

## COMMON GRAMMATICAL ERRORS

### 1. Incorrect subject-verb agreement

- *The relationship between a subject and its verb*

Incorrect: *It is a combination of factors that cause the present situation*

Revised: *It is a combination of factors that causes the present situation*

Note:            I/you/they/we these    cause  
                  he/she/it/this        causes

Note: *common academic mass/uncountable nouns are software, data, information, equipment, machinery, knowledge, space, oxygen, steel, water, environment and technology – these do not have plural forms; this means that informations does not exist!*

### Activity: Subject Verb Agreement

- Of all the countries in that area of the world, perhaps Nigeria \_\_\_\_\_ the most potential. (have/**has**)
- Houses built in Victoria \_\_\_\_\_ less than those in New South Wales. (**cost**/costs)
- As most sports magazines can attest, playing sports such as tennis and basketball \_\_\_\_\_ not only mental ability but also physical strength. (require/**requires**)
- Common knowledge to anyone who studies science, the earth \_\_\_\_\_ on its own axis once every 24 hours. (revolve/**revolves**)
- Of all the grammar points I have studied in my seven years of English, the most recent unit \_\_\_\_\_ me the most for a variety of reasons. (confuse/**confuses**)

### 2. Wrong tense or verb form

- *The verb form that shows whether you are referring to the past, future or present*

Incorrect: *It was not until a sociological view of the situation was combining with a psychological approach that some progress was made.*

Revised: *It was not until a sociological view of the situation **combined** with a psychological approach that some progress was made.*

### Activity: Correct Verb Form

- After I had eaten my lunch, I \_\_\_\_\_ to her while she was eating hers. (was talking/have talked/**talked**)

## UTS: HELPS

- b. He has a party every weekend and his friends \_\_\_\_\_ to it without fail.  
(come/are coming/came)
- c. He told me that the sun \_\_\_\_\_ with a beautiful display of colours.  
(rises/rose/is rising)
- d. She was late and he \_\_\_\_\_ on the corner long before she came.  
(has been standing/had been standing/is standing)

### 3. Incorrect singular/plural agreement

- Agreement between noun forms

Incorrect: *Tourism have been considered one of the most important factor in the town's economic development.*

Revised: *Tourism **has** been considered one of the most important **factors** in the town's economic development.*

Note: *Uncountable nouns such as knowledge, information, advice, progress, research and machinery can be problematic*

### 4. Incorrect word form

- Using the wrong form – verb, adjective, noun or adverb – of a word

Incorrect: *The primary emphasis of early research on leadership was psychologically and focused on the personality characteristics typical found among success leaders.*

Revised: *The primary emphasis of early research on leadership was **psychological** and focused on the personality characteristics **typically** found among **successful** leaders.*

Note: *to address this problem you need to change the format of the sentence to find the correct form – you may need to use a dictionary or thesaurus.*

### 5. Unclear pronoun reference

- Unclear pronoun reference makes sentences confusing, vague, and difficult to understand.

Incorrect: *Both Isabel and Barbara loved her children.*

Revised: *Both Isabel and Barbara loved **Isabel's/Barbara's/their** children.*

Note: *Find the pronoun and replace it with the antecedent. If the pronoun reference is clear, the sentence should make sense.*

## 6. Incorrect use of articles

- *The incorrect use or omission of a, an and the*

Incorrect: *The meeting ended with a call for humanitarian approach to be taken over a plight of the refugees around the globe.*

Revised: *(general – around the globe) The meeting ended with a call for **a** humanitarian approach to be taken over **the** plight of **refugees around the globe**.*

**Revised: (specific place – in East Timor)** *The meeting ended with a call for **a** humanitarian approach to be taken over **the** plight of **the refugees in East Timor**.*

Note: *if a word begins with a consonant, but sounds as if it begins **with a vowel it should be treated as if it starts with a vowel, i.e. an hour, an heir***

### Activity: Articles

- Are you shopping for \_\_\_ health club to join so you can get in shape?  
i. **a**            ii. an            iii. the            iv. no article is needed
- Shop wisely! You could end up choosing \_\_\_ wrong club and losing more money than pounds.  
i. a            ii. an            iii. **the**            iv. no article is needed
- You may find that \_\_\_ European vacation is just what you need.  
i. **a**            ii. an            iii. the            iv. no article is needed
- When you undertake a research, you will need to gather \_\_\_ data samples.  
i. a            ii. an            iii. the            iv. **no article is needed**
- Doctors often use \_\_\_ information manuals to keep up to date with new medications.  
i. a            ii. an            iii. the            iv. **no article is needed**

## 7. Wrong or missing prepositions

- *Using the wrong preposition is a common error as most prepositions are not stressed or pronounced clearly in speech. They are also often left out accidentally in writing.*

Incorrect: *The study emphasised on the need of further research to ascertain the influence by television violence to young children.*

Revised: *The study emphasised on the need of further research to ascertain the influence **of** television violence **on** young children.*

Note: *Prepositions need copious practice.*

## 8. Omitted commas

- *Commas should be used in compound sentences, before conjunctions, after transitions and between clauses. Use or omission of commas can change the emphasis of the sentence.*

Incorrect: *When it comes to eating people differ in their tastes.*

Revised: *When it comes to eating, people differ in their tastes.*

Incorrect: *My sister who lives in New York is doing a PhD.*

Correct: *My sister, who lives in New York, is doing a PhD.*

## 9. Too many commas

- *Unnecessary commas make sentences difficult to read.*

Incorrect: *Field trips are required, in several courses, such as, botany and geology.*

Revised: *Field trips are require in several courses, such as botany and geology.*

Incorrect: *The term, "computer literacy," has become almost a cliché, in educational circles.*

Revised: *The term "computer literacy" has become almost a cliché in educational circles.*

## 10. Possessive apostrophe error

- *Apostrophes indicate possession for nouns, omissions in contractions and are, in general, not used to indicate plurals.*

Incorrect: *In the current conflict, it's uncertain who's borders they are crossing.*

Revised: *In the current conflict **it is** uncertain **whose** borders they are crossing.*

Note: *In academic writing you should avoid contractions.*

## 11. Incorrect word use

- *Using a word with the wrong meaning often due to similar spelling or pronunciation can occur when using spell check!*

Incorrect: *The recession had a negative affect on sales.*

Revised: *The recession had a negative **effect** on sales.*

Incorrect: *The purpose of there visit was political.*

Revised: *The purpose of **their** visit was political.*

Incorrect: *The types of information are quiet different.*

Revised: *The types of information are **quite** different.*

## PRACTICE

**Identify any grammatical errors in the following sentences and correct them where necessary.**

This report gives an analytical of the financial stableness of XYZ Ltd.

*This report gives an analysis of the financial stableness of XYZ Ltd.*

The more rapidly the economy grow and the complexities of business increases, the more rapidly the need for accounting grow.

*The more rapidly the economy grows and the complexities of business increases, the more rapidly the need for accounting grows.*

The financial information consists of a profit-and-loss statements for the year ending 30/6/96, and a balance sheet as at 30/6/96 for three separate accounting system.

*The financial information consists of a profit and loss statement for the year ending 30/6/96, and a balance sheet as at 30/6/96 for three separate accounting systems.*

Form yourselves into the groups of four or five people and develop marketing plan for the new product.

*Form yourselves into groups of four or five people and develop a marketing plan for the new product.*

In this article, we will provide conceptual definitions of four vanity-related traits, develop self-report measures of the traits, and have extensively validated these measures. We then demonstrated the relevance of the traits to a number of consumer-related behaviours. Last, we offer a discussion with implications for future research.

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The goals of macro-economic policy include increasing gross domestic product; controlling inflation and making unemployment to be as low as possible.

*The goals of macro-economic policy include increasing gross domestic product; controlling inflation; and making unemployment to be as low as possible.*

Using “action research” as a keyword to do a search, one finds articles distributed among social science, education, IT and other areas, the number of published articles relevant to IT in academic journals is very small.

*Using “action research” as a keyword to do a search, one finds articles distributed among social science, education, IT and other areas. The number of published articles relevant to IT in academic journals is very small.*

Using “green IT” as keywords to do a search on the databases for the report.

*Using “green IT” as a keyword to do a search on the databases for the report, xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx.*

Plagiarism has been increasing at a great rate over the past few years due to the widespread availability of Internet access, which enables students to get copies of other writers' work which at one time would only have been available in libraries.

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A book of notes outlining all his theories.

*A book of notes outlining all his theories xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx.*

*Check and compare your answers with a partner!*