed at various times.

Some Saxon, French and Latin triplets are: fire, flame, conflagration; time, age, epoch; holy, sacred, consecrated. Fragile is from Latin *fragilis*, while frail is from Old French *frele*. Something fragile is easily broken, but we use the word frail about somebody who has been very ill or who is very old. However, the morning after a good party, one sometimes feels "fragile".

Saxon words disappeared, of course, for example dihtan, replaced by compose; schyldig by guilty, lof by praise.

By about 1400 the Kings of English were once more speaking English and Parliament was using English. However, it was an English that had been transformed, both lexically and grammatically. French in England began to decline. The Prioress in the *Canterbury Tales* likes to give herself ladylike airs and graces. Chaucer praises her French, but with a sly reservation.

> And Frensh she spak ful faire and fetisly
> After the scole of Stratford-atte-Bowe,
> For Frensh of Paris was to hir unknowe.

Of course, English has continued to borrow liberally from French ever since the middle ages: ballet, burlesque, forte, penchant, double-entendre, prestige, limousine, camouflage and champagne!

19.12 THE RENAISSANCE AND EARLY MODERN ENGLISH

This period saw borrowings from a great many languages but the most significant borrowings are from classical Latin (not medieval) and from Greek. Among other things, these borrowings are of enormous importance in the language of science, but many ordinary words came into English.

Some Latin words were: exit, genius, fungus, miser, vacuum. Shakespeare livid in this period (1564 - 1616), and benefited from the feast of words around him. The words *castigate, auspicious* and *critic* first appear in his works, although he may not have invented them but heard them used around him. While Shakespeare's plays show the feast of words, they sometimes satirise the consequences of the explosion of vocabulary. Ben Jonson wrote of Shakespeare that he had "small Latin and less Greek".

In *Love's Labour Lost* there is a pedantic schoolmaster called Holofernes, with a cheeky page-boy called Moth. It is said of Holofernes that: "He draweth out the thread of his verbosity finer than the staple of his argument". Holofernes prefers ponderous Latinity: "In the posteriors of this day; which the rude multitude call the afternoon." He is oblivious to the comic potential of his inflated verbiage.

Moth coins the mock Latin *honorificabilitudinitatibus*. He says of Holofernes and others that: "they have been at a great feast of languages, and stolen the scraps."

Thomas Wilson, author of *The Arte of Rhetorick*, wrote in 1553, when considering the flood of new words into English:

> Among all other lessons this should first be learned, that we never affect any straunge ynkhorne termes, but to speak as is commonly received: neither seeking to be over fine, nor yet living over-careless, using our speeche as most men do, and ordering our wittes as the fewest have done. Some seeke so far for outlandish English, that they forget altogether their mothers language. And I dare sweare this, if some of their mothers were alive, thei were not able to tell what they say: and yet these fine clerkes will say, they speak in their mother tongue, if a man should charge them for counterfeiting the King's English.

So the King's English is the plain language of the majority and not a counterfeit, just as one does not counterfeit the coin of the realm. Wilson goes on to satirise what he considers the extravagant verbiage that occurred. However, some of the strange, new words he condemns have become a permanent part of English: expending, affability, ingenious, capacity, celebrate, superiority. The new and outrageous became absorbed. Language plays tricks on us.

Borrowings from Latin have continued ever since. Some borrowings in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries are alibi, inertia, opus, ego, moratorium, referendum, bacillus, libido.

Borrowings from Greek must be mentioned, including the appropriation by English of important prefixes and suffixes, most notably, *-ology* from *logos*. Borrowings from Greek before 1500 include: academy, bible, (*biblos* = book), tragedy, tyrant. After 1500 we have, for example: pathos, irony, chorus, dilemma, theory. Much later we have: agnostic, acrobat, pylon. It became possible to make up new words from Greek elements: phonograph, gramophone, telegraph, psychology, telephone. Anglo-Saxon could accommodate new concepts by using native elements; now, English could accommodate new concepts by using Latin and Greek elements. A new age of word creation had arrived. If a "supermarket" is not impressive enough, we can have a "hypermarket". We can have hypertext, cyberspace and cyberpunk.

The possibilities for combining and playing with the learned and the racy got new dimensions. Anna Russell, the comedienne, had a parody of a traditional English ballad of which the chorus , to be sung to the tune of "what shall we do to the drunken sailor" went as follows:

> Hey libido, bats in the belfry,
> Hey libido, bats in the belfry,
> Hey libido, bats in the belfry,
> Jolly old Sigmund Freud.

20

PRONUNCIATION

Fairly often one gets inquiries form people about how to "improve their accents", "speak better", "improve their spoken English", and so on. The question is what accent to move them towards and what features to try to change. There is the accent called "Received Pronunciation" (RP) that BBC announcers had to use fifty years ago, and which is still heard on the BBC, not least on the BBC overseas services. It is interesting to note that Lord Reith who was the dominant figure in the governing of the BBC from its founding in 1922, and who insisted on RP for announcers, was a Scot. Mony guid Scots wad nae agree with him.

Received Pronunciation, is not to be confused with standard English, which is a much wider concept, involving grammar, spelling and vocabulary. Indeed, Lord Quirk (formerly Professor Randolph Quirk of London University and one of the authors of *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language*, (1985) the most substantial of modern grammars) is of the opinion that one may speak standard English with any accent, citing FW de Klerk, Nelson Mandela and Bill Clinton as speakers of standard English. (The Times, 12 July, 1993).

Received Pronunciation and the term standard English must also not be confused with the accent of Buckingham Palace. In any case, the linguistic watchers of Buckingham Palace have noticed that the Queen's accent has become slightly vulgarised with time and social change. In England a new accent is gaining ground and some think that it will become a kind of general accent. It has been dubbed Estuary Speech because it seems to have a base in the Thames Estuary east of London.

It must not be thought that the British Settlers who have come to South Africa over the centuries have spoken RP. The 1820 Settlers were groups from various regions of Britain, speaking different regional dialects. The groups included a Scottish party led by that notable figure, Thomas Pringle, the first South African poet to write in English. He is known for his opposition to Lord Charles Somerset on the question of press freedom, and when the good Governor made life too difficult for him, he returned to Britain and became the Secretary of the Anti-Slavery Society. The Eastern Cape has a distinctive English accent that is not RP. The late Professor Guy Butler, the moving figure behind the Grahamstown monument and festival and a notable Shakespearean scholar, spoke with an Eastern Cape accent.

Received Pronunciation is, nevertheless, a useful template or general model. It has been the accent loosely used in teaching spoken English throughout the world, except in areas of American influence. This is not to say that all foreign language learners of English speak with an RP accent - far from it! But the awareness of this loose model has probably meant that speakers of English all over the world can understand one another when they speak.

Received Pronunciation is usually the system of pronunciation used in British dictionaries to show the pronunciation of words. The system used in American dictionaries is, in fact, pretty similar, although it reflects a general American accent.

What follows are a few tips. They will not make those who follow them into the kind of announcer Lord Reith wanted in 1922, but they do point to a few basic things. Furthermore, some of what follows may alert the reader to the forces at work on spoken English in South Africa today. **The reader will have to make his or her choices as to what is taken on board.**

There are three very broad accent groupings in South African that will come up for comment at various times:

1. the accent of English-speaking South Africans, a pretty varied group that of course includes the Indian population;

2. English as influenced by Afrikaans - with some overlapping into No. 1.,
3. English as generally spoken by speakers of the indigenous African languages.

Some of the tips that follow apply to all three. Some are more specific. What needs to be stated is that there is not a single system of pronunciation of English that may be called "South African English", although in the past people have tended to give this name to White English-speaking pronunciation (even though this is, itself, pretty varied).

20.1 STRESS AND RHYTHM

The rhythm of English is determined by an alternation of stressed syllables with unstressed syllables. This can take place within a word or within a sentence.

Potato

The stress is on the second syllable. The first syllable is unstressed. Stress is marked by a short vertical line before the stressed syllable.

Po'tato

This stress mark is very important. When one looks up a word in a dictionary to find out the pronunciation, one must take note of the stress mark.

The pronunciation in a dictionary will be indicated in *phonetic script*, a set of phonetic symbols which must not be mistaken for the spelling alphabet. The sounds represented by these symbols will probably be illustrated by a table somewhere in the dictionary in which each symbol has a word next to it to show the sound. The snag with this system is that English spelling does not accurately and consistently indicate sound - English spelling is far from being *phonetic*. Furthermore, people speak with various accents, and may not pronounce the illustrative words in a way that accurately shows the sound of the accompanying phonetic symbol which the word is intended to illustrate.

Therefore, making out the sounds that the phonetic symbols used by a dictionary represent, presents some difficulty. However, finding the stress mark can be done, and determining where the stress falls in a word of more than one syllable is a most important feature of pronunciation, possibly the most important feature. It is something that gives a lot of trouble in South Africa, for reasons that will be explained later.

Practise aloud all examples given. Some people have very great difficulty in placing the stress in the right place. Try to put the stress on the marked syllable. Some of these words are frequently mispronounced in South Africa.

Euro'pean	incon'ceivable
'innocent	un'bearable
'error	im'pregnable
'seventy	a'bout
con'sider	'contact
cor'rect	con'nect
oc'cur	com'poser
	'circumstances

One must watch out when prefixes and suffixes are added - the stress can sometimes move to another syllable.

ac'celerate	ac'celerator	accele'ration
'capable	ca'pacity	capa'bility
com'bine	combi'nation	

com'municate	com'municator	communi'cation
e'conomy	eco'nomic	eco'nomical
'monarch	'monarchy	mo'narchical
'photo	'photograph	photo'graphic

Sometimes the shift of stress is a little erratic

me'chanic	me'chanical	'mechanism (often incorrectly pronounced)

Sometimes, a word can be stressed in more than one way.

'garage	ga'rage	
'compensate	compen'sation	compen'satory or com'pensatory
con'tribute	'contribute	
con'troversy	'controversy	

Read 20.4 and then come back and do all these words again.

20.2 EXAMPLES OF FREQUENTLY MISPRONOUNCED WORDS

In the following list, the underlining in the left-hand column indicates the incorrect placing of stress. The right-hand column shows correct stress, marked by ' before the syllable that takes the main stress. All these examples were obtained by listening to the SABC.

Incorrect	Correct
appropriate	ap'propriate
category	'category
interested	'interested
commentators	'commentators
development	de'velopment
intimidate	in'timidate
sophisticated	so'phisticated
humanism	'humanism
communism	'communism
seventy	'seventy
knowledge	'knowledge
spoken	'spoken
desolate	'desolate
innocence	'innocence
adolescent	ado'lescent
narrator	nar'rator
unpalatable	un'palatable
attributed	att'ributed
communicate	com'municate
magnetism	'magnetism
mechanism	'mechanism
patriotism	'patriotism
alienated	'alienated
synthesis	'synthesis
monopolise	mo'nopolise
rhetoric	'rhetoric
romance	ro'mance

Read 20.4 and then come back and do all these words again.

20.3 STRESS AND CHANGE OF MEANING AND FUNCTION

There is an important list of words of which the meaning and function change depending on where the stress is put.

For example, a 'convict is a person who has been con'victed. The first one is a noun, the second is a verb, with the stress on the second syllable.

The vowel in the first syllable, if the stress is on the second syllable should, ideally speaking, be reduced. For explanation of vowel reduction in unstressed positions, read the next section 20.4 and then come back to this list and practice reducing where necessary.

It is at least necessary to master the stress patterns in these words, otherwise meaning will be affected. Reduction is a refinement that is desirable but not absolutely essential.

NB. This list contains some exceptions to the usual pattern. The usual pattern is to stress the first syllable for a noun or adjective, and to stress the second syllable for a verb.

a 'convict (noun)	to con'vict (verb)	
'frequent (occurs often - adjective)		
'frequently (adverb)		
to fre'quent (verb - to go to a place frequently)		
'abstract (noun or adj.)	to ab'stract (verb)	
an al'ternative	al'ternative (adj.)	to 'alternate (verb)
an 'attribute (noun)	to at'tribute to (verb)	
a 'compact (noun)	to com'pact (verb)	
'compact (adj) or com'pact (adj) com'pactly (adverb)		
a 'convert	to con'vert	
a 'desert (as in Sahara)	to de'sert	
de'sert (last course of a meal)		
an 'estcourt	to es'court	
in'valid (adj)	to 'validate	
an 'invalid (noun)		
an 'object	to ob'ject	
a 'pervert	to per'vert	
the 'refuse (garbage)	to re'fuse	a re'fusal
a 'contest	to con'test	
a 'secret	to se'crete	
'absent (adj)	to ab'sent oneself/himself	
a 'protest	to pro'test	
an 'essay	to es'say	
a 'prospect	to pros'pect	
a 'reject	to re'ject	
a 'product	to pro'duce	
'progress (noun)	to pro'gress	

20.4 VOWEL REDUCTION IN UNSTRESSED SYLLABLES

A feature of mother-tongue English generally (including general American pronunciation), and especially of Received Pronunciation, is the phenomenon of **vowel reduction in unstressed syllables**.

In the English vowel (vocalic) system there is the vowel known as the neutral vowel. It is a low central vowel: the tongue is in a relaxed position. It's sound is a vague uh sound. The phonetic symbol for this sound is an e that is turned upside down and back to front. It might be useful to be able to identify this

symbol when you consult a dictionary. Phonetic symbols go into square brackets. The symbol for the neutral vowel is [ə].

The neutral vowel [ə] is generally used in English for unstressed syllables in which vowel reduction occurs. A complication is that sometimes, in RP, the vowel [ɪ] is also used in unstressed syllables, although it is usually a full vowel, the sound in sit. For example, the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (OALS) uses [ɪ] in the first syllable of erect, erode, erotic, erupt. Note that one does not say eerect, eerode, eerotic, eerupt: those first syllables are all unstressed. One could also perhaps use [ɪ] in the first syllable of consider and potato and in the last syllable of agreement.

A further complication concerns the South African situation. There is a broad tendency among whites, especially those who are Afrikaans-speaking but also among many English speakers, to use [ə] instead of [ɪ] on many occasions, in sit, pit, this, for example.

Broadly, then, when a syllable is totally unstressed, [ə] and sometimes [ɪ] are used.

With this in mind, let us go back to some of the earlier examples.

1. 'garage 2. ga'rage

In the second one, it is likely that the vowel in the first syllable will be reduced to [ə]. One sometimes hears the second syllable of No. 1 reduced, too.

1. con'tribute 2. 'contribute

In No. 1 the first syllable would be reduced. In No. 2 the first syllable is now stressed. The same would apply to con'troversy and 'controversy.

The first syllable of com'bine would be reduced, also of com'municate. The last syllable of com'municate would also be reduced. In 'capable the first syllable is stressed, but in ca'pacity the first syllable is now unstressed and would be reduced. The word reduced would, itself, have the vowel in the first syllable reduced. In e'conomy the first syllable is reduced, (perhaps to [ɪ] rather than [ə]). In eco'nomic the second syllable is reduced, the first syllable is now not completely unstressed, and the full vowel is used [i:].

'Monarch, 'monarchy and mo'narchical are interesting. Do not allow the eye and the spelling to bamboozle you. That arch is a trap. Use [ə]. In mon'archical the stress is now on the arch, so it is not reduced, while reduction now takes place in the first syllable. The al at the end would also be reduced. (Incidentally, a monarch is a king: the word must not be muddled with the Afrikaans monnik, meaning a monk. Kings are sometimes most un-monk-like in their behaviour.)

English spelling is far from being phonetic. Vowel reduction is one of the features of pronunciation that causes spelling not to be phonetic. There are many others, however. The spelling systems of Afrikaans and of the indigenous African languages are much more closely phonetic and vowel reduction is not a feature of the pronunciation of these languages.

In general, do not be fooled by the eye, and the appearance of spelling. Attention, for example, not only has a reduced vowel in the first syllable, but the io in the last syllable is also [ə]. In the word about, the first vowel is [ə]. We do not say aybout, or ayttention.

In the following words, there is a reduced vowel in the underlined syllable. Where are the stresses?

innocent
error
seventy
correct
occur
corrupt

20.4.1

Up to now we have been considering word stress, the stress patterns that occur in words of more than one syllable. There is also sentence stress. In particular, this concerns the small words in a sentence, which are frequently unstressed: prepositions, for example, or auxiliary verbs, or articles.

In the following examples, the underlined words are unstressed and the vowels are reduced. Some of the vowels in the longer words are also reduced, and have been underlined.

What are you doing?
Have you had a fine time?
He was convicted of murder. (The of has a v sound [əv].)
What are you going to do?
He waited for a while for a bus, but then decided to walk.

It is worth noting, first of all, the number of reduced vowels. Vowel reduction and lack of stress facilitate the easy flow of English.

This is a very important feature of English pronunciation. However, it creates problems, too. There may be difficulties of listening comprehension for those who are unaccustomed to lack of stress and reduction. Word recognition may be difficult. The alternative is a rather plodding succession of sounds.

Stress on the small words in a sentence can change with intonation.

What are you doing?
What ARE you doing?!!

In the first one, the are is represented only by [ə]. In the second the full [a:] sound is used, and a raised intonation on the word are.

Two other observations may be made in passing. The spelling are is one of those deceptive spellings. This concerns the vowel sound and also the letter r, which in RP is not pronounced.

There is an unfortunate tendency among announcers on the SABC to put an entirely unnecessary and illogical stress on the small words in a sentence.

He saw large crowds IN the park.
The President has just returned FROM Europe.

The point is not that the President has returned from Europe - the point is that he has returned from Europe. The point is that there were large crowds and they were in the park. If an unnatural emphasis is put on in, then perhaps the meaning is that the large crowds were in the park and that there were only a few people outside the park. Meaning is affected. This was, however, clearly not what the announcer in question was trying to say.

Here is another example.

Mr Jones of Cape Town IS with us.

What a surprise! We thought he was not here. He is with us after all.

20.5 POETIC METRE

The basic of metre in English poetry is stressed and unstressed syllables. There are the traditional poetic feet, but they do not quite fit the bill, being inherited from classical Latin and Greek poetry, where they indicated quantity, i.e. length, rather than stress.

Poetry (or at least verse) with a clearly marked rhythm is a considerable adjunct to teaching English, especially to second and foreign language learners. If there is a tune, so much the better. Children should be brought up on nursery rhymes. The verse does not have to be particularly elevated. The underlined syllables are the unstressed, reduced, “weak” syllables.

What shall we do with the drunken sailor? ...etc

On a slightly more serious note but with a very clear beat, is this verse from the poet Swinburne.

When the hounds of spring are on winter's traces,
The mother of months in meadow or plain
Fills the shadows and windy places
With lisp of leaves and ripple of rain. (of = [əv])

If one does not get the reduced vowels, especially in the last line, the verse plods and loses its flow and magic. Just imagine the effect of:

WITH lisp OF leaves AND ripple OF rain.

Not all English verse is as regular as this. Take these lines that open one of Shakespeare's Sonnets.

Like as the waves make towards the pebbled shore,
So do our minutes hasten to their end.

There are meant to be five strong beats in each line, but are there really? Play with the words, try to get over the unimportant words quickly, and see what you finish up with.

20.6 STRESS - TIMED AND SYLLABLE - TIMED LANGUAGES

English is a stress-timed language. A great many languages are syllable-timed. The implication of this latter system is that there is equal stress on all syllables, there are no weak syllables and there is no vowel reduction.

French, for instance, is governed by the principle of what is called *egalite*. Say this word with equal stress on all syllables and you will get the idea. The same word, taken into English, is said with a very different rhythm: e'gality. There is a strong stress on the second syllable, the first syllable is weak with a reduced vowel, so is the last syllable. These two words illustrate the different rhythmic principles of the two languages.

The indigenous African languages are syllable-timed. The consequence, for the speakers of these languages is that there is difficulty in knowing which syllable takes the stress, and in pronouncing weak syllables, especially when vowel reduction is required.

The question of vowel reduction is further problematised by the fact that the African languages do not have the neutral vowel [ə] nor the "barred ɪ" [ɪ]. These two vowels, and especially [ə], are central vowels, that is, they are made in the central part of the vowel area in the mouth. The African languages do not have vowels in this area. There are, therefore, two strong factors that make weak syllables and vowel reduction difficult for speakers of the indigenous African languages. English has a number of "central" vowels. See section 20.10.

Afrikaans has got [ə] in its vowel system and is a stress-timed language, although reduction is possibly not as prevalent as in English, especially Received Pronunciation.

What complicates the matter even further for all non-mother-tongue speakers of English is the way-ward and unphonetic English spelling system with its tendency to make people take spelling as a guide.

English-speaking South Africans are by no means immune to the problems of correct placing of stress and of vowel reduction.

South Africans should understand the basic principles involved in this clash of languages. What they do about it is a matter of individual choice.

There are some other tips that can be given about accent.

20.7 VOWEL LENGTH

English is very pernickety about vowel length. English has five long vowels. A long vowel is indicated in the phonetic alphabet by a colon: after the symbol. For example, [i:] is the sound in speak, see, receive (second syllable, not first, which is reduced), me, key, quay, believe (second syllable - the first is reduced). It is worth noting that there are many spellings for this sound [i:]. English spelling is not phonetic.

When you look up a word in a dictionary, check for the **:** that indicates a long vowel.

Here are the long vowels in English, represented by words in spelling.

1. see, speak, key
2. car, calm
3. bird, heard, germ
4. food, you, mule, union
5. ought, cause, port

Other vowels in English are short. There are no pairs of long and short vowels. The problem comes when long vowels are pronounced short and short vowels are given length. It is essentially the ship/ sheep problem, which is, incidentally a world-wide English second and foreign language problem. Here are some examples.

fulfilled	becomes	foolfeeled
spin and win	becomes	speen and ween
it is	becomes	eet eez
these	becomes	this (hence the plural is beginning to disappear)
peace	becomes	piss
port	becomes	pot
sheep	becomes	ship
ship	becomes	sheep
each	becomes	itch
beach	becomes	bitch
field	becomes	filled
court	becomes	cot
short	becomes	shot
beaten	becomes	bitten
bitten	becomes	beaten (I was beaten by a dog. I was bitten at tennis.)

In the last case, quite possibly, the last syllable of bitten, which should be the neutral vowel, is lengthened.

Recently is sometimes pronounced with a short first vowel and a long second vowel. Likewise, reason is heard with a short first vowel and lengthened second vowel.

timber	becomes	teember
team	becomes	tim

The neutral vowel [ə] is always short. One sometimes hears an unnatural lengthening in the tion ending of words. Position should have the short neutral vowel at the end. Sometimes one hears the sound as in set but very drawn out.

The Queen of England gets a short vowel in Queen and a long vowel [i:] in the first syllable of England. (The Quin of Eengland.)This swapping of long and short vowels in the same phrase is quite frequent. The neutral vowel [ə] in the second syllable of England could also be lengthened. You are referred to section 20.10.

20.8 VOICING AND UNVOICING

Say the words hiss or kiss and then the words zoo or buzz. Notice the difference between the sounds represented by the letter s and the letter z. The first is an unvoiced sound - the vocal chords in the larynx do not vibrate. The second is a voiced sound - the vocal chords vibrate.

The English consonantal system is characterised by a number of pairs of voiced and unvoiced consonants. There is some confusion about this in the South African context.

put	but
ten	den
come	go
church	judge
full	very
thin	then
some	zeal
ship	pleasure

Take the word decision. The c is unvoiced[s], the s is the sound in the middle of pleasure. One hears reversal of voiced and unvoiced sometimes. The s becomes the voiced z and the other becomes unvoiced as in ship.

The problem is frequently one to do with the terminal consonants i.e. the consonants at the ends of words. Afrikaans usually has unvoiced terminal consonants. English distinguishes carefully between voiced and unvoiced terminal consonants.

The consequence is that the s in the third person singular of verbs can be unvoiced. Goes loses the z sound. Runs with z gets an s sound. S in the plural is sometimes unvoiced sometimes voiced. Cats (unvoiced), dogs (voiced z). Dogs can become docks. The reason why these is tending to be replaced by this is not only because the long vowel is shortened, but because the voiced [z] at the end of these tends to be unvoiced to [s].

The ed in the past tense, when one gets the voiced d sound (for both occur) can become unvoiced. Rubbed can become rupt, for example.

The moral is, then, that one should always look carefully at consonants at the ends of words. Look at "ends" [z]. It might be ents. Look carefully at the letters s and d.

Here is a list of Afrikaans words that illustrate how Afrikaans unvoices the terminal consonant, whatever the spelling.

eet	eed
hart	hard
voet	voed
ent	end
bont	bond

Here are some English pairs that show how English preserves the distinction between voiced and unvoiced final consonants.

dogs	docks	cadge	catch
rags	racks	fears	fierce
mud	mut	spend	spent
edge	etch	bid	bit
owed	oat	knees	niece
food	foot	floors	floss

20.8.1

Finally, have you considered some of the phonetic logic in dogs[z] and cats[s]. Obviously, with the voiced [g] in dogs it is easier to have a voiced [z] to follow. Similarly, the unvoiced [t] in cat required an unvoiced [s] after it.

The same logic can affect the ed in the past tense. Take peeked. The e in the ed disappeared in the distant past. That left the d next to the k. The d should be voiced but the k is unvoiced, so the d conformed and became t. We say peekt, although we still spell it peeked. For those who might be interested, the technical term for any process by which one sound changes under the influence of an adjacent sound is assimilation. We say that the sound that changes is assimilated to the sound that causes the change.

20.9 THE LETTER *r*

This letter, and the sounds that are associated with it, give some trouble.

In RP the letter is very often not pronounced. Take the word carter. In RP neither of the r letters is pronounced. The auxiliary verb are is said without the r. On the other hand, the r in run or in very is pronounced.

We are concerned particularly with the post-vocalic r, obviously the r after a vowel. Languages that pronounce the post-vocalic r are rhotic, those that do not are non-rhotic.

RP is non-rhotic. Many other English accents are rhotic e.g. Scots, Irish, Welsh, general American (but not the deep South). The Afrikaans accent is rhotic.

In the words here, there, the r is silent. If one says "here and there", however, it is possible in RP to pronounce the r at the end of here, as it performs a linking function.

This, then, is the first question about r: is it pronounced or is it not?

The second question is what sound do we use if we do pronounce it?

There are two kinds of r sounds that are important. The one is the rolled r, the kind of sound usually found in Afrikaans, in some Scottish accents and in Welsh. The rolled r is made by a rapid series of taps of the tip of the tongue on the alveolar ridge - that ridge behind the upper teeth just before the palate begins.

The other r sound, the one associated with RP, is made by curling the tongue back behind the alveolar ridge; however the tongue does not touch anything.

Dictionaries very often do not distinguish between the two sounds in their phonetic annotation, using the symbol [r] for both kinds. If you want to be more precise, then use [r] for the rolled r. For the RP kind of r, turn the symbol upside down and back to front. This symbol is called the inverted r.

Finally, if you bry, enjoy it.

20.10 CENTRAL AND "TENSE" VOWELS

In section 20.6 some mention was made of the difficulties that speakers of the indigenous African languages have with the neutral vowel [ə], because it is one of the so-called "central vowels". In phonetic jargon, vowels at the edge of the vowel area are called "tense" vowels, and the vowels in the African languages are all "tense".

Thus, not only the neutral vowel but all vowels that are not "tense" tend to give difficulties. In particular, the central vowel in the words bird, heard, germ, word gives some trouble. It is usually fronted to the tense front vowel that is found in set. For bird you will get bed, for germ gem, for heard head, and so on.

The central vowels in English are:

sit
bird, earth (long vowel)
about (neutral vowel)
butter
pot, top, was
full, wool

Watch out for them. Speakers of African languages have trouble with them. Afrikaans-speakers have trouble with sit and was, in particular. With the exception of bird/earth, all these vowels are short. You are referred to 20.7.

20.11 THE DIPHTHONGS

There are two kinds of vocalic (vowel) sound, simple vowels and diphthongs. The simple vowels can be either long or short, or central and tense. The diphthong is a vowel in which the tongue glides from one point to another. The word glide is important: the movement is not a jump, although it takes only a moment.

The following words illustrate the diphthongs in English: they are grouped according to the point to which the glide goes.

Group one:

glide, fine, pie, sky, time
play, say, day
boy, toy

Group two:

house, brown, cow, bough
go, glow

Group three:

here, beer, year
fair, bear, there, glare
poor,
more, door

White, English-speaking South Africans tend to weaken the glide of some of these or to eliminate it altogether. In particular, the glides in glide, time in group 1, and fair hair in group 3 can be very noticably weakened or eliminated, perhaps with a change in the initial position, too. Poor and more in group 3 are also usually glideless. “Fine time” and “fair hair” are the real trademarks.

Naturally, if a diphthong has no glide it ceases to be a diphthong and becomes a simple vowel.

These weakened glides have become fairly general South African. The Indian accent shows glide weakening in play and go.

There are no diphthongs in the indigenous African languages, so speakers of these languages are likely to have trouble with all diphthongs.

20.12 THE “H” SOUND

You remember Eliza Doolittle being bullied by Professor Henry Higgins into saying:

In Hertford, Hereford and Hampshire, hurricanes hardly ever happen.

Eliza is a Cockney, and her tendency is to drop the h sound and occasionally to put it in where it should not be:

urricanes ardly hever appen.

South Africa shows some different patterns. Firstly, the h sound exists in unvoiced and voiced forms. The RP sound and the sound very widely used in the English-speaking world, is the unvoiced form. The symbol for this is [h]. The symbol for the voiced form has the top of the symbol curled over.

The voiced form is characteristic of Afrikaans and is becoming very general. It is sometimes mistakenly thought to be a dropped h, but it is most certainly not.

20.13 ASPIRATION

A characteristic of RP and of English generally is aspiration on p, t, and k. Aspiration is a little extra push of breath.

Pat and tap the cat.

These, for the record, are the unvoiced plosives.

These three consonants are not aspirated if combined with another consonant e.g. spin.

Lack of aspiration is very widespread in South Africa, generally, especially in the Afrikaans accent.

20.14 THE VOWEL IN "SIT": THE "BARRED ɪ"

The vowel in sit undergoes frequent change in South Africa. Sometimes it becomes the long [i:] as in seat. Sometimes it becomes the neutral vowel [ə].

20.15 BRITISH PLACE NAMES

It has often enough been remarked in these notes that English spelling can not be trusted. This is nowhere more evident than in the pronunciation of British place names. Be warned!

Gloucester (gloster)
Harwich (haridge)
Holborn (hoben - second syllable reduced)
Cirencester (sisister - sometimes)
Bicester (bister)
Keswick (kezik)

It gets much worse when you get into the Celtic regions: Wales and the Scottish Highlands.

Names have usually gone through long processes of assimilation and sluring (the dropping of sounds).

Other words show these processes to a marked degree, too, for example the language of the sea.

boatswain	=	bosun
forecastle	=	focsle
gunwhale	=	gunnel

We no longer go down to the sea in ships but catch respiratory diseases while flying.

A hundred years ago, a gentleman would not talk of his "waistcoat" but of his "weskit".

What can happen is best illustrated by two aristocratic English family names:

Cholmondeley
Fancourthang

Chumly! Fanshaw! Can you beat it!

20.16 CONSONANT CLUSTERS

This is relevant to certain European languages, Italian for example, to the indigenous African languages, and to Japanese.

English has many consonant clusters. Some people, through mother-tongue influence, try to put vowels between the consonants.

Also, English ends many words on a consonant. Some speakers of other languages would like to put a vowel sound after the final consonant.

20.17 BAD STRESS HABITS

There are some bad stress habits to be observed in South Africa. They are spread by a wide variety of SABC announcers. They affect meaning and are illogical and affected. The problem is unnecessary stress on small words that should be unstressed.

> Many South Africans think it will not happen to them.

The stress should fall on them - the sense requires it.

> The table tennis championships will be held later this month.

One would put extra stress on the will only to contradict somebody who had said they won't be held later. For a plain statement of fact, the emphasis must go on "later this month".

> . . . play a key role (a pronounced ay)

The a is usually unstressed (with the vowel reduced). The meaning requires the emphasis on key.

The habit is spreading. Here is an SAA pilot to the passengers, coming down at Johannesburg.

> It's been our pleasure to bring you safely to Johannesburg.

Did he mean a contrast to from Johannesburg?

Sentence stress, as discussed earlier, usually requires lack of stress on the small words in a sentence, often with reduction. Only unusual circumstances need stress on these words.

20.18 BAD INTONATION HABITS

Again, announcers on the SABC are responsible for spreading bad habits. In this case, it is a wrong "tune", a dip in pitch when a high tone is needed.

> Cape Town.

The voice should go up on Cape. If a lower tone is used then meaning changes. The implication is that it is not Cape Town but Cape village or Cape something else that is intended.

If you say that something is "not child's play", with a low intonation on child's and a raised intonation and more emphasis on play, then you imply that it is perhaps child's work, by contrast. The natural, usual intonation pattern is a raised tone on child's - the meaning requires this.

> Toronto citizens are outraged.
> St Lucia is a unique water system.
> The South African cricket team.

These examples were all pronounced with a low tone on out, water, cricket, and then a higher tone on the underlined element. The opposite should be the case.

MARKING CODE

The object of this code is to speed up the correcting of grammar and other aspects of writing. Obviously, the students must be told the meaning of the code. Consistent use of this code by all teaching staff would help to drive home certain points of grammar and of writing skills. The code can act as a check list.

Con	=	Concord
S+V	=	Agreement of subject and verb
S	=	Faulty syntax or sentence structure
S.Frag	=	Sentence fragment
R-on	=	Run-on sentence
Vb?	=	Where is the finite verb?
Com	=	Comma fault
Punc	=	Punctuation fault
T	=	Faulty tenses
Pres Perf	=	Present Perfect tense needed
Past Perf	=	Past Perfect tense needed
Simple Pres	=	Simple Present needed
Wr cont.	=	Continuous tense faulty, use Simple
Do Supp	=	Fault with Do Support
Pro Ante?	=	Where is the antecedent of the pronoun?
Part	=	Misrelated or unrelated participle
Modal	=	Modal fault
Cond	=	Incorrect conditional construction
Uncountable	=	Uncountable noun - plural can’t be used
Pass needed	=	Passive voice needed
Act needed	=	Active voice needed
Pass form	=	Defective passive structure
WW	=	Wrong word
Logic?	=	Logic not clear
Signpost	=	Better use of connectors, conjunctions and signposting devices needed