



202 English Rules Explained

Every rule explained in simple English: why it works, how to spot it in the exam, more examples, the common trap, a memory trick and a practice question.
For Bank, SSC and Railway exams.

202

rules explained

404

X wrong / ✓ correct examples

Top 50

one-line rules for the night before

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Subject-Verb Agreement

1 Each / every / either / neither + singular verb.

✗ Each of the boys have a book.

✓ Each of the boys has a book.

Exam tip: The noun after “of” does not decide the verb.

WHY?	“Each” and “every” look at people one by one, so “each boy” means one boy. One person needs a singular verb.
SPOT IT	The subject starts with each / every / either / neither, often followed by “of the ...”.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ Every student and every teacher was present. ✓ Neither of the answers is correct.
TRAP	The plural noun after “of” (of the boys) tempts you to use a plural verb.
TRICK	Each = 1 → is / has / was.
TRY IT	Either of the two roads ___ to the station. (lead / leads) (answer at the end of the topic)

2 “One of the” + plural noun + singular verb.

✗ One of my friends are a doctor.

✓ One of my friends is a doctor.

WHY?	The subject is “one”, not “friends”. “Of my friends” only tells us which group the one person is from.
SPOT IT	“One of the / one of my” + plural noun.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ One of the windows is broken. ✓ One of my teachers lives in Delhi.
TRAP	Writing a singular noun after “one of”: one of my friend.
TRICK	One of many, but only ONE does the action.
TRY IT	One of the players ___ injured. (was / were) (answer at the end of the topic)



3

With as well as / along with / together with / in addition to, the verb agrees with the FIRST subject.

✗ The teacher as well as the students are present.

✓ The teacher as well as the students is present.

WHY?

“As well as, along with” only add side information; they do not join two subjects. So the first noun is the real subject.

SPOT IT

as well as / along with / together with / with / besides / in addition to between the subject and the verb.

MORE EXAMPLES

✓ The captain, along with his players, was honoured.

✓ My friends as well as my brother are coming.

TRAP

Treating “A as well as B” like “A and B” and using a plural verb.

TRICK

Cover the “as well as ...” part and read the sentence again.

TRY IT

The minister, with his officers, ___ visiting the area. (is / are) (answer at the end of the topic)

4

With either...or / neither...nor, the verb agrees with the NEARER subject.

✗ Neither the teacher nor the students was present.

✓ Neither the teacher nor the students were present.

WHY?

With either...or / neither...nor only one of the two subjects is chosen, so the verb follows the subject closest to it.

SPOT IT

either...or, neither...nor, or, nor joining two subjects.

MORE EXAMPLES

✓ Either the boys or their father has the key.

✓ Neither he nor I am guilty.

TRAP

Matching the verb with the first subject.

TRICK

Look just left of the verb: the nearest noun wins.

TRY IT

Neither my parents nor my sister ___ at home. (is / are) (answer at the end of the topic)



5 With not only...but also, the verb agrees with the nearer subject.

✗ Not only the students but also the teacher were laughing.

✓ Not only the students but also the teacher was laughing.

WHY?	Like either...or, only the second (nearer) subject decides the verb.
SPOT IT	not only ... but also between two subjects.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ Not only the players but also the coach was happy. ✓ Not only the coach but also the players were happy.
TRAP	Making the verb agree with the first subject.
TRICK	Nearest subject wins, just like either...or.
TRY IT	Not only Ravi but also his friends ___ invited. (was / were) (answer at the end of the topic)

6 “A number of” + plural verb; “the number of” + singular verb.

✗ A number of students was absent.

✓ A number of students were absent.

Exam tip: The number of students is fifty.

WHY?	“A number of” means “many”, so it is plural. “The number of” means the count itself, which is one number, so it is singular.
SPOT IT	a number of / the number of + plural noun.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ A number of books are missing. ✓ The number of books in the library is 5,000.
TRAP	Mixing them up because the noun after “of” is plural in both.
TRICK	A number = many (plural); THE number = one count (singular).
TRY IT	The number of accidents ___ increased. (has / have) (answer at the end of the topic)

7 “Many a” + singular noun + singular verb.

✗ Many a student have failed.

✓ Many a student has failed.

WHY?	“Many a” is followed by a singular noun, so the verb is singular too, even though the meaning is “many”.
SPOT IT	“many a” + noun.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ Many a man has lost his job. ✓ Many a day was spent waiting.
TRAP	Thinking “many” always means plural.
TRICK	Many a + one noun + one verb (has / is / was).
TRY IT	Many a soldier ___ died for the country. (has / have) (answer at the end of the topic)



8 “More than one” + singular noun + singular verb.

✗ More than one student were absent.

✓ More than one student was absent.

WHY?	“More than one” goes with a singular noun, so the verb is singular.
SPOT IT	“more than one” + noun.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ More than one book is missing. ✓ More than one person was hurt.
TRAP	Writing a plural noun: more than one books.
TRICK	More than ONE → think “one” → singular.
TRY IT	More than one candidate ___ absent. (was / were) (answer at the end of the topic)

9 Two subjects joined by “and” take a plural verb.

✗ Ram and Shyam is good friends.

✓ Ram and Shyam are good friends.

WHY?	“A and B” means two people or things, so the verb is plural.
SPOT IT	Two nouns joined by “and” (without each / every before them).
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ My father and my uncle are doctors. ✓ Hard work and honesty are needed.
TRAP	Forgetting the plural when the subject is long.
TRICK	A + B = 2 → are / have / were.
TRY IT	Rita and her sister ___ in Pune. (live / lives) (answer at the end of the topic)

10 Two nouns with ONE article mean one person or thing: singular verb.

✗ The poet and painter are dead.

✓ The poet and painter is dead.

Exam tip: Count the articles: one “the” = one person.

WHY?	“The poet and painter” (one “the”) is one man who is both. “The poet and the painter” (two “the”) are two men.
SPOT IT	Two nouns joined by “and”: count the articles.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ The secretary and treasurer has resigned. (one person) ✓ The secretary and the treasurer have resigned. (two people)
TRAP	Always using a plural verb after “and”.
TRICK	One article = one person.
TRY IT	The principal and teacher ___ absent today (one person). (is / are) (answer at the end of the topic)



11 Two nouns that make one idea take a singular verb.

✗ Bread and butter are his breakfast.

✓ Bread and butter is his breakfast.

WHY?	Some pairs are thought of as one thing (bread and butter = one meal), so they take a singular verb.
SPOT IT	Fixed pairs: bread and butter, rice and curry, slow and steady, law and order.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ Slow and steady wins the race. ✓ Rice and curry is my favourite dish.
TRAP	Using “are” only because of “and”.
TRICK	One dish or one idea = singular.
TRY IT	Law and order ___ a state subject. (is / are) (answer at the end of the topic)

12 Each / every before nouns joined by “and”: singular verb.

✗ Every boy and every girl were given a prize.

✓ Every boy and every girl was given a prize.

WHY?	When “each” or “every” comes before the nouns, each noun is taken one at a time, so the verb is singular.
SPOT IT	each / every before nouns joined by “and”.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ Each man and each woman has a vote. ✓ Every room and every hall was cleaned.
TRAP	Using a plural verb because of “and”.
TRICK	Every ... and every ... = one at a time.
TRY IT	Every boy and girl ___ to bring a pen. (has / have) (answer at the end of the topic)

13 A collective noun acting as one unit: singular verb.

✗ The jury have given its verdict.

✓ The jury has given its verdict.

WHY?	A collective noun (jury, team, committee, family, army) is one group. When the group acts together, use a singular verb.
SPOT IT	Collective noun + one shared action (gave its verdict, won the match).
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ The team has won the match. ✓ The committee has made its decision.
TRAP	Using “have” because the group has many people.
TRICK	Whole group together = it / its / has.
TRY IT	The army ___ marched to the border. (has / have) (answer at the end of the topic)



14 A collective noun whose members act separately: plural verb.

✗ The jury is divided in their opinions.

✓ The jury are divided in their opinions.

Exam tip: Look at "its" or "their" to decide.

WHY?	When the members act separately or disagree, the group is seen as many persons, so the verb is plural.
SPOT IT	divided, disagree, among themselves, their.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ The family are quarrelling among themselves. ✓ The jury were divided in their opinions.
TRAP	Mixing "its" and "their" in the same sentence.
TRICK	"their / among themselves" → plural verb.
TRY IT	The committee ___ divided on the issue. (is / are) (answer at the end of the topic)

15 News, mathematics, physics, economics (subject), measles: singular verb.

✗ The news are true.

✓ The news is true.

WHY?	These words end in -s but mean one thing (one piece of news, one subject, one disease), so the verb is singular.
SPOT IT	news, mathematics, physics, economics, politics (as a subject), measles, mumps, billiards.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ Mathematics is my favourite subject. ✓ Measles is a common disease.
TRAP	The -s ending looks plural.
TRICK	Subject name or disease name = singular.
TRY IT	Physics ___ a difficult subject for many. (is / are) (answer at the end of the topic)

16 An amount, distance or time taken as one whole: singular verb.

✗ Five hundred rupees are a big amount.

✓ Five hundred rupees is a big amount.

WHY?	An amount of money, time or distance is taken as one total, so the verb is singular.
SPOT IT	Number + rupees / years / kilometres + is / are.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ Ten kilometres is a long walk. ✓ Two years is a long time.
TRAP	The number makes it look plural.
TRICK	One total = one sum = singular.
TRY IT	Fifty thousand rupees ___ too much for this phone. (is / are) (answer at the end of the topic)



17 Words between the subject and the verb do not change the verb.

✗ The quality of the mangoes are poor.

✓ The quality of the mangoes is poor.

Exam tip: Find the real subject first.

WHY?	The verb agrees with the main subject, not with the noun closest to it. "Of the mangoes" only describes the subject.
SPOT IT	Subject + of / with / in + plural noun + verb.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ The cost of these books is high. ✓ The leader of the workers was arrested.
TRAP	Matching the verb with the nearest noun.
TRICK	Cover the "of ..." phrase and read again.
TRY IT	The box of pencils ___ on the table. (is / are) (answer at the end of the topic)

18 After "there is / there are" the noun that follows decides the verb.

✗ There is many reasons for this.

✓ There are many reasons for this.

WHY?	In "there is / there are" the real subject comes after the verb, so look ahead to find it.
SPOT IT	The sentence starts with There is / are / was / were / has been.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ There are two pens on the table. ✓ There was a lot of noise.
TRAP	Using "there is" by habit with a plural noun.
TRICK	Look RIGHT after "there": that noun decides.
TRY IT	There ___ many mistakes in your essay. (is / are) (answer at the end of the topic)



19 “Who / that / which” takes the verb of the noun it refers to.

✗ He is one of the best players who has played for India.

✓ He is one of the best players who have played for India.

Exam tip: “who” refers to “players” (plural).

WHY?	“Who / that / which” refers to the noun just before it. If that noun is plural, the verb after “who” is plural.
SPOT IT	“one of the + plural noun + who / that”.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ She is one of the girls who sing well. ✓ This is one of the books that are popular.
TRAP	Using a singular verb because of “one”. (But “the only one of the girls who sings” is singular.)
TRICK	Ask “who sing?” → the girls (plural).
TRY IT	He is one of those men who ___ hard. (work / works) (answer at the end of the topic)

20 Book or film titles that look plural take a singular verb.

✗ “The Arabian Nights” are a famous book.

✓ “The Arabian Nights” is a famous book.

WHY?	A book or film title is the name of one work, so it takes a singular verb.
SPOT IT	A title in quotes or italics.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ “The Times of India” is a daily newspaper. ✓ “Gulliver’s Travels” is a famous novel.
TRAP	Being fooled by the plural word inside the title.
TRICK	One book = one thing.
TRY IT	“Great Expectations” ___ written by Dickens. (was / were) (answer at the end of the topic)

21 “The” + adjective (the rich, the poor, the old) means people: plural verb.

✗ The rich is not always happy.

✓ The rich are not always happy.

WHY?	“The rich” means “rich people”, so it is plural.
SPOT IT	the + adjective (rich, poor, old, young, blind) as the subject.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ The poor need help. ✓ The young are full of energy.
TRAP	Adding -s: the riches, the poors.
TRICK	the rich = rich people → plural.
TRY IT	The old ___ respect. (deserve / deserves) (answer at the end of the topic)



22 Everyone, everybody, someone, anyone, nobody + singular verb.

✗ Everybody have arrived.

✓ Everybody has arrived.

WHY?	Everyone, someone, nobody, anyone, each one mean one person, so they take a singular verb.
SPOT IT	Words ending in -one, -body, -thing as the subject.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ Somebody is at the door. ✓ Nothing was found.
TRAP	"Everybody" feels like many people.
TRICK	every-ONE, every-BODY = one → singular.
TRY IT	Everyone ___ to pass. (want / wants) (answer at the end of the topic)

23 "A pair of" + plural noun + singular verb.

✗ A pair of shoes are lying here.

✓ A pair of shoes is lying here.

WHY?	The subject is "a pair" (one pair), so the verb is singular.
SPOT IT	a pair of / a set of / a bunch of + plural noun.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ A pair of scissors is on the desk. ✓ A bunch of keys was found.
TRAP	Matching the verb with "shoes".
TRICK	a pair / a set / a bunch = one.
TRY IT	A set of books ___ been sent. (has / have) (answer at the end of the topic)

24 Half / part / percentage of: the noun after "of" decides the verb.

✗ Half of the mangoes is rotten.

✓ Half of the mangoes are rotten.

Exam tip: Half of the milk is sour (uncountable).

WHY?	With half, most, some, part or a percentage, look at the noun after "of": plural noun → plural verb; uncountable noun → singular verb.
SPOT IT	half of / most of / some of / part of / 40% of.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ Most of the students are present. ✓ Some of the water was wasted.
TRAP	Always using a singular verb after "half".
TRICK	of + plural → plural; of + uncountable → singular.
TRY IT	Forty percent of the land ___ dry. (is / are) (answer at the end of the topic)



TRY-IT ANSWERS 1. leads · 2. was · 3. is · 4. is · 5. were · 6. has · 7. has · 8. was · 9. live · 10. is · 11. is · 12. has · 13. has · 14. are · 15. is · 16. is · 17. is · 18. are · 19. work · 20. was · 21. deserve · 22. wants · 23. has · 24. is



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25 Advice, information, furniture, luggage, baggage, equipment, scenery, machinery have no plural.

✗ He gave me many advices.

✓ He gave me much advice.

Exam tip: Or: many pieces of advice.

WHY?	These nouns cannot be counted one by one, so they have no plural and take no “a / an”. To count them, say “a piece of”.
SPOT IT	advice, information, furniture, luggage, equipment, scenery, machinery + -s, “many” or “a”.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ She gave me some useful advice. ✓ We need more information.
TRAP	Adding -s: advices, informations, furnitures.
TRICK	Can't count → no -s, no “a”; use much / some.
TRY IT	He bought new ___ for the house. (furniture / furnitures) (answer at the end of the topic)

26 These uncountable nouns take a singular verb.

✗ The furniture are new.

✓ The furniture is new.

WHY?	Uncountable nouns are treated as one mass, so they take a singular verb.
SPOT IT	Uncountable noun + is / are.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ The luggage is heavy. ✓ The information was wrong.
TRAP	Using “are” after furniture or luggage.
TRICK	One mass = is / was / has.
TRY IT	All the equipment ___ new. (is / are) (answer at the end of the topic)



27 Cattle, police, people, poultry, clergy are always plural.

✗ The police has caught the thief.

✓ The police have caught the thief.

WHY?	These nouns already mean many and have no singular form, so the verb is plural.
SPOT IT	cattle, police, people, poultry, clergy, gentry, vermin.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ The cattle are grazing. ✓ People are waiting outside.
TRAP	Writing “the police has” or “cattles”.
TRICK	Plural meaning, no -s → are / have.
TRY IT	The police ___ arrested the thief. (has / have) (answer at the end of the topic)

28 Scissors, trousers, spectacles, pliers, tongs take a plural verb.

✗ My trousers is torn.

✓ My trousers are torn.

Exam tip: But: A pair of trousers is torn.

WHY?	These things have two parts (two legs, two blades), so the nouns are plural.
SPOT IT	scissors, trousers, spectacles, jeans, pliers, tongs, binoculars.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ These spectacles are mine. ✓ My jeans are blue.
TRAP	Using “is” with trousers or scissors.
TRICK	Two parts = plural; but “a pair of ... is”.
TRY IT	The scissors ___ very sharp. (is / are) (answer at the end of the topic)

29 “Hair” (on the head) is uncountable.

✗ Her hairs are black.

✓ Her hair is black.

Exam tip: One single hair is countable: two grey hairs.

WHY?	“Hair” on the head is one mass, so it has no -s. One single strand can be counted.
SPOT IT	hair + s / are.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ Her hair is long. ✓ I found two hairs in my soup.
TRAP	Writing “her hairs are long”.
TRICK	Head hair = a mass; one strand = countable.
TRY IT	His hair ___ turning grey. (is / are) (answer at the end of the topic)



30 Number + noun used before another noun becomes a hyphenated adjective and stays singular.

✗ He gave me a five-rupees note.

✓ He gave me a five-rupee note.

Exam tip: a three-hour journey, a ten-year-old boy

WHY?	When “number + noun” is used like an adjective before another noun, it takes a hyphen and the noun stays singular.
SPOT IT	Number + noun + noun (five-rupee note, ten-year-old boy).
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ We went on a two-day trip. ✓ They stayed in a five-star hotel.
TRAP	Writing “a ten-years-old boy”.
TRICK	Before a noun, no -s.
TRY IT	He went on a three-___ tour. (week / weeks) (answer at the end of the topic)

31 Dozen, score, hundred after a number take no -s.

✗ I bought three dozens eggs.

✓ I bought three dozen eggs.

Exam tip: But: dozens of eggs.

WHY?	After a number, dozen, hundred, thousand, million and score take no -s.
SPOT IT	Number + dozen / hundred / thousand.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ Two hundred people came. ✓ It costs five thousand rupees.
TRAP	Writing “two hundreds”. (But “hundreds of people” has no number before it.)
TRICK	Number before → no -s.
TRY IT	She bought two ___ bananas. (dozen / dozens) (answer at the end of the topic)



32 Use 's for living beings; use "of" for non-living things.

✗ The table's leg is broken.

✓ The leg of the table is broken.

Exam tip: Allowed: a day's journey, a stone's throw.

WHY?	's shows ownership mostly for people and animals. For things, English normally uses "of".
SPOT IT	thing's + noun (table's leg, book's cover).
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ The roof of the house leaks. ✓ The cover of the book is torn.
TRAP	Using 's for every noun. (Allowed for time and distance: a week's holiday.)
TRICK	Person or animal → 's; thing → of.
TRY IT	The ___ is broken. (window's glass / glass of the window) (answer at the end of the topic)

33 In compound nouns the plural goes on the main word.

✗ All my sister-in-laws came.

✓ All my sisters-in-law came.

Exam tip: passers-by, commanders-in-chief

WHY?	In compound nouns, the main noun takes the plural.
SPOT IT	noun-in-law, passer-by, commander-in-chief.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ Both my mothers-in-law live nearby. ✓ Many passers-by stopped to help.
TRAP	Writing "son-in-laws".
TRICK	Make the person word plural.
TRY IT	Both his ___ came. (brother-in-laws / brothers-in-law) (answer at the end of the topic)



34 One thing owned by two people: 's on the last name only.

✗ This is Ram's and Shyam's shop.

✓ This is Ram and Shyam's shop.

Exam tip: Two separate shops: Ram's and Shyam's shops.

WHY?	When two people own one thing together, 's comes only on the last name. Separate things: 's on each.
SPOT IT	Two names + 's + noun.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ Raj and Simran's house (one house). ✓ Raj's and Simran's houses (two houses).
TRAP	Adding 's to both names for one shared thing.
TRICK	Shared = 's on the last name only.
TRY IT	This is ___ car (they share it). (Amit and Rahul's / Amit's and Rahul's) (answer at the end of the topic)

35 "Alphabet" means the whole set of letters.

✗ He knows all the alphabets.

✓ He knows all the letters of the alphabet.

WHY?	The alphabet is the whole set of letters (A to Z), so "all the alphabets" is wrong when you mean letters.
SPOT IT	"alphabets" used for letters.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ The English alphabet has 26 letters. ✓ Write all the letters of the alphabet.
TRAP	Thinking alphabet = letter.
TRICK	Alphabet = the full set; letter = one sign.
TRY IT	The word "cat" has three _____. (alphabets / letters) (answer at the end of the topic)

36 Uncountable nouns take "a piece of", not "a / an".

✗ I have an information for you.

✓ I have a piece of information for you.

WHY?	Uncountable nouns cannot take "a / an". To show one unit, say "a piece of / an item of".
SPOT IT	a / an + information / advice / news / furniture.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ Here is a piece of advice. ✓ I heard an interesting item of news.
TRAP	Writing "an advice" or "a news".
TRICK	"a / an" only with countable nouns.
TRY IT	She gave me ___ useful advice. (a / a piece of) (answer at the end of the topic)



37 Deer, sheep, fish (same kind), aircraft do not change in the plural.

✗ I saw two deers in the zoo.

✓ I saw two deer in the zoo.

WHY?	Some animal nouns have the same form in singular and plural.
SPOT IT	deers, sheeps, aircrafts.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ one sheep, ten sheep. ✓ one aircraft, two aircraft.
TRAP	Adding -s.
TRICK	deer, sheep, fish, aircraft, species: same form.
TRY IT	We saw five ___ on the hill. (sheeps / sheep) (answer at the end of the topic)

38 “People” (persons) is plural; “peoples” means nations.

✗ The people of India is hard-working.

✓ The people of India are hard-working.

WHY?	“People” is already plural (= persons). “Peoples” means nations or ethnic groups.
SPOT IT	people + is / was / has.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ Many people were at the station. ✓ The peoples of Asia have rich cultures.
TRAP	Using “peoples” for persons.
TRICK	people = persons → are.
TRY IT	The people of this village ___ very kind. (is / are) (answer at the end of the topic)

39 Abstract nouns used in general take no “the”.

✗ The honesty is the best policy.

✓ Honesty is the best policy.

WHY?	Qualities and ideas used in general (honesty, love, beauty) take no “the”. Use “the” only when they are specific.
SPOT IT	“The + quality” at the start of a general sentence.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ Truth always wins. ✓ The honesty of this man is well known (specific).
TRAP	Adding “the” by habit.
TRICK	General idea → no “the”.
TRY IT	___ is the best policy. (The honesty / Honesty) (answer at the end of the topic)



40 For one person in a staff, say “a member of the staff”.

✗ He is a staff of this bank.

✓ He is a member of the staff of this bank.

WHY?	“Staff” means the whole group of workers, so one person is “a member of the staff”.
SPOT IT	“a staff” used for one person.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ The staff are on strike. ✓ She is a member of the hospital staff.
TRAP	Writing “He is a staff”.
TRICK	staff = group, like team.
TRY IT	He is ___ of this school. (a staff / a member of the staff) (answer at the end of the topic)

41 “Offspring” has no plural –s.

✗ She has three offsprings.

✓ She has three offspring.

WHY?	“Offspring” has the same form for one child or many.
SPOT IT	“offsprings”.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ The cat protected her offspring. ✓ Their offspring are all doctors.
TRAP	Adding –s.
TRICK	Like sheep: no –s.
TRY IT	The lion protects its _____. (offspring / offsprings) (answer at the end of the topic)

42 “Innings” is singular as well as plural.

✗ India won the first inning.

✓ India won the first innings.

WHY?	In cricket, “innings” is used for one turn or many; “inning” is used in baseball.
SPOT IT	“inning” in a cricket sentence.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ He played a good innings. ✓ Both teams have played two innings.
TRAP	Writing “the first inning”.
TRICK	Cricket → always innings.
TRY IT	Kohli played a brilliant _____. (inning / innings) (answer at the end of the topic)



43 “Premises” (a building) is always plural.

✗ The premise of the bank is large.

✓ The premises of the bank are large.

WHY?	“Premises” (a building and its land) is always plural. “Premise” means an idea that an argument is based on.
SPOT IT	“premise” used for a building.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ No smoking on the premises. ✓ His premise was wrong.
TRAP	Using “premise” for a building.
TRICK	Building = premises (plural).
TRY IT	The company’s ___ are guarded. (premise / premises) (answer at the end of the topic)

44 “This kind of / sort of” + singular noun + singular verb.

✗ This kind of mangoes are sweet.

✓ This kind of mango is sweet.

Exam tip: Plural: These kinds of mangoes are sweet.

WHY?	“This kind of” points to one kind, so the noun and verb are singular. For many kinds, say “these kinds of”.
SPOT IT	this kind / sort / type of + plural noun.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ This type of question is easy. ✓ These kinds of questions are easy.
TRAP	Writing “this kind of books are”.
TRICK	this → kind → singular; these → kinds → plural.
TRY IT	This sort of ___ is common in exams. (mistake / mistakes) (answer at the end of the topic)

TRY-IT ANSWERS 25. furniture · 26. is · 27. have · 28. are · 29. is · 30. week · 31. dozen · 32. glass of the window · 33. brothers-in-law · 34. Amit and Rahul’s · 35. letters · 36. a piece of · 37. sheep · 38. are · 39. Honesty · 40. a member of the staff · 41. offspring · 42. innings · 43. premises · 44. mistake



PRACTISE THIS TOPIC

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prepzen.in/a/gr-04



45 After a preposition, use the object form (me, him, her, us, them).

✗ This is between you and I.

✓ This is between you and me.

WHY?	After a preposition (between, for, with, to, except) the pronoun is the object, so use me / him / her / us / them.
SPOT IT	Preposition + ... and I / he / she.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ This gift is for him and me. ✓ Everyone except her came.
TRAP	Thinking “I” sounds more polite.
TRICK	Remove the other person: “for me” → “for him and me”.
TRY IT	Keep this secret between you and ____ (I / me) (answer at the end of the topic)

46 After “than / as”, use the form the full sentence needs.

✗ He is taller than me.

✓ He is taller than I (am).

Exam tip: Exams follow the formal rule.

WHY?	“Than” compares two clauses; the hidden verb shows the form: “taller than I (am)”.
SPOT IT	than / as + pronoun.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ She is older than he (is). ✓ I like you more than him (= than I like him).
TRAP	Always using me / him after “than”.
TRICK	Finish the sentence in your head.
TRY IT	Rahul runs faster than ____ (I / me) (answer at the end of the topic)



47 After forms of “be”, use the subject form (formal English).

✗ It is me who called you.

✓ It is I who called you.

WHY?	In formal English the pronoun after “be” (is, was, are) takes the subject form.
SPOT IT	It is / was + me / him / her.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ It was she who won. ✓ It is they who are to blame.
TRAP	“It’s me” is fine in speech, but exams follow the formal rule.
TRICK	After “be” → I, he, she, we, they.
TRY IT	It was ___ who called you. (he / him) (answer at the end of the topic)

48 Who = subject, whom = object.

✗ Whom do you think is coming?

✓ Who do you think is coming?

Exam tip: Test: “he” is coming, so “who”.

WHY?	“Who” is the doer (subject); “whom” receives the action (object).
SPOT IT	who / whom in a question or clause.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ Who is calling? ✓ To whom did you give the book?
TRAP	Words like “do you think” in between confuse you.
TRICK	Answer with he / him: he → who, him → whom.
TRY IT	___ did you meet at the party? (Who / Whom) (answer at the end of the topic)

49 “One” is followed by one / one’s.

✗ One should do his duty.

✓ One should do one’s duty.

WHY?	When “one” is the subject (meaning any person), keep “one / one’s” later, not “his / her”.
SPOT IT	One should / must ... his.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ One must love one’s country. ✓ One should keep one’s promises.
TRAP	Switching to “his” or “your”.
TRICK	one ... one’s.
TRY IT	One should respect ___ parents. (his / one’s) (answer at the end of the topic)



50 Each / every / everyone takes a singular pronoun in exams.

✗ Every student must bring their own book.

✓ Every student must bring his or her own book.

WHY?	Everyone, each, every student are singular, so in exams the pronoun is singular too: his or her.
SPOT IT	everyone / each / every + their.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ Each girl has done her work. ✓ Every man must do his duty.
TRAP	"Their" is common in speech; exams want the singular.
TRICK	Singular subject → his / her.
TRY IT	Each of the boys must bring ___ own lunch. (their / his) (answer at the end of the topic)

51 Order for good things: second, third, first person (you, he and I).

✗ I, you and he will go.

✓ You, he and I will go.

Exam tip: For a fault, first person comes first: I, you and he are to blame.

WHY?	For good or neutral things, the polite order is you (2nd), he / she (3rd), I (1st). When admitting a fault, put yourself first.
SPOT IT	I, you and he in a list.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ You, she and I are invited. ✓ I, you and he are to blame.
TRAP	Putting "I" first in a good sentence.
TRICK	2-3-1 for good things; 1-2-3 for mistakes.
TRY IT	___ will go to the party. (I, you and he / You, he and I) (answer at the end of the topic)



52 Absent, avail, enjoy, pride take a reflexive pronoun.

✗ He absented from the class.

✓ He absented himself from the class.

Exam tip: He availed himself of the chance.

WHY?	Some verbs need a reflexive pronoun (myself, himself) because the action returns to the doer.
SPOT IT	absent, avail, enjoy, pride, apply (oneself).
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ She prides herself on her cooking. ✓ Avail yourself of this offer.
TRAP	Leaving the reflexive out: He absented from school.
TRICK	absent / avail / pride + self.
TRY IT	He availed ___ of the opportunity. (– / himself) (answer at the end of the topic)

53 “Each other” for two people, “one another” for more than two.

✗ The two brothers love one another.

✓ The two brothers love each other.

Exam tip: A traditional exam rule.

WHY?	Traditional exam rule: “each other” for two people, “one another” for more than two.
SPOT IT	Two people + one another.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ Ravi and Sita help each other. ✓ The players hugged one another.
TRAP	Using them as the same.
TRICK	Two = each other; group = one another.
TRY IT	The five friends trust _____. (each other / one another) (answer at the end of the topic)

54 Possessive pronouns have no apostrophe: its, yours, ours, theirs.

✗ The dog wagged it's tail.

✓ The dog wagged its tail.

Exam tip: it's = it is

WHY?	“Its” (no apostrophe) shows ownership. “It's” always means “it is” or “it has”.
SPOT IT	it's + noun.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ The company changed its logo. ✓ It's raining.
TRAP	Adding an apostrophe to show possession.
TRICK	If “it is” fits, use it's; otherwise its.
TRY IT	The bird hurt ___ wing. (its / it's) (answer at the end of the topic)



55 “Who” for persons, “which” for things and animals.

✗ The boy which came here is my brother.

✓ The boy who came here is my brother.

WHY?	Use “who” for people and “which” for animals and things. “That” can be used for both.
SPOT IT	person + which.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ The man who helped me is a doctor. ✓ The pen which I bought is blue.
TRAP	Using “which” for people.
TRICK	who = person; which = thing.
TRY IT	The girl ___ won the race is my sister. (who / which) (answer at the end of the topic)

56 After a superlative, all, any, only, none, use “that”.

✗ This is the best book which I have read.

✓ This is the best book that I have read.

WHY?	After a superlative (best, first) and words like all, any, only, none, everything, “that” is used instead of “which / who”.
SPOT IT	best / only / all + which.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ All that glitters is not gold. ✓ He is the only person that can help.
TRAP	Writing “the best which”.
TRICK	best / all / only → that.
TRY IT	This is the finest film ___ I have seen. (which / that) (answer at the end of the topic)

57 A collective noun acting as one unit takes “its”.

✗ The committee has submitted their report.

✓ The committee has submitted its report.

WHY?	When a collective noun acts as one unit, the pronoun is “it / its”.
SPOT IT	Collective noun + has ... their.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ The team lost its first match. ✓ The government has changed its policy.
TRAP	Using “their” with a singular verb.
TRICK	has + its; have + their.
TRY IT	The jury gave ___ verdict. (its / their) (answer at the end of the topic)



58 Do not repeat the subject with a pronoun.

✗ My brother he is a doctor.

✓ My brother is a doctor.

WHY?	The noun and the pronoun are the same person, so using both gives the sentence two subjects.
SPOT IT	Noun + he / she / it + verb.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ The manager is on leave. ✓ My sister lives in Goa.
TRAP	Copying the spoken style.
TRICK	One subject only.
TRY IT	Raju ___ is a good boy. (he / no word) (answer at the end of the topic)

59 Either / neither for two; any / none for more than two.

✗ Neither of the three boys came.

✓ None of the three boys came.

WHY?	“Either / neither” are for a choice between two. For three or more, use “any / none”.
SPOT IT	either / neither + three or more.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ Either of the two roads leads there. ✓ None of the five students passed.
TRAP	Writing “neither of the three”.
TRICK	2 → either / neither; 3+ → any / none.
TRY IT	___ of the four boys came. (Neither / None) (answer at the end of the topic)

60 “The same ... as” and “such ... as” (not “which”).

✗ He gave the same answer which I gave.

✓ He gave the same answer as I gave.

WHY?	The fixed pairs are “the same ... as” and “such ... as”.
SPOT IT	same ... which / that.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ Wear the same shirt as yesterday. ✓ Such students as work hard succeed.
TRAP	Writing “the same ... which”.
TRICK	same → as; such → as.
TRY IT	He has the same car ___ I have. (which / as) (answer at the end of the topic)



61 “Let” is followed by the object form.

✗ Let he go home.

✓ Let him go home.

WHY?	“Let” is followed by an object, so use me / him / her / us / them.
SPOT IT	let + he / she / I / we.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ Let us go. ✓ Let them play.
TRAP	Writing “let he”.
TRICK	let + me / him / them.
TRY IT	Let ___ finish the work. (she / her) (answer at the end of the topic)

62 Do not use “myself” as a subject.

✗ Myself and Ravi went there.

✓ Ravi and I went there.

WHY?	Reflexive pronouns (myself, himself) are not used as the subject; they reflect back to it.
SPOT IT	Myself and ... at the start.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ I did it myself. ✓ Ravi and I went there.
TRAP	Using “myself” to sound polite.
TRICK	Start with “I” (or “Ravi and I”).
TRY IT	Ravi and ___ went to Goa. (myself / I) (answer at the end of the topic)

63 “None of / some of / all of” + object pronoun.

✗ None of we knew the answer.

✓ None of us knew the answer.

WHY?	After “of”, use the object form: us, them.
SPOT IT	of + we / they.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ Some of them were late. ✓ Neither of us knew.
TRAP	Writing “none of we”.
TRICK	of + us / them.
TRY IT	Many of ___ were absent. (they / them) (answer at the end of the topic)



64 After “like” (meaning “such as”), use the object form.

✗ People like he and I work hard.

✓ People like him and me work hard.

WHY?	“Like” (meaning “such as”) is a preposition, so it takes the object form.
SPOT IT	like + he / she / I / they.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ Students like her deserve help. ✓ Don’t talk to people like them.
TRAP	Writing “people like he”.
TRICK	like + me / him / her / them.
TRY IT	Players like ___ are rare. (he / him) (answer at the end of the topic)

TRY-IT ANSWERS 45. me · 46. I · 47. he · 48. Whom · 49. one’s · 50. his · 51. You, he and I · 52. himself · 53. one another · 54. its · 55. who · 56. that · 57. its · 58. no word · 59. None · 60. as · 61. her · 62. I · 63. them · 64. him



PRACTISE THIS TOPIC

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65 Use “an” before a vowel SOUND, “a” before a consonant sound.

✗ He waited for a hour.

✓ He waited for an hour.

Exam tip: a university, a one-rupee coin, an honest man

WHY?	The choice depends on the first SOUND, not the first letter.
SPOT IT	a / an before words starting with h, u, o, eu.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ an umbrella, an hour (silent h). ✓ a uniform, a one-way street (“yu”, “wa” sounds).
TRAP	Going by the letter instead of the sound.
TRICK	Say it aloud: vowel sound → an.
TRY IT	She is ___ honest girl. (a / an) (answer at the end of the topic)

66 For short forms, go by the letter sound.

✗ He is a MLA.

✓ He is an MLA.

Exam tip: an MBA, an FIR, a UN official

WHY?	Short forms read letter by letter take a / an by the sound of the first letter: M = “em”, F = “ef”.
SPOT IT	a / an + MLA, MBA, FIR, SP, NCC, X-ray.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ He is an SP officer. ✓ She is a BA student.
TRAP	Writing “a MBA”.
TRICK	A, E, F, H, I, L, M, N, O, R, S, X sound like vowels → an.
TRY IT	He has ___ M.Sc. degree. (a / an) (answer at the end of the topic)



67 “The” before things that are only one: the sun, the sky, the earth.

✗ Sun rises in east.

✓ The sun rises in the east.

WHY?	Things that are the only one of their kind take “the”.
SPOT IT	sun, moon, sky, earth, world, equator without “the”.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ The moon is bright tonight. ✓ The earth moves round the sun.
TRAP	Missing “the”.
TRICK	Only one in the world → the.
TRY IT	___ sky is clear today. (no article / The) (answer at the end of the topic)

68 “The” before rivers, seas, oceans, mountain ranges and groups of islands.

✗ Ganga is a holy river.

✓ The Ganga is a holy river.

Exam tip: No “the” before a single peak: Mount Everest.

WHY?	Names of rivers, seas, oceans, mountain ranges and groups of islands take “the”.
SPOT IT	River or ocean names without “the”.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ the Himalayas. ✓ the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.
TRAP	Adding “the” to a single peak: Mount Abu, Mount Everest.
TRICK	Rivers, ranges, oceans → the; single peak → no the.
TRY IT	___ Indian Ocean is the third largest ocean. (no article / The) (answer at the end of the topic)

69 “The” before a superlative.

✗ He is best student in the class.

✓ He is the best student in the class.

WHY?	A superlative points to one special thing, so it takes “the”.
SPOT IT	-est / most without “the”.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ Everest is the highest peak. ✓ Paris is the most beautiful city.
TRAP	Writing “He is best player”.
TRICK	-est / most → the.
TRY IT	She is ___ youngest in her class. (no article / the) (answer at the end of the topic)



70 No article before the name of a language.

✗ He speaks the English fluently.

✓ He speaks English fluently.

Exam tip: But: the English language.

WHY?	Names of languages take no article. With the word "language", use "the".
SPOT IT	the + English / Hindi + verb.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ She speaks Tamil. ✓ The Tamil language is very old.
TRAP	Writing "He knows the French".
TRICK	Language name alone → no article.
TRY IT	He is learning ___ Spanish. (no article / the) (answer at the end of the topic)

71 No article before meals in general.

✗ We had the dinner at eight.

✓ We had dinner at eight.

Exam tip: Specific: The dinner you cooked was tasty.

WHY?	Meals in general take no article. Use "a" with an adjective and "the" for a specific meal.
SPOT IT	the + breakfast / lunch / dinner in general.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ Breakfast is ready. ✓ We had a good lunch.
TRAP	Writing "We had the lunch at one".
TRICK	General meal → no article.
TRY IT	We have ___ dinner at nine. (no article / the) (answer at the end of the topic)

72 No article with school, college, hospital, church, prison used for their main purpose.

✗ He goes to the school every day (as a student).

✓ He goes to school every day.

Exam tip: His father went to the school to meet the teacher.

WHY?	When we go for the main purpose (study, treatment, worship, punishment), no article. For another reason, use "the".
SPOT IT	school, college, hospital, church, temple, prison, bed.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ He was taken to hospital (as a patient). ✓ She went to the hospital to visit a friend.
TRAP	Always using "the".
TRICK	Main purpose → no "the".
TRY IT	The thief was sent to ___ prison. (no article / the) (answer at the end of the topic)



73 “The” before musical instruments.

✗ She plays violin well.

✓ She plays the violin well.

WHY?	Musical instruments take “the” after “play”.
SPOT IT	play + instrument without “the”.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ He plays the guitar. ✓ She plays the flute.
TRAP	Missing “the” (but sports take none: play cricket).
TRICK	play the + instrument; play + game.
TRY IT	She plays ___ piano. (no article / the) (answer at the end of the topic)

74 “The” before newspapers and holy books.

✗ I read Hindu every day.

✓ I read The Hindu every day.

Exam tip: the Gita, the Bible, the Quran

WHY?	Names of newspapers and holy books take “the”.
SPOT IT	A newspaper or holy book name without “the”.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ She reads the Bhagavad Gita. ✓ He reads The Times of India.
TRAP	Missing “the”.
TRICK	Paper or holy book → the.
TRY IT	I read ___ Ramayana. (no article / the) (answer at the end of the topic)

75 “The” before ordinal numbers (first, second, last).

✗ This is first time I have seen it.

✓ This is the first time I have seen it.

WHY?	Ordinal numbers (first, second, last) point to one exact position, so they take “the”.
SPOT IT	first / second / last + noun without “the”.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ It was the first day of school. ✓ I missed the last bus.
TRAP	Writing “This is first time”.
TRICK	first / last / next (in order) → the.
TRY IT	He was ___ first to arrive. (no article / the) (answer at the end of the topic)



76 A few = some (positive); few = almost none (negative).

✗ Few friends helped him, so he did not feel alone.

✓ A few friends helped him, so he did not feel alone.

Exam tip: Same for little / a little.

WHY?	"A few / a little" mean "some" (positive). "Few / little" mean "almost none" (negative).
SPOT IT	few / a few with a result like "so ..." or "but ...".
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ I have a little money, so I can buy tea. ✓ He has little hope of success.
TRAP	Mixing the positive and negative meaning.
TRICK	a few = some; few = almost none.
TRY IT	___ students passed, so the teacher was sad. (A few / Few) (answer at the end of the topic)

77 No article before plural or uncountable nouns used in general.

✗ The books are our best friends.

✓ Books are our best friends.

WHY?	Plural and uncountable nouns used in general take no article.
SPOT IT	The + plural noun in a general truth.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ Dogs are loyal. ✓ Milk is good for health.
TRAP	Adding "the" by habit.
TRICK	General truth → no "the".
TRY IT	___ cats like milk. (The / no article) (answer at the end of the topic)

78 "What a / such a" only with singular countable nouns.

✗ What a fine weather!

✓ What fine weather!

Exam tip: "weather" is uncountable.

WHY?	"A / an" go only with singular countable nouns. Weather, advice and news are uncountable.
SPOT IT	what a / such a + uncountable noun.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ What a lovely day! ✓ What lovely weather!
TRAP	Writing "such a good advice".
TRICK	Uncountable → what / such without "a".
TRY IT	It was ___ terrible weather. (such a / such) (answer at the end of the topic)



79 Use “a / an” before a profession.

✗ He is engineer.

✓ He is an engineer.

WHY?	A profession or role after “be” needs “a / an”.
SPOT IT	is / am / are + job name without a / an.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ She wants to be a doctor. ✓ He is an artist.
TRAP	Writing “My father is teacher”.
TRICK	be + a / an + job.
TRY IT	Her brother is ___ pilot. (no article / a) (answer at the end of the topic)

80 “The ... the” in double comparatives.

✗ More you read, more you learn.

✓ The more you read, the more you learn.

WHY?	In “the + comparative ... the + comparative”, both parts need “the”.
SPOT IT	A double comparative without “the”.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ The sooner, the better. ✓ The harder you work, the more you earn.
TRAP	Dropping one “the”.
TRICK	the ... the.
TRY IT	___ more you practise, the better you become. (no article / The) (answer at the end of the topic)

TRY-IT ANSWERS 65. an · 66. an · 67. The · 68. The · 69. the · 70. no article · 71. no article · 72. no article · 73. the · 74. the · 75. the · 76. Few · 77. no article · 78. such · 79. a · 80. The



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81 Never use a double comparative or superlative.✗ This is **more better** than that.✓ This is **better** than that.

WHY?	“Better” is already a comparative; adding “more” makes it double.
SPOT IT	more + -er word / most + -est word.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ She is more intelligent than her friend. ✓ He is the cleverest boy (not “most cleverest”).
TRAP	Writing “more taller” or “most best”.
TRICK	One marker only: -er OR more.
TRY IT	This road is ___ than that one. (more wider / wider) (answer at the end of the topic)

82 Comparing two: use the comparative, not the superlative.✗ She is the **tallest** of the two sisters.✓ She is the **taller** of the two sisters.

WHY?	For two persons or things use the comparative; for three or more use the superlative.
SPOT IT	“of the two” + -est.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ He is the better of the two players. ✓ He is the best of all the players.
TRAP	Using -est for two.
TRICK	Two → -er; three or more → -est.
TRY IT	Ravi is the ___ of the two brothers. (taller / tallest) (answer at the end of the topic)



83 Senior, junior, superior, inferior, prior, preferable + “to”.

✗ He is senior than me.

✓ He is senior to me.

WHY?	Latin comparatives (senior, junior, superior, inferior, prior, preferable) take “to”, not “than”.
SPOT IT	senior / junior / superior / inferior + than.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ This cloth is superior to that. ✓ He arrived prior to me.
TRAP	Writing “senior than”.
TRICK	–ior words → to.
TRY IT	Silk is superior ___ cotton. (than / to) (answer at the end of the topic)

84 Compare like with like (use that of / those of).

✗ The climate of Delhi is hotter than Shimla.

✓ The climate of Delhi is hotter than that of Shimla.

WHY?	Compare climate with climate, not climate with a city. Use “that of / those of”.
SPOT IT	A comparison of two different kinds of things.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ The population of Mumbai is larger than that of Pune. ✓ The ears of a rabbit are longer than those of a cat.
TRAP	Writing “The salary of a doctor is more than a teacher”.
TRICK	Same thing on both sides.
TRY IT	The roads of Delhi are better than ___ of Patna. (no word / those) (answer at the end of the topic)

85 Comparing within the same group, add “other”.

✗ He is better than any boy in the class.

✓ He is better than any other boy in the class.

WHY?	If he is in the class, “better than any boy” compares him with himself. “Any other boy” leaves him out.
SPOT IT	than any + a noun of the same group.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ Mumbai is bigger than any other city in Maharashtra. ✓ Mumbai is bigger than any city in Kerala (a different group, no “other”).
TRAP	Forgetting “other”.
TRICK	Same group → any other.
TRY IT	Mount Everest is higher than any ___ peak in the world. (no word / other) (answer at the end of the topic)



86 Linking verbs (be, seem, look, feel, smell, taste, sound) + adjective.

✗ The rose smells sweetly.

✓ The rose smells sweet.

WHY?	Linking verbs describe the subject's state, not an action, so they take an adjective.
SPOT IT	look / feel / smell / taste / sound / seem / become + -ly word.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ She looks happy. ✓ The milk tastes sour.
TRAP	Writing "I feel badly".
TRICK	Can you put "is" instead? Then use an adjective (She is happy).
TRY IT	The music sounds _____. (sweet / sweetly) (answer at the end of the topic)

87 Action verbs + adverb.

✗ He drives careful.

✓ He drives carefully.

WHY?	An adverb tells how an action is done, so action verbs take adverbs.
SPOT IT	Action verb + adjective.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ She sings beautifully. ✓ Please drive slowly.
TRAP	Writing "He speaks fluent".
TRICK	How? → -ly adverb.
TRY IT	He answered the question _____. (correct / correctly) (answer at the end of the topic)

88 Fast, hard, late, early are both adjective and adverb; "fastly" does not exist.

✗ He runs fastly.

✓ He runs fast.

WHY?	Fast, hard, late, early, straight, high are both adjectives and adverbs; no -ly form is needed.
SPOT IT	fastly, straightly.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ He drives fast. ✓ Go straight.
TRAP	Adding -ly.
TRICK	fast, hard, late, early, straight → no -ly.
TRY IT	The train is running _____. (fast / fastly) (answer at the end of the topic)



89 Hard = with effort; hardly = almost not.

✗ He works hardly to pass the exam.

✓ He works hard to pass the exam.

WHY?	"Hardly" is not the adverb of "hard"; it means "almost not".
SPOT IT	"hardly" used for effort.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ She works hard. ✓ I can hardly see without glasses.
TRAP	Writing "works hardly".
TRICK	hard = a lot; hardly = almost nothing.
TRY IT	He studied ___ and passed. (hard / hardly) (answer at the end of the topic)

90 "Very" with the positive degree, "much" with the comparative.

✗ He is very better now.

✓ He is much better now.

WHY?	"Very" goes with the positive degree (very good); "much / far" go with comparatives (much better).
SPOT IT	very + -er / more.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ This train is much faster. ✓ This book is far more useful.
TRAP	Writing "very better".
TRICK	very good, much better.
TRY IT	She is ___ taller than her brother. (very / much) (answer at the end of the topic)

91 "Too" means more than needed (a negative sense).

✗ I am too happy to meet you.

✓ I am very happy to meet you.

Exam tip: Correct use: too tired to walk.

WHY?	"Too" means "more than needed" and suggests a problem; it often goes with "to + verb".
SPOT IT	too + a happy feeling (too happy, too glad).
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ The tea is too hot to drink. ✓ He is too weak to walk.
TRAP	Using "too" to mean "very".
TRICK	too = a problem; very = a lot.
TRY IT	I am ___ glad to see you. (too / very) (answer at the end of the topic)



92 “Elder / eldest” for family, before a noun; “older ... than” for comparing.

✗ My brother is elder than me.

✓ My brother is older than me.

Exam tip: my elder brother

WHY?	“Elder” is used for family members and only before a noun; it does not take “than”. “Older” can take “than”.
SPOT IT	elder than.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ My elder sister is a nurse. ✓ He is older than his wife.
TRAP	Writing “elder than”.
TRICK	elder + noun; older + than.
TRY IT	She is two years ___ than me. (elder / older) (answer at the end of the topic)

93 “Fewer” with countable nouns, “less” with uncountable nouns.

✗ He made less mistakes this time.

✓ He made fewer mistakes this time.

WHY?	“Fewer” for things you can count (books, people); “less” for things you cannot count (water, time).
SPOT IT	less + plural noun.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ fewer cars, less traffic. ✓ fewer mistakes, less sugar.
TRAP	Writing “less students”.
TRICK	Count → fewer; amount → less.
TRY IT	There were ___ people than last year. (less / fewer) (answer at the end of the topic)

94 “Little” for quantity, “few” for number.

✗ He has few money.

✓ He has little money.

WHY?	“Little / much” for quantity (uncountable); “few / many” for number (countable).
SPOT IT	few + uncountable noun; little + plural noun.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ There is little water left. ✓ There are few chairs in the room.
TRAP	Writing “few money”.
TRICK	few / many → count; little / much → amount.
TRY IT	There is ___ milk in the bottle. (few / little) (answer at the end of the topic)



95 Order of adjectives: opinion, size, age, shape, colour, origin, material, purpose.

✗ She bought a red big ball.

✓ She bought a big red ball.

WHY?	English puts adjectives in a fixed order: opinion, size, age, shape, colour, origin, material, purpose.
SPOT IT	Two or more adjectives before a noun.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ a beautiful old wooden chair. ✓ a small round black table.
TRAP	Putting the colour before the size.
TRICK	OSASCOMP: Opinion–Size–Age–Shape–Colour–Origin–Material–Purpose.
TRY IT	She wore a ___ dress. (red long / long red) (answer at the end of the topic)

96 Unique, perfect, complete, ideal, absolute cannot be compared.

✗ This is the most unique design.

✓ This is a unique design.

WHY?	Unique, perfect, complete, ideal, absolute already mean “the highest”, so they cannot be compared.
SPOT IT	more / most / very + unique / perfect.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ This painting is unique. ✓ His work is perfect.
TRAP	Writing “most perfect”.
TRICK	No more / most before these words.
TRY IT	This is a ___ chance. (very unique / unique) (answer at the end of the topic)

97 “Enough” comes after an adjective but before a noun.

✗ He is not enough tall.

✓ He is not tall enough.

Exam tip: enough money

WHY?	“Enough” comes after an adjective or adverb but before a noun.
SPOT IT	enough + adjective.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ She is old enough to vote. ✓ We have enough time.
TRAP	Writing “enough big”.
TRICK	adjective + enough; enough + noun.
TRY IT	The room is not ___ for us. (enough big / big enough) (answer at the end of the topic)



98 “Such” + noun, “so” + adjective.

✗ It was so a nice day.

✓ It was such a nice day.

Exam tip: It was so nice.

WHY?	“Such” goes before a noun phrase (such a good boy); “so” goes before an adjective or adverb alone (so good).
SPOT IT	so a + adjective + noun.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ It was such a hot day. ✓ It was so hot.
TRAP	Writing “so a nice person”.
TRICK	such + a + adjective + noun; so + adjective.
TRY IT	He is ___ a kind man. (so / such) (answer at the end of the topic)

99 Put “only / even” just before the word it qualifies.

✗ He only drank milk (meaning nothing else).

✓ He drank only milk.

WHY?	“Only” changes the meaning depending on where it is, so put it just before the word it limits.
SPOT IT	“only” placed far from the word it limits.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ Only Ravi ate rice (no one else did). ✓ Ravi ate only rice (nothing else).
TRAP	Putting “only” before the verb by habit.
TRICK	only → right before the word it limits.
TRY IT	He has ___ two rupees. (only got / got only) (answer at the end of the topic)

100 Late = not on time; lately = recently.

✗ He came lately to the office today.

✓ He came late to the office today.

WHY?	“Late” means not on time; “lately” means “recently”.
SPOT IT	“lately” used for “not on time”.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ The bus came late. ✓ I have been busy lately.
TRAP	Thinking “lately” is the adverb of “late”.
TRICK	lately = recently.
TRY IT	She has not been well _____. (late / lately) (answer at the end of the topic)



TRY-IT ANSWERS 81. wider · 82. taller · 83. to · 84. those · 85. other · 86. sweet · 87. correctly · 88. fast · 89. hard · 90. much · 91. very · 92. older · 93. fewer · 94. little · 95. long red · 96. unique · 97. big enough · 98. such · 99. got only · 100. lately



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101 Never use the present perfect with a past time word.

✗ I have met him yesterday.

✓ I met him yesterday.

Exam tip: yesterday, ago, last year → simple past

WHY?	The present perfect links the past with now. Yesterday, ago, last week point to a finished past time, so use the simple past.
SPOT IT	has / have + V3 with yesterday / ago / last / in 2019.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ I saw that film last week. ✓ She has already seen that film.
TRAP	Using “have” because the action feels recent.
TRICK	Exact past time → simple past.
TRY IT	He ___ to Delhi two days ago. (has gone / went) (answer at the end of the topic)

102 “Since” + point of time; “for” + period of time.

✗ He has been ill since three days.

✓ He has been ill for three days.

Exam tip: since Monday, since 2015

WHY?	“Since” shows the starting point; “for” shows the length of time.
SPOT IT	since + a period, or for + a point.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ since morning, since 2020. ✓ for two hours, for ten years.
TRAP	Writing “since two years”.
TRICK	since = from when? for = how long?
TRY IT	I have lived here ___ five years. (since / for) (answer at the end of the topic)



103 With “since / for”, use the present perfect (continuous), not the present.

✗ He is working here since 2015.

✓ He has been working here since 2015.

WHY?	An action that started in the past and is still going on needs the present perfect (continuous), not the simple present.
SPOT IT	am / is + -ing (or simple present) with since / for.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ She has been teaching for ten years. ✓ I have known her since childhood.
TRAP	Writing “I am living here since 2010”.
TRICK	since / for → has / have (been).
TRY IT	They ___ in Pune since 2018. (live / have lived) (answer at the end of the topic)

104 Of two past actions, the earlier one takes the past perfect.

✗ The train left before I reached the station.

✓ The train had left before I reached the station.

WHY?	When two actions happened in the past, the one that happened first takes the past perfect (had + V3).
SPOT IT	before / after / when / by the time + two past actions.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ When I reached, the film had started. ✓ She had finished her work before he came.
TRAP	Using the simple past for both actions.
TRICK	First action → had + V3.
TRY IT	The patient ___ before the doctor came. (died / had died) (answer at the end of the topic)



105 A past main verb is followed by a past verb (sequence of tenses).

✗ He said that he will come.

✓ He said that he would come.

Exam tip: Universal truths stay present: the earth moves round the sun.

WHY?	When the main verb is past (said, told), the reported verb usually moves to the past too. Universal truths stay present.
SPOT IT	said / told + will / can / is.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ She said that she was tired. ✓ He said that the sun rises in the east.
TRAP	Keeping will / can after a past main verb.
TRICK	said → would / could / was.
TRY IT	He told me that he ___ come tomorrow. (will / would) (answer at the end of the topic)

106 No “will” after when, if, before, after, till, as soon as.

✗ I will call you when I will reach.

✓ I will call you when I reach.

WHY?	In time and condition clauses (when, if, as soon as, before, after, until) the present tense already shows the future.
SPOT IT	when / if / as soon as + will.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ I will call you as soon as I reach. ✓ If he comes, tell him to wait.
TRAP	Using “will” in both parts.
TRICK	“will” only in the main part.
TRY IT	Wait here until I ___ back. (will come / come) (answer at the end of the topic)

107 Know, believe, love, like, own, belong, see, hear are not used in the -ing form.

✗ I am knowing him for years.

✓ I have known him for years.

WHY?	Verbs of feeling, thinking and owning describe states, not actions, so they are not used in the -ing form.
SPOT IT	am / is / are + knowing / believing / belonging.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ I understand your problem. ✓ This book belongs to me.
TRAP	Writing “I am understanding”.
TRICK	State verbs → no -ing.
TRY IT	I ___ you are right. (am believing / believe) (answer at the end of the topic)



108 Do / does / did + base verb.

✗ Did you went there?

✓ Did you go there?

WHY?	After do / does / did the main verb is always in the base form; “did” already shows the tense.
SPOT IT	did + V2, does + verb-s.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ Did she call you? ✓ He does not like tea.
TRAP	Writing “didn’t went”.
TRICK	did / does → base verb.
TRY IT	She did not ___ the answer. (knew / know) (answer at the end of the topic)

109 A modal (can, may, must, should) + base verb.

✗ He can speaks English.

✓ He can speak English.

WHY?	Modals (can, could, may, might, must, shall, should, will, would) are followed by the base verb.
SPOT IT	modal + -s / -ed / -ing or “to”.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ You must leave now. ✓ She may come later.
TRAP	Writing “can to go” or “must went”.
TRICK	modal + base verb.
TRY IT	You should ___ your parents. (respects / respect) (answer at the end of the topic)

110 Make, let, help, bid, see, hear + base verb (no “to”).

✗ He made me to laugh.

✓ He made me laugh.

Exam tip: Passive takes “to”: I was made to laugh.

WHY?	These verbs take an object + base verb (no “to”). In the passive, “to” comes back.
SPOT IT	make / let / see / hear + object + to + verb.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ Let me go. ✓ I heard her sing.
TRAP	Writing “let him to go”.
TRICK	make / let + base; passive: was made to.
TRY IT	The teacher made us ___ again. (to write / write) (answer at the end of the topic)



111 Look forward to, object to, be used to, with a view to + -ing.

✗ I look forward to meet you.

✓ I look forward to meeting you.

WHY?	In these phrases “to” is a preposition, not part of the verb, so the verb after it takes -ing.
SPOT IT	look forward to / be used to / object to / with a view to + base verb.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ She is used to working at night. ✓ He objected to being called a liar.
TRAP	Thinking “to” always needs a base verb.
TRICK	If a noun can come after “to”, use -ing.
TRY IT	I am looking forward to ___ you. (see / seeing) (answer at the end of the topic)

112 Avoid, enjoy, finish, mind, risk, deny, admit, suggest + -ing.

✗ He avoided to meet me.

✓ He avoided meeting me.

WHY?	Some verbs are always followed by the -ing form.
SPOT IT	avoid, enjoy, finish, mind, risk, deny, admit, suggest, practise + to + verb.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ She enjoys dancing. ✓ He admitted stealing the money.
TRAP	Writing “enjoy to swim”.
TRICK	Remember: avoid, enjoy, finish, mind + -ing.
TRY IT	He suggested ___ a taxi. (to take / taking) (answer at the end of the topic)

113 Want, decide, hope, refuse, promise, agree + to + verb.

✗ She refused going there.

✓ She refused to go there.

WHY?	Some verbs are followed by “to + verb”.
SPOT IT	want, decide, hope, refuse, promise, agree, plan, expect + -ing.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ She decided to stay. ✓ They agreed to help.
TRAP	Writing “decided going”.
TRICK	A plan or a wish for the future → to + verb.
TRY IT	He promised ___ on time. (to come / coming) (answer at the end of the topic)



114 Lie (lay, lain) = to rest; lay (laid, laid) = to put.

✗ He laid on the bed all day.

✓ He lay on the bed all day.

Exam tip: She laid the book on the table.

WHY?	Lie (lay, lain) means to rest and has no object; lay (laid, laid) means to put something down and needs an object.
SPOT IT	laid / lay used for resting.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ The book is lying on the table. ✓ Please lay the plates on the table.
TRAP	Mixing “lay” (past of lie) with “lay” (put).
TRICK	lay = put something; lie = rest yourself.
TRY IT	The hen ___ an egg every day. (lies / lays) (answer at the end of the topic)

115 Hang → hanged (to execute); hang → hung (to suspend a thing).

✗ The murderer was hung.

✓ The murderer was hanged.

Exam tip: The picture was hung on the wall.

WHY?	For a person executed, use “hanged”; for things hung up, use “hung”.
SPOT IT	“hung” for a person executed.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ The picture was hung on the wall. ✓ The criminal was hanged at dawn.
TRAP	Using “hung” for people.
TRICK	Person → hanged; thing → hung.
TRY IT	The clothes were ___ out to dry. (hanged / hung) (answer at the end of the topic)

116 Rise has no object; raise needs an object.

✗ Prices have raised again.

✓ Prices have risen again.

Exam tip: They raised the prices.

WHY?	Rise (rose, risen) has no object; raise (raised) needs an object.
SPOT IT	“raise” without an object, or “rise” with one.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ The sun rises in the east. ✓ Raise your hand.
TRAP	Writing “prices have raised”.
TRICK	Raise SOMETHING; things rise by themselves.
TRY IT	The river ___ after the rain. (raised / rose) (answer at the end of the topic)



117 “It is (high) time” + past tense.

✗ It is high time we leave.

✓ It is high time we left.

WHY?	“It is (high) time” + subject + past tense means it should happen now.
SPOT IT	It is high time + present tense.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ It is time you went to bed. ✓ It is high time the government acted.
TRAP	Using the present tense because the meaning is “now”.
TRICK	high time → past form .
TRY IT	It is high time we ___ the work. (start / started) (answer at the end of the topic)

118 “Would rather” + another person + past tense.

✗ I would rather you go now.

✓ I would rather you went now.

WHY?	“Would rather” + another person + past tense expresses a wish about now.
SPOT IT	would rather + person + present tense.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ I would rather you stayed. ✓ She would rather he didn't smoke.
TRAP	Using the present tense. (Same subject: I would rather stay.)
TRICK	would rather (someone) + past .
TRY IT	I would rather you ___ now. (leave / left) (answer at the end of the topic)

119 Suggest / recommend / insist that + subject + base verb (or should).

✗ He suggested that she goes home.

✓ He suggested that she (should) go home.

WHY?	After suggest, recommend, insist, demand, propose + that, use the base verb (or should + base) for every subject.
SPOT IT	suggest / insist that + he goes.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ The doctor recommended that he rest. ✓ I insist that she be present.
TRAP	Adding -s for he / she.
TRICK	suggest that + base verb .
TRY IT	He insisted that she ___ the truth. (tells / tell) (answer at the end of the topic)



120 Verbs that take no object have no passive.

✗ The accident **was happened** at night.

✓ The accident **happened** at night.

Exam tip: happen, occur, arrive, die, sleep

WHY?	Only verbs with an object can be passive. Happen, occur, arrive, die, sleep, come and go have no object.
SPOT IT	was / were + happened / occurred / died.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ The accident occurred at night. ✓ He died last year.
TRAP	Writing “was died”.
TRICK	No object → no passive.
TRY IT	The meeting ___ at 5 pm. (was occurred / occurred) (answer at the end of the topic)

121 A longer action (past continuous) is interrupted by a short one (simple past).

✗ I **was reading** when he **was coming**.

✓ I **was reading** when he **came**.

WHY?	The longer action in progress takes the past continuous; the short action that interrupts it takes the simple past.
SPOT IT	when + was / were -ing for the short action.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ She was cooking when the phone rang . ✓ While I was walking , it started to rain.
TRAP	Using the continuous for both actions.
TRICK	Long action → was -ing; short action → V2.
TRY IT	I was sleeping when the bell _____. (was ringing / rang) (answer at the end of the topic)

122 “Had better” + base verb.

✗ You **had better to go** now.

✓ You **had better go** now.

WHY?	“Had better” (advice) is followed by the base verb with no “to”.
SPOT IT	had better + to.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ You had better see a doctor. ✓ We had better leave now.
TRAP	Writing “had better to go”.
TRICK	had better + base.
TRY IT	You had better ___ quiet. (to keep / keep) (answer at the end of the topic)



123 “Lest” + should + base verb.

✗ Work hard lest you will fail.

✓ Work hard lest you should fail.

WHY?	“Lest” means “so that ... not”, so it is followed by “should” and never by “not”.
SPOT IT	lest + will / may / not.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ Hurry lest you should miss the bus. ✓ Speak softly lest you should wake the baby.
TRAP	Adding “not” after lest.
TRICK	lest + should + base.
TRY IT	Run fast lest you ___ miss the train. (will / should) (answer at the end of the topic)

124 “Wish” for an unreal present + past (were for all persons).

✗ I wish I was rich.

✓ I wish I were rich.

WHY?	“Wish” for something unreal now takes the past tense; with “be”, formal English uses “were” for every person.
SPOT IT	wish + was / present tense.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ I wish I knew the answer. ✓ She wishes she were taller.
TRAP	Writing “I wish I am”.
TRICK	wish (now) → past; wish (past) → had + V3.
TRY IT	I wish I ___ a bird. (was / were) (answer at the end of the topic)

TRY-IT ANSWERS 101. went · 102. for · 103. have lived · 104. had died · 105. would · 106. come · 107. believe · 108. know · 109. respect · 110. write · 111. seeing · 112. taking · 113. to come · 114. lays · 115. hung · 116. rose · 117. started · 118. left · 119. tell · 120. occurred · 121. rang · 122. keep · 123. should · 124. were



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125 For a missed duty in the past: should / ought to + have + V3.

✗ He should come yesterday.

✓ He should have come yesterday.

WHY?	To say an expected action did not happen in the past, use should / ought to + have + V3.
SPOT IT	should + base verb + a past time word.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ You should have called me. ✓ She ought to have told the truth.
TRAP	Writing “should come yesterday”.
TRICK	Past regret → should have + V3 .
TRY IT	You should ___ earlier. (come / have come) (answer at the end of the topic)

126 “Need not / dare not” as modals take the base verb without “to”.

✗ You need not to worry.

✓ You need not worry.

Exam tip: Also correct: You do not need to worry.

WHY?	When need / dare are used as modals (often in negatives and questions) they take the base verb without “to”. As main verbs they take “to”.
SPOT IT	need not to / dare not to.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ You need not hurry. ✓ You don’t need to hurry.
TRAP	Mixing both forms.
TRICK	need not + base; do not need + to.
TRY IT	He need not ___ the form again. (to fill / fill) (answer at the end of the topic)



127 “Ought” always takes “to”.

✗ You ought respect your elders.

✓ You ought to respect your elders.

WHY?	“Ought” is the only modal that always takes “to”.
SPOT IT	ought + base verb.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ We ought to help the poor. ✓ You ought not to lie.
TRAP	Writing “ought go”.
TRICK	ought + to.
TRY IT	You ought ___ obey the rules. (no word / to) (answer at the end of the topic)

128 “May” for formal permission.

✗ Can I come in, sir?

✓ May I come in, sir?

WHY?	“May” asks permission politely and formally; “can” shows ability.
SPOT IT	Can I ... in a formal request.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ May I use your phone? ✓ I can swim.
TRAP	Exams prefer “may” for permission.
TRICK	Permission → may; ability → can.
TRY IT	___ I leave early today, sir? (Can / May) (answer at the end of the topic)

129 “Could” is the past of “can”.

✗ He can swim when he was young.

✓ He could swim when he was young.

WHY?	“Could” is the past form of “can” for past ability.
SPOT IT	can + a past time.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ She could read at the age of four. ✓ I could not sleep last night.
TRAP	Writing “can when he was young”.
TRICK	Past ability → could.
TRY IT	When I was ten, I ___ run fast. (can / could) (answer at the end of the topic)



130 First conditional: If + present, will + base verb.

✗ If it will rain, we will stay at home.

✓ If it rains, we will stay at home.

WHY?	For a real future possibility: If + present simple, will + base verb.
SPOT IT	if + will.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ If you study, you will pass. ✓ If it is sunny, we will go out.
TRAP	Using "will" in both parts.
TRICK	if + present; will in the result.
TRY IT	If he ___ late, we will start without him. (will be / is) (answer at the end of the topic)

131 Second conditional: If + past (were), would + base verb.

✗ If I am rich, I would buy a car.

✓ If I were rich, I would buy a car.

WHY?	For an imaginary or unlikely situation now: If + past (were), would + base verb.
SPOT IT	if + present tense with "would".
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ If I had money, I would travel. ✓ If I were you, I would accept the offer.
TRAP	Writing "If I am you".
TRICK	Imagine now → past + would.
TRY IT	If I ___ the PM, I would build more schools. (am / were) (answer at the end of the topic)

132 Third conditional: If + had + V3, would have + V3.

✗ If he had worked hard, he would pass.

✓ If he had worked hard, he would have passed.

WHY?	For an imaginary past (it did not happen): If + had + V3, would have + V3.
SPOT IT	if + had + V3 with would + base verb.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ If you had told me, I would have come. ✓ If she had left early, she would have caught the bus.
TRAP	Writing "would pass".
TRICK	Past imagination → had ... would have.
TRY IT	If he had run faster, he ___ the race. (would win / would have won) (answer at the end of the topic)



- 133** Never use “would” in the if–clause.
 ✗ If you would have told me, I would have helped.
 ✓ If you had told me, I would have helped.

WHY?	“Would” belongs to the result part; the if–part takes the past or past perfect.
SPOT IT	if + would.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ If you had asked, I would have helped. ✓ If I knew, I would tell you.
TRAP	Using “would” in both parts.
TRICK	No “would” after “if”.
TRY IT	If you ___ me, I would have come. (would have called / had called) (answer at the end of the topic)

- 134** “Unless” already means “if not”; do not add “not”.
 ✗ Unless you do not work hard, you will fail.
 ✓ Unless you work hard, you will fail.

WHY?	“Unless” = “if not”. Adding “not” makes a double negative.
SPOT IT	unless + not / don’t.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ Unless you hurry, you will miss the bus. ✓ You will not succeed unless you try.
TRAP	Writing “unless you don’t”.
TRICK	“unless” already has “not”.
TRY IT	Unless you ____, you will not get a seat. (do not hurry / hurry) (answer at the end of the topic)

- 135** Inverted conditional: Had + subject + V3.
 ✗ Had I know, I would have come.
 ✓ Had I known, I would have come.
 Exam tip: = If I had known

WHY?	“If” can be dropped by putting “had” first: Had I known = If I had known.
SPOT IT	Had + subject + base verb or V2.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ Had she left early, she would have caught the bus. ✓ Had we known, we would have helped.
TRAP	Writing “Had I know”.
TRICK	Had + subject + V3.
TRY IT	Had he ___ hard, he would have passed. (work / worked) (answer at the end of the topic)



136 “Should” at the start means “if”: Should + subject + base verb.

✗ Should you will need help, call me.

✓ Should you need help, call me.

WHY?	“Should” at the start replaces “if” for a possible future event and is followed by the base verb.
SPOT IT	Should + subject + will / verb-s.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ Should it rain, the match will be cancelled. ✓ Should you see him, give him this.
TRAP	Adding “will”.
TRICK	Should + subject + base.
TRY IT	Should you ___ any help, call me. (need / needed) (answer at the end of the topic)

137 “Used to” + base verb for a past habit.

✗ I used to playing cricket.

✓ I used to play cricket.

Exam tip: be used to + -ing: I am used to waking early.

WHY?	“Used to + base verb” is a past habit that no longer happens. “Be used to + -ing” means “be familiar with”.
SPOT IT	used to + -ing (habit), or be used to + base verb.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ He used to smoke. ✓ I am used to living alone.
TRAP	Mixing the two forms.
TRICK	used to + V1 = past habit; be used to + V-ing = familiar.
TRY IT	She used to ___ early. (getting up / get up) (answer at the end of the topic)

138 Must not = forbidden; need not = not necessary.

✗ You must not come if you are busy.

✓ You need not come if you are busy.

WHY?	“Must not” means it is not allowed; “need not” means it is not necessary.
SPOT IT	“must not” where the meaning is “no need”.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ You must not cheat in the exam. ✓ You need not bring food; it is provided.
TRAP	Using “must not” for “no need”.
TRICK	must not = don’t do it; need not = no need.
TRY IT	You ___ pay; it is free. (must not / need not) (answer at the end of the topic)



139 “Would you mind” + -ing.
X Would you mind to open the window?
✓ Would you mind opening the window?

WHY?	“Mind” is followed by the -ing form.
SPOT IT	mind + to + verb.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ Would you mind closing the door? ✓ Do you mind waiting?
TRAP	Writing “mind to wait”.
TRICK	mind + -ing.
TRY IT	Would you mind ___ me? (help / helping) (answer at the end of the topic)

140 “Dare not” + base verb.
X He dare not to speak.
✓ He dare not speak.

WHY?	As a modal, “dare” takes the base verb without “to”.
SPOT IT	dare not to.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ She dare not go out at night. ✓ How dare you say that!
TRAP	Adding “to”.
TRICK	dare not + base.
TRY IT	I dare not ___ him. (to disturb / disturb) (answer at the end of the topic)

TRY-IT ANSWERS 125. have come · 126. fill · 127. to · 128. May · 129. could · 130. is · 131. were · 132. would have won · 133. had called · 134. hurry · 135. worked · 136. need · 137. get up · 138. need not · 139. helping · 140. disturb



PRACTISE THIS TOPIC

Scan for 20 exam questions on Modals & Conditionals with answers and explanations in the PrepZen app.

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141 Married to (not with).

✗ She is married with a doctor.

✓ She is married to a doctor.

WHY?	“Marry” takes a direct object (She married him); “married” takes “to”.
SPOT IT	married with.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ He is married to my cousin. ✓ She married a doctor (no preposition).
TRAP	Translating “ke saath” as “with”.
TRICK	married TO, engaged TO.
TRY IT	She got married ___ an engineer. (with / to) (answer at the end of the topic)

142 Die of a disease; die from a wound or a cause.

✗ He died from cholera.

✓ He died of cholera.

WHY?	“Die of” is used for a disease or hunger; “die from” for a cause like a wound or overwork.
SPOT IT	died from + a disease.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ He died of a heart attack. ✓ He died from injuries in the accident.
TRAP	Mixing them up.
TRICK	Disease → of; wound → from.
TRY IT	Many people died ___ hunger. (from / of) (answer at the end of the topic)



143 Prefer A to B (not than).

✗ I prefer tea than coffee.

✓ I prefer tea to coffee.

WHY?	"Prefer" compares with "to", not "than". With verbs: prefer + -ing to + -ing, or prefer to + verb rather than + verb.
SPOT IT	prefer ... than.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ I prefer walking to driving. ✓ She prefers to read rather than watch TV.
TRAP	Writing "prefer ... than".
TRICK	prefer A TO B.
TRY IT	He prefers coffee ___ tea. (than / to) (answer at the end of the topic)

144 Discuss a topic (no "about").

✗ We discussed about the plan.

✓ We discussed the plan.

WHY?	"Discuss" already means "talk about", so it takes a direct object.
SPOT IT	discuss about.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ Let us discuss the problem. ✓ We had a discussion about the plan (the noun takes "about").
TRAP	Adding "about".
TRICK	discuss + topic; discussion + about.
TRY IT	They discussed ___ the budget. (about / no word) (answer at the end of the topic)

145 Enter a place (no "into").

✗ He entered into the room.

✓ He entered the room.

Exam tip: But: enter into an agreement.

WHY?	"Enter" (go into a place) takes a direct object. "Enter into" is used for agreements, talks or arguments.
SPOT IT	entered into + a place.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ She entered the hall. ✓ The two companies entered into a deal.
TRAP	Adding "into" for a room.
TRICK	Place → enter; agreement → enter into.
TRY IT	The thief entered ___ the house. (into / no word) (answer at the end of the topic)



146 Comprise (no “of”); consist of.

✗ The book comprises of ten chapters.

✓ The book comprises ten chapters.

Exam tip: The book consists of ten chapters.

WHY?	“Comprise” means “consist of”, so it does not take “of”. “Consist” does take “of”.
SPOT IT	comprise of.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ India comprises 28 states and 8 union territories. ✓ The team consists of 11 players.
TRAP	Writing “comprises of”.
TRICK	comprises (no of) = consists of.
TRY IT	The house comprises ___ five rooms. (of / no word) (answer at the end of the topic)

147 Reach a place (no “at / to”).

✗ We reached at the station.

✓ We reached the station.

WHY?	“Reach” takes a direct object, so no “at / to”.
SPOT IT	reach at / reach to.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ We reached home late. ✓ She reached the airport on time.
TRAP	Writing “reached at”.
TRICK	reach + place; arrive at / in + place.
TRY IT	The train reached ___ Mumbai at noon. (at / no word) (answer at the end of the topic)

148 Angry with a person, angry at a thing.

✗ I am angry on him.

✓ I am angry with him.

WHY?	“Angry with” a person; “angry at / about” a thing or situation.
SPOT IT	angry on / angry upon.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ She is angry with her son. ✓ He was angry at the delay.
TRAP	Writing “angry on”.
TRICK	Person → with.
TRY IT	Don’t be angry ___ me. (on / with) (answer at the end of the topic)



149 Afraid of.

✗ She is afraid from dogs.

✓ She is afraid of dogs.

WHY?	This is a fixed pair: afraid of (also scared of, fond of).
SPOT IT	afraid from.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ Are you afraid of the dark? ✓ He is afraid of failure.
TRAP	Using “from”.
TRICK	afraid OF, scared OF, fond OF.
TRY IT	The child is afraid ___ water. (from / of) (answer at the end of the topic)

150 Congratulate someone on something.

✗ I congratulated him for his success.

✓ I congratulated him on his success.

WHY?	We congratulate someone ON an achievement.
SPOT IT	congratulate for.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ I congratulate you on your promotion. ✓ They congratulated her on winning.
TRAP	Writing “congratulate for”.
TRICK	congratulate ON.
TRY IT	We congratulated him ___ his success. (for / on) (answer at the end of the topic)

151 Between two, among more than two.

✗ Divide the sweets between the three boys.

✓ Divide the sweets among the three boys.

WHY?	“Between” for two people or things; “among” for more than two.
SPOT IT	between + three or more.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ Share the cake between the two sisters. ✓ He distributed sweets among the children.
TRAP	Always using “between”.
TRICK	2 → between; 3+ → among.
TRY IT	The money was divided ___ four brothers. (between / among) (answer at the end of the topic)



152 At a time, on a day or date, in a month or year.

✗ The meeting is on 5 o'clock in Monday.

✓ The meeting is at 5 o'clock on Monday.

Exam tip: in March, in 2026

WHY?	"At" for an exact time; "on" for days and dates; "in" for months, years, seasons and parts of the day.
SPOT IT	on + clock time; in + a day or date.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ Independence Day is on 15 August. ✓ I study in the morning and sleep at night.
TRAP	Writing "in Monday" or "on 2026".
TRICK	at TIME, on DAY, in MONTH / YEAR.
TRY IT	India became independent ___ 1947. (on / in) (answer at the end of the topic)

153 Beside = next to; besides = in addition to.

✗ There is a temple besides the river.

✓ There is a temple beside the river.

WHY?	"Beside" means next to; "besides" means in addition to / apart from.
SPOT IT	"besides" used for "next to".
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ Sit beside me. ✓ Besides English, she knows French.
TRAP	Mixing them up.
TRICK	beside = by the side; besides = also.
TRY IT	___ studying, he works part-time. (Beside / Besides) (answer at the end of the topic)

154 Aware of.

✗ He is not aware about the rule.

✓ He is not aware of the rule.

WHY?	This is a fixed pair: aware of (also conscious of).
SPOT IT	aware about.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ Are you aware of the new rule? ✓ She was not aware of the danger.
TRAP	Using "about".
TRICK	aware OF, conscious OF.
TRY IT	He was aware ___ the risks. (about / of) (answer at the end of the topic)



155 Interested in.

✗ She is interested on music.

✓ She is interested in music.

WHY?	This is a fixed pair: interested in.
SPOT IT	interested on / for.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ She is interested in politics. ✓ Are you interested in joining?
TRAP	Writing “interested on”.
TRICK	interested IN.
TRY IT	He is interested ___ painting. (in / on) (answer at the end of the topic)

156 Good at a subject.

✗ He is good in maths.

✓ He is good at maths.

WHY?	Skills take “at”: good at, bad at, clever at.
SPOT IT	good in + a skill.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ She is good at singing. ✓ He is bad at maths.
TRAP	Writing “good in maths”.
TRICK	good / bad / clever AT.
TRY IT	Ravi is good ___ chess. (in / at) (answer at the end of the topic)

157 Abide by a rule.

✗ You must abide with the rules.

✓ You must abide by the rules.

WHY?	“Abide by” is a fixed pair meaning “obey”.
SPOT IT	abide with / abide to.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ We must abide by the law. ✓ Players must abide by the referee’s decision.
TRAP	Using “with”.
TRICK	abide BY = obey.
TRY IT	All members must abide ___ the rules. (with / by) (answer at the end of the topic)



158 Accused of a crime; charged with a crime.

✗ He was accused for theft.

✓ He was accused of theft.

WHY?	"Accuse" takes "of"; "charge" takes "with".
SPOT IT	accused for / charged of.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ She was accused of lying. ✓ He was charged with murder.
TRAP	Mixing them up.
TRICK	accused OF, charged WITH.
TRY IT	He was accused ___ cheating. (for / of) (answer at the end of the topic)

159 Deprived of.

✗ He was deprived from his rights.

✓ He was deprived of his rights.

WHY?	This is a fixed pair: deprived of (also robbed of).
SPOT IT	deprived from.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ Many poor children are deprived of education. ✓ He was deprived of sleep.
TRAP	Using "from".
TRICK	deprive OF, rob OF.
TRY IT	The prisoners were deprived ___ food. (from / of) (answer at the end of the topic)

160 Agree with a person, agree to a proposal.

✗ I agree to you completely.

✓ I agree with you completely.

Exam tip: We agreed to the plan.

WHY?	Agree WITH a person or an opinion; agree TO a plan or proposal; agree ON a point decided together.
SPOT IT	agree to + a person.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ I agree with your view. ✓ The boss agreed to our request.
TRAP	Writing "agree to you".
TRICK	Person → with; proposal → to.
TRY IT	I agree ___ you on this point. (to / with) (answer at the end of the topic)



161 On foot; by bus, by train, by car.

✗ He came by foot.

✓ He came on foot.

WHY?	Transport takes “by” (by bus, by train, by air); walking is “on foot”.
SPOT IT	by foot.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ She goes to school on foot. ✓ They travelled by train.
TRAP	Writing “by foot”.
TRICK	on foot; by car; in a car.
TRY IT	We went to the temple ___ foot. (by / on) (answer at the end of the topic)

162 Different from.

✗ This book is different than that one.

✓ This book is different from that one.

WHY?	In formal and exam English, “different” is followed by “from”.
SPOT IT	different than / different to.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ His style is different from mine. ✓ Indian food is different from Chinese food.
TRAP	Using “than”.
TRICK	different FROM.
TRY IT	This phone is different ___ that one. (than / from) (answer at the end of the topic)

TRY-IT ANSWERS 141. to · 142. of · 143. to · 144. no word · 145. no word · 146. no word · 147. no word · 148. with · 149. of · 150. on · 151. among · 152. in · 153. Besides · 154. of · 155. in · 156. at · 157. by · 158. of · 159. of · 160. with · 161. on · 162. from



PRACTISE THIS TOPIC

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163 No sooner ... than.

✗ No sooner did he arrive when it began to rain.

✓ No sooner did he arrive than it began to rain.

WHY?	“No sooner” is a comparative (sooner), so it pairs with “than”.
SPOT IT	No sooner ... when / then.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ No sooner had I sat down than the bell rang. ✓ No sooner did the rain stop than we went out.
TRAP	Using “when”.
TRICK	sooner → than .
TRY IT	No sooner had he left ___ she arrived. (when / than) (answer at the end of the topic)

164 Hardly / scarcely ... when.

✗ Hardly had he left than the phone rang.

✓ Hardly had he left when the phone rang.

WHY?	“Hardly / scarcely / barely” pair with “when” (or “before”), not “than”.
SPOT IT	hardly / scarcely ... than.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ Scarcely had I reached when it started raining. ✓ Hardly had she slept when the phone rang.
TRAP	Mixing it with “no sooner ... than”.
TRICK	hardly → when ; no sooner → than .
TRY IT	Scarcely had we started ___ the car broke down. (than / when) (answer at the end of the topic)



165 Though / although ... yet (or a comma), never “but”.

✗ Though he is poor but he is honest.

✓ Though he is poor, yet he is honest.

WHY?	“Though / although” already show contrast, so “but” in the same sentence is double; use “yet” or a comma.
SPOT IT	though / although ... but.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ Although it was late, she kept working. ✓ Though he tried hard, yet he failed.
TRAP	Writing “although ... but”.
TRICK	though + yet (or a comma), never but.
TRY IT	Although he is rich, ___ he is humble. (but / yet) (answer at the end of the topic)

166 Both ... and (not as well as).

✗ Both Ram as well as Shyam came.

✓ Both Ram and Shyam came.

WHY?	“Both” pairs only with “and”.
SPOT IT	both ... as well as / with.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ Both the teacher and the students enjoyed the trip. ✓ She is both smart and kind.
TRAP	Writing “both ... as well as”.
TRICK	both ... and.
TRY IT	Both Rita ___ Mona are doctors. (as well as / and) (answer at the end of the topic)

167 Not only ... but also.

✗ He not only sings but dances.

✓ He not only sings but also dances.

WHY?	The pair is “not only ... but also”; exam English does not drop “also”.
SPOT IT	not only ... but (without also).
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ She is not only smart but also hard-working. ✓ He not only wrote the book but also printed it.
TRAP	Dropping “also”.
TRICK	not only ... but also.
TRY IT	He is not only a singer ___ a dancer. (but also / and) (answer at the end of the topic)



168 Either ... or; neither ... nor.

✗ Neither he or his brother came.

✓ Neither he nor his brother came.

WHY?	"Either" pairs with "or"; "neither" pairs with "nor".
SPOT IT	neither ... or.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ Either you or I must go. ✓ Neither the bus nor the train was on time.
TRAP	Writing "neither ... or".
TRICK	N-either → n-or .
TRY IT	Neither Ram ___ Shyam knew the answer. (or / nor) (answer at the end of the topic)

169 Do not use "because" and "so" together.

✗ Because he was ill, so he did not come.

✓ Because he was ill, he did not come.

WHY?	"Because" already gives the reason, so "so" (the result) in the same sentence is double.
SPOT IT	because ... so / as ... so.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ Because it was raining, we stayed in. ✓ It was raining, so we stayed in.
TRAP	Using both words.
TRICK	One linking word only: because OR so.
TRY IT	Because she was tired, ___ she went to bed early. (so / no word) (answer at the end of the topic)

170 "Until" already has a negative sense; no "not" after it.

✗ Wait here until I do not return.

✓ Wait here until I return.

WHY?	"Until / till" means "up to the time when", so "not" after it is wrong.
SPOT IT	until + not.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ Wait until the rain stops. ✓ Don't leave until I come.
TRAP	Writing "until he does not come".
TRICK	"until" already means "before".
TRY IT	Stay here until I ___. (do not return / return) (answer at the end of the topic)



171 As if / as though + past (were).

✗ He talks as if he is a king.

✓ He talks as if he were a king.

WHY?	"As if / as though" for something unreal take the past (were).
SPOT IT	as if + is / am.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ She behaves as if she were the boss. ✓ He spends money as if he were a millionaire.
TRAP	Using the present tense.
TRICK	as if → were.
TRY IT	He talks as if he ___ everything. (knows / knew) (answer at the end of the topic)

172 Whether ... or not (not "or no").

✗ I do not know whether he will come or no.

✓ I do not know whether he will come or not.

WHY?	The pair is "whether ... or not", never "or no".
SPOT IT	whether ... or no.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ Tell me whether you are coming or not. ✓ I wonder whether it will rain or not.
TRAP	Writing "or no".
TRICK	whether ... or not.
TRY IT	I don't know whether he will agree _____. (or no / or not) (answer at the end of the topic)

173 So ... that (not "so ... as").

✗ He is so weak as he cannot walk.

✓ He is so weak that he cannot walk.

WHY?	"So ... that" shows a result. "So ... as to" + verb also works, but "so ... as he" is wrong.
SPOT IT	so + adjective + as + a clause.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ She was so tired that she slept at once. ✓ He was so kind as to help me.
TRAP	Writing "so weak as he cannot".
TRICK	so ... that + clause; so ... as to + verb.
TRY IT	The box was so heavy ___ I could not lift it. (as / that) (answer at the end of the topic)



174 Would rather / sooner ... than + base verb.

✗ I would rather die than to beg.

✓ I would rather die than beg.

WHY?	After “would rather / would sooner ... than”, use the base verb without “to”.
SPOT IT	than + to + verb.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ I would rather walk than wait. ✓ She would sooner quit than lie.
TRAP	Writing “than to beg”.
TRICK	rather ... than + base.
TRY IT	I would rather stay home than ___ out. (to go / go) (answer at the end of the topic)

175 “Lest” is already negative; use “should”, not “not”.

✗ Walk carefully lest you may not fall.

✓ Walk carefully lest you should fall.

WHY?	“Lest” already means “so that ... not”, so adding “not” reverses the meaning; use “should”.
SPOT IT	lest + not / may not / will.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ Be careful lest you should fall. ✓ Study hard lest you should fail.
TRAP	Writing “lest you may not”.
TRICK	lest + should (no not).
TRY IT	Take an umbrella lest you ___ get wet. (should / may not) (answer at the end of the topic)

176 Do not use “since” and “therefore” together.

✗ Since he was late, therefore he was punished.

✓ Since he was late, he was punished.

WHY?	“Since” gives the reason and “therefore” gives the result; using both in one sentence is double.
SPOT IT	since ... therefore / as ... so.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ Since he was ill, he stayed home. ✓ He was ill; therefore, he stayed home.
TRAP	Using both words.
TRICK	One linking word only.
TRY IT	Since it was late, ___ we went home. (therefore / no word) (answer at the end of the topic)



177 Fixed pairs: seldom or never, little or nothing.

✗ He seldom or ever visits us.

✓ He seldom or never visits us.

WHY?	These are fixed pairs: seldom or never, little or nothing, if any.
SPOT IT	seldom or ever.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ He seldom or never smiles. ✓ She knows little or nothing about it.
TRAP	Writing “seldom or ever”.
TRICK	seldom or NEVER.
TRY IT	He seldom ___ goes to the cinema. (or ever / or never) (answer at the end of the topic)

178 “No other ... than” (not “but”).

✗ He has no other friend but me.

✓ He has no other friend than me.

WHY?	“Other” is a comparison word, so it pairs with “than”. (But: “It was none other than the PM.”)
SPOT IT	no other ... but / except.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ I have no other choice than this. ✓ She had no other option than to wait.
TRAP	Using “but”.
TRICK	other → than.
TRY IT	He has no other friend ___ Ravi. (but / than) (answer at the end of the topic)

TRY-IT ANSWERS 163. than · 164. when · 165. yet · 166. and · 167. but also · 168. nor · 169. no word · 170. return · 171. knew · 172. or not · 173. that · 174. go · 175. should · 176. no word · 177. or never · 178. than



PRACTISE THIS TOPIC

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179 A negative word at the start (never, seldom, rarely, hardly) needs inversion.✗ **Never I have seen such a sight.**✓ **Never have I seen such a sight.**

WHY?	When a negative or limiting word starts the sentence, the helping verb comes before the subject, like in a question.
SPOT IT	Never / Seldom / Rarely / Hardly / Little / Nowhere + subject + verb.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ Rarely do we see such talent. ✓ Seldom has he been late.
TRAP	Keeping the normal order.
TRICK	Negative word first → question order.
TRY IT	Never ___ such a big crowd. (I have seen / have I seen) (answer at the end of the topic)

180 “Not only” at the start needs inversion.✗ **Not only he sings but he also dances.**✓ **Not only does he sing but he also dances.**

WHY?	“Not only” at the start also needs question order (do / does / did + subject).
SPOT IT	Not only + subject + verb.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ Not only did she win, but she also broke the record. ✓ Not only is he rich, but he is also kind.
TRAP	Forgetting the inversion.
TRICK	Not only + did / does / is + subject.
TRY IT	Not only ___ late, but he also forgot the tickets. (he came / did he come) (answer at the end of the topic)



181 “Only after / only then / only when” at the start needs inversion.

✗ Only after the exam I rested.

✓ Only after the exam did I rest.

WHY?	“Only + a time phrase” at the start needs inversion in the main clause.
SPOT IT	Only after / when / then + subject + verb.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ Only then did I understand. ✓ Only when he left did we start.
TRAP	Inverting the first clause instead of the main one.
TRICK	Invert the MAIN clause.
TRY IT	Only after the rain stopped ___ out. (we went / did we go) (answer at the end of the topic)

182 Items in a list must be in the same form (parallelism).

✗ She likes reading, writing and to dance.

✓ She likes reading, writing and dancing.

WHY?	Items in a list (joined by and / or) should be in the same grammar form.
SPOT IT	A list that mixes -ing words, to + verb and nouns.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ He likes to swim, to run and to cycle. ✓ She is kind, honest and helpful.
TRAP	One item in a different form.
TRICK	Same form for every item.
TRY IT	She enjoys cooking, singing and ___. (to dance / dancing) (answer at the end of the topic)

183 Paired words join the same kind of word.

✗ He is not only intelligent but also works hard.

✓ He is not only intelligent but also hard-working.

WHY?	Paired words (not only ... but also, either ... or, both ... and) must be followed by the same kind of word: adjective with adjective, verb with verb.
SPOT IT	not only + adjective ... but also + verb phrase.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ She is not only smart but also kind. ✓ He either plays or studies.
TRAP	Mixing parts of speech.
TRICK	Check what comes after each half of the pair.
TRY IT	He is not only brave but also ___. (works hard / honest) (answer at the end of the topic)



184 Avoid redundant words: return back, repeat again, revert back, reply back.

✗ Please reply back soon.

✓ Please reply soon.

WHY?	Return, repeat, revert and reply already contain the meaning of “back / again”.
SPOT IT	return back, repeat again, revert back, reply back, descend down, ascend up.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ Please repeat the question. ✓ He returned home.
TRAP	Adding “back” or “again”.
TRICK	re- already means again or back.
TRY IT	Please ___ the money soon. (return back / return) (answer at the end of the topic)

185 “The reason is that” (not because).

✗ The reason is because he was ill.

✓ The reason is that he was ill.

WHY?	“Reason” already means “because”, so “the reason is because” says it twice.
SPOT IT	the reason is because.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ The reason for his absence is that he was ill. ✓ The reason why she left is unclear.
TRAP	Writing “reason ... because”.
TRICK	reason ... that.
TRY IT	The reason he failed is ___ he did not study. (because / that) (answer at the end of the topic)

186 “Cousin” alone; “cousin brother / sister” is not standard.

✗ He is my cousin brother.

✓ He is my cousin.

WHY?	“Cousin” already means the child of an uncle or aunt (a boy or a girl), so “cousin brother / sister” is not standard English.
SPOT IT	cousin brother / cousin sister.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ She is my cousin. ✓ My cousin Ravi lives in Delhi.
TRAP	Using the Indian form in exams.
TRICK	Just “cousin”.
TRY IT	Ravi is my ___. (cousin brother / cousin) (answer at the end of the topic)



187 No double negatives.

✗ I don't know **nothing** about it.

✓ I don't know **anything** about it.

WHY?	Two negatives cancel each other, so "don't know nothing" means "know something". Use one negative only.
SPOT IT	not / never + no / nothing / nobody.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ I don't have any money. ✓ He never says anything.
TRAP	Copying the spoken style.
TRICK	One negative per clause.
TRY IT	I didn't see _____. (nobody / anybody) (answer at the end of the topic)

188 Hardly, scarcely, barely are negative; no "not" with them.

✗ I could not **hardly** hear him.

✓ I could **hardly** hear him.

WHY?	Hardly, scarcely, barely, seldom and never are already negative.
SPOT IT	not + hardly / scarcely.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ I can barely see. ✓ She hardly ever comes.
TRAP	Writing "could not hardly".
TRICK	hardly = almost not → no extra "not".
TRY IT	I ____ hardly hear you. (can not / can) (answer at the end of the topic)

189 Question tag: positive statement → negative tag, and the reverse.

✗ He is coming, **is he?**

✓ He is coming, **isn't he?**

WHY?	A tag checks the statement: a positive statement takes a negative tag, a negative statement takes a positive tag, with the same helping verb.
SPOT IT	Positive statement + positive tag.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ She can swim, can't she? ✓ They didn't come, did they?
TRAP	Changing the helping verb.
TRICK	Opposite tag, same helping verb, a pronoun subject.
TRY IT	You are coming, ____? (are you / aren't you) (answer at the end of the topic)



190 “I am” takes the tag “aren’t I”.

✗ I am late, amn’t I?

✓ I am late, aren’t I?

WHY?	“Amn’t I” is not standard, so the tag for “I am” is “aren’t I”.
SPOT IT	amn’t I.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ I am right, aren’t I? ✓ I am not late, am I?
TRAP	Using “amn’t”.
TRICK	I am ... aren’t I?
TRY IT	I am your best friend, ___? (amn’t I / aren’t I) (answer at the end of the topic)

191 “Let’s” takes “shall we”; an order takes “will you”.

✗ Let’s go, will we?

✓ Let’s go, shall we?

Exam tip: Close the door, will you?

WHY?	“Let’s” (= let us, a suggestion) takes “shall we”. Orders and requests take “will you / won’t you”.
SPOT IT	Let’s ... will we / won’t we.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ Let’s have tea, shall we? ✓ Open the window, will you?
TRAP	Using “will we”.
TRICK	Let’s → shall we; an order → will you.
TRY IT	Let’s start the meeting, ___? (will we / shall we) (answer at the end of the topic)

192 Everyone / nobody / somebody take “they” in the tag.

✗ Nobody came, did he?

✓ Nobody came, did they?

WHY?	Everyone, nobody and somebody take “they” in the tag. Nobody and nothing are negative, so the tag is positive.
SPOT IT	nobody ... did he / don’t they.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ Everyone is here, aren’t they? ✓ Nothing happened, did it?
TRAP	Using “he” or a negative tag.
TRICK	everyone / nobody → they; nothing → it.
TRY IT	Somebody called you, ___? (didn’t he / didn’t they) (answer at the end of the topic)



TRY-IT ANSWERS 179. have I seen · 180. did he come · 181. did we go · 182. dancing · 183. honest · 184. return · 185. that · 186. cousin · 187. anybody · 188. can · 189. aren't you · 190. aren't I · 191. shall we · 192. didn't they



PRACTISE THIS TOPIC

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193 Affect (verb) / effect (noun).

✗ The rain effected the crops.

✓ The rain affected the crops.

Exam tip: The rain had a bad effect.

WHY?	“Affect” is usually a verb (to change something); “effect” is usually a noun (the result).
SPOT IT	“effect” used as a verb.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ Smoking affects health. ✓ The medicine had a good effect.
TRAP	Mixing them up.
TRICK	A for Action (verb) → affect; E for End result → effect.
TRY IT	The strike ___ the train service. (effected / affected) (answer at the end of the topic)

194 Principal (main, head) / principle (a rule, a value).

✗ He is a man of principals.

✓ He is a man of principles.

WHY?	“Principal” = main, or the head of a school; “principle” = a basic rule or belief.
SPOT IT	principal for a rule, or principle for a person.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ The principal called a meeting. ✓ Honesty is my principle.
TRAP	The spelling.
TRICK	princiPAL is your PAL (a person); principLE = ruLE.
TRY IT	He never breaks his _____. (principals / principles) (answer at the end of the topic)



195 Lose (fail to keep) / loose (not tight).

✗ Don't loose hope.

✓ Don't lose hope.

WHY?	"Lose" (verb) = fail to keep; "loose" (adjective) = not tight.
SPOT IT	"loose" used as a verb.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ Don't lose your keys. ✓ This shirt is loose.
TRAP	The spelling.
TRICK	"lose" has lost an "o".
TRY IT	If you don't practise, you will ___ the match. (loose / lose) (answer at the end of the topic)

196 Advice (noun) / advise (verb).

✗ Please advice me.

✓ Please advise me.

WHY?	"Advice" (noun, ends in -ice) is what you give; "advise" (verb, ends in -ise) is the action.
SPOT IT	"advise" used as a verb.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ She gave me good advice. ✓ I advise you to rest.
TRAP	The spelling.
TRICK	Like practice (noun) and practise (verb).
TRY IT	The doctor ___ him to rest. (advised / advised) (answer at the end of the topic)

197 Stationary (not moving) / stationery (paper, pens).

✗ I bought some stationary.

✓ I bought some stationery.

WHY?	"Stationary" (with A) = not moving; "stationery" (with E) = paper, pens, envelopes.
SPOT IT	"stationary" used for paper items.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ The car was stationary. ✓ Buy stationery for the office.
TRAP	The spelling.
TRICK	stationEry = Envelopes; stationAry = stAnding still.
TRY IT	The bus remained ___ for an hour. (stationary / stationery) (answer at the end of the topic)



198 Accept (take) / except (leave out).

✗ Everyone came **accept** him.

✓ Everyone came **except** him.

WHY?	"Accept" = to take or agree to; "except" = leaving out, apart from.
SPOT IT	"accept" used for "but not".
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ Please accept my apology. ✓ All came except Rohan.
TRAP	The similar sound.
TRICK	EX cept = EX clude.
TRY IT	He ___ the job offer. (excepted / accepted) (answer at the end of the topic)

199 Compliment (praise) / complement (something that completes).

✗ She paid me a **complement**.

✓ She paid me a **compliment**.

WHY?	"Compliment" = praise; "complement" = something that completes or goes well with another thing.
SPOT IT	"complement" used for praise.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ She complimented his work. ✓ The tie complements the shirt.
TRAP	The spelling.
TRICK	compliment = I like you; complEment = complEte .
TRY IT	He paid her a ___ on her dress. (complement / compliment) (answer at the end of the topic)

200 Then (time) / than (comparison).

✗ He is taller **then** me.

✓ He is taller **than** me.

WHY?	"Then" = at that time / next; "than" = used in comparisons.
SPOT IT	"then" after a comparative.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ First read, then write. ✓ She is smarter than her brother.
TRAP	The spelling.
TRICK	thAn = compArison .
TRY IT	He is older ___ me. (then / than) (answer at the end of the topic)



201 Formerly (earlier) / formally (officially).

✗ He was formally a teacher (meaning earlier).

✓ He was formerly a teacher.

WHY?	"Formerly" = in the past, earlier; "formally" = in an official or proper way.
SPOT IT	"formally" meaning earlier.
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ He was formerly a pilot. ✓ The minister was formally invited.
TRAP	The similar sound.
TRICK	forMERly → former (earlier); forMALly → formal.
TRY IT	She was ___ the principal of this school. (formally / formerly) (answer at the end of the topic)

202 Economic (of the economy) / economical (saving money).

✗ This car is very economic.

✓ This car is very economical.

WHY?	"Economic" = about the economy; "economical" = saving money, not wasteful.
SPOT IT	"economic" for "cheap to run".
MORE EXAMPLES	✓ India's economic growth. ✓ an economical car.
TRAP	Mixing them up.
TRICK	economiCAL = CALculating your money.
TRY IT	This bulb is very _____. (economic / economical) (answer at the end of the topic)

TRY-IT ANSWERS 193. affected · 194. principles · 195. lose · 196. advised · 197. stationary · 198. accepted · 199. compliment · 200. than · 201. formerly · 202. economical



PRACTISE THIS TOPIC

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Top 50

THE NIGHT BEFORE THE EXAM

One-line rules you must not forget

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1 Each / every + singular verb. | 26 Unless is already negative: no "not" after it. |
| 2 One of the + plural noun + singular verb. | 27 Though ... yet (not "but"). |
| 3 A number of + plural; the number of + singular. | 28 Not only...but also / both...and join the SAME parts. |
| 4 Neither...nor / either...or: the verb follows the nearer subject. | 29 No redundancy: return back, repeat again, revert back. |
| 5 As well as / along with: the verb follows the first subject. | 30 Discuss a topic (not discuss about). |
| 6 Many a + singular noun + singular verb. | 31 Married to (not with); die of a disease. |
| 7 Advice, information, furniture, luggage, equipment, scenery: no plural. | 32 Prefer A to B (not than). |
| 8 Cattle, police, people, poultry: always plural. | 33 Make / let / help + base verb: <i>made him laugh</i> . |
| 9 News, mathematics, physics + singular verb. | 34 Look forward to / be used to + -ing . |
| 10 Fewer with countable, less with uncountable nouns. | 35 Present perfect never with past-time words. |
| 11 After a preposition use the object form: <i>between you and me</i> . | 36 Earlier of two past actions: past perfect. |
| 12 Who = subject, whom = object. | 37 Each other (2 people), one another (more than 2). |
| 13 "One" takes "one's": <i>One should do one's duty</i> . | 38 Comparing two: <i>the taller of the two</i> . |
| 14 An before a vowel SOUND: <i>an hour, an MBA; a university</i> . | 39 Scarcely / hardly are negative: no "not" with them. |
| 15 The before rivers, oceans, unique things and superlatives. | 40 After "the reason is" use that , not because. |
| 16 No article before a language: <i>He speaks English</i> . | 41 Agree with a person, agree to a proposal. |
| 17 No double comparative: <i>better</i> , never <i>more better</i> . | 42 Between two, among more than two. |
| 18 Senior, junior, superior, inferior, prior + to (not than). | 43 Beside = next to; besides = in addition to. |
| 19 Linking verbs + adjective: <i>The rose smells sweet</i> . | 44 Enter a room, reach a place, comprise ten parts: no preposition. |
| 20 Hardly / scarcely ... when; no sooner ... than . | 45 Avoid / enjoy / finish / mind + -ing . |
| 21 Never / seldom / hardly at the start: invert. <i>Never have I seen...</i> | 46 Need not / dare not + base verb (no "to"). |
| 22 Since + point of time; for + period of time. | 47 Had better + base verb: <i>You had better go</i> . |



23 No “will” in the if-clause: *If it rains, we will stay.*

24 Wish / if only + past: *I wish I were rich.*

25 **Lest** + should: *Work hard lest you should fail.*

48 **It is high time** + past tense: *It is high time we left.*

49 Should + have + V3 for a missed duty: *He should have come.*

50 Question tag: positive → negative tag; *I am late, aren't I?*



Test yourself on all 202 rules

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