

CHAPTER 4

Spotting Error Tips and Tricks

How to Solve Spotting Error Questions

1. In order to solve questions on spotting errors, the first step you should take is to read the complete sentence carefully. In most of the cases, you will be able to detect the error in the first go itself.

While reading the entire sentence, you must carefully check the subject-verb agreement.

2. The next step is to carefully check all spellings. Many a times, an error can be spotted in spellings.

3. If you can still not detect the error or you are still unsure of the correct answer, then you must read each individual part of the sentence and closely examine which part consists of an error.

List of Common Errors

Following is the list of common errors that can be seen in “spotting the error” questions in **exam**

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1. **words beginning with ‘h’** like, honour, honest, heir etc. are considered to be silent. Hence the vowel following it takes ‘an’, instead of ‘a’ for the article. Hence, the correct usage is “an hour”, “an heir”, “an honour” etc.

2. In case of **using prepositions**, you need to keep in mind the following definitions –

between (to be used for only two)

3. Always check for **subject-verb agreement** – if a subject is singular, then its verb should also be singular. On similar grounds, if a subject is plural, then its verb should also be plural. Furthermore, if you write in the present tense, both the noun and the verb take plural forms in opposite ways. For instance, the noun adds an “s” to its singular form, on the other hand, the verb removes the “s” from its singular form.

4. Check for errors in **use of conjunctions** – remember that a sentence only uses one conjunction at a time. For instance, use of both “as” and “so” in the same sentence is incorrect.

5. Distinction between **“much” and “many”** – the word “much” is used before uncountable nouns, while the word “many” is used before countable nouns.

Here, uncountable nouns are substances which can not be further broker down into smaller elements. For example, “litres of milk” (here the word “milk” can not be further broken down

into smaller units). On the other hand, countable nouns are substances which can be broken down into smaller elements. For instance, “two dogs” (here the existence of the word “two” makes the verb countable).

NOTE: it is also important that you work on your vocabulary, to maximize your marks in the English Language section.

6. Distinction between “**whose**” and “**which**” – the word “whose” is used to address living entities and the word “which” is used for lifeless objects. For instance, the sentence, “which book is lying there?” is incorrect and the sentence “whose book is lying there?” is correct.

7. The **pronoun “one”** as a subject should use “one’s” because it does not indicate towards a specific gender – male or female.

8. The combination of words “**One of**” always takes a plural noun after it. For instance, the sentence, “it is one of the saddest day” is incorrect and the sentence, “it is one of the saddest days” is correct.

9. **Collective nouns** like public, committee, team, audience, government, etc. can be used both as singular and plural depending on their meaning. When these words refer to a unit, the verb is singular, otherwise it is plural.

10. There are certain nouns that refer to length, measure, money or a number. When they are preceded by a numeral, they remain unchanged in form. These nouns are – Foot, metre, pair, score, dozen, head, year, hundred, thousand, million etc.

How to Solve Sentence Correction Questions

In this topic you have to find the correct alternative which may improve the sentence. Sometimes there is no correction required then your answer will be no improvement.

Tips to solve Sentence Correction in Exam

(i) Read the original sentence carefully and try to spot grammatical errors by identifying whether something “sounds” wrong.

(ii) Always look at every choice.

(iii) Even when the original sentence seems fine, pay attention to the grammar that it tests and look through the choices systematically to see if any alternative provides a better option.

(iv) As you locate each error, eliminate all of the choices that contain that error.

(v) Do not read each answer choice back into the sentence individually; that wastes time and invites inaccuracy.

(vi) Instead, identify the differences among the choices and eliminate those that offer less effective or grammatically incorrect alternatives.

Questions for Practice

Directions: Read each sentence to find out whether there is any grammatical error or idiomatic error in it. The error, if any, will be in one part of the sentence. The letter of that part is the answer. If there is 'No error', the answer is (5). (Ignore errors of punctuation, if any.)

1. The area was plunged into, (1) / darkness mid a wave of (2) / cheering and shouting (3) / slogans like 'Save and Earth'. (4) No error (5)
2. The poll contestants approached the commission (1) / complaining that the hoardings (2) / violated the code of conduct (3)/ and influenced the public perception. (4) No error (5)
3. The country has (1) / adequate laws but problems arise (2) / when these are not (3) / implemented in letter and spirit. (4) No error (5)
4. The management feels that (1) / the employees of the organization are (2) / non – productive, and do not want (3) / to work hard (4)/ No error (5)
5. As far the issue of land encroachment (1) / in villages is concerned, people will (2) / have to make a start from their villages by (3) / sensitizing and educating the villagers about the issue. (4) No error (5)

Answers :

1 (2) ; 2 (5) ; 3(5) ; 4 (3) ; 5(1)

26 Tips for Spotting Errors in English

Even those of us who are well-versed with English end up making the silliest of errors in grammar. It is a very natural tendency but error-spotting is not an art that one can't master. It is just a matter of swearing by some guidelines and practice! Here are 26 tips for error spotting in English:

1. Certain nouns possess a singular form but still represent plurality and thus, take a plural verb when used in a sentence.

E.g. Cattle, peasantry, people, clergy, police.

Thus,

- The Police has come (Incorrect)
- The Police have come (Correct)

2. Certain nouns always take the plural verb because their form is always plural.

E.g. Scissors, trousers, spectacles, thanks, premises.

Thus,

- The scissors is kept on the table. (Incorrect)
- The scissors are kept on the table. (Correct)

3. When a number is followed by a noun denoting measure, length, money, number or weight, the form of the nouns does not change so long as they are followed by another noun or pronoun.

E.g. Million, pair, metre, year, dozen, foot, head.

Thus,

- This is a nine-metres cloth. (Incorrect)
- This is a nine-metre cloth. (Correct)

4. When a number is followed by a noun denoting measure, length, money, number or weight, but these are not followed by another noun or pronoun, then they take the plural form.
E.g. Million, pair, metre, year, dozen, foot, head.

Thus,

- This sari is nine yard long. (Incorrect)
- This sari is nine yards long. (Correct)

5. Certain nouns, especially of the collective category, are used as singular when they specify a unit.

E.g. Public, team, committee, government, audience, orchestra, company, jury.

Thus,

- The public were unanimous in their opinion. (Incorrect)
- The public was unanimous in its opinion. (Correct)

6. Certain nouns, especially of the collective category, are used in plural when they specify a difference of opinion or class.

E.g. Public, team, committee, government, audience, orchestra, company, jury.

Thus,

- The jury was divided in its opinion. (Incorrect)
 - The jury were divided in their opinion. (Correct)
7. If the pronoun 'one' is used, it must be maintained throughout the sentence.

Thus,

- One must respect his elders. (Incorrect)
 - One must respect one's elders. (Correct)
8. The word 'whose' is used for living people and 'which' is used for non-living things or ideas.

Thus,

- Which box is kept on the table? (Incorrect)
 - Whose box is kept on the table? (Correct)
9. 'Less' is used to denote quantity while 'fewer' is used to denote number.

Thus,

- No less than twenty people were (Incorrect)
 - No fewer than twenty people were (Correct)
10. 'One of' is always followed by noun in the plural form.

Thus,

- She is one of the least important person in the office. (Incorrect)
- She is one of the least important people in the office. (Correct)

11. Only 'than' should be used after 'no other'

Thus,

- I like no other movie but Titanic. (Incorrect)
- I like no other movie than Titanic. (Correct)

12. After the word 'Know', 'how', 'what' or 'when' should be used before using the infinitive.

Thus,

- I know to speak English. (Incorrect)
- I know how to speak English. (Correct)

13. If the verb indicates a purpose, an infinitive must be used and if the verb indicates a cause, a gerund must be used.

Thus,

- He went to the mall for watching a movie. (Incorrect)
- He went to the mall to watch a movie. (Correct)

- He was suspended to show indiscipline. (Incorrect)
- He was suspended for showing indiscipline. (Correct)

14. 'As' is not used with verbs like 'appointed', 'elected', 'considered', 'called' but it is used with the word 'regard'.

Thus,

- He was elected as Secretary of the organisation. (Incorrect)
- He was elected Secretary of the organisation. (Correct)

- I regard Sahil my best friend. (Incorrect)
- I regard Sahil as my best friend. (Correct)

15. Adverbs should not be confused for adjectives. An adjective describes the characteristic of the subject while an adverb describes the action of the verb.

Thus,

- The horse looked beautifully. (Incorrect)
- The horse looked beautiful. (Correct)

16. Question tags are always the opposite of the sentence which means that if the sentence is positive, the question tag is negative and vice versa.

Thus,

- You were dancing, were you? (Incorrect)
- You were dancing, weren't you? (Correct)

17. An infinitive verb should never be split.

Thus,

- I request you to kindly tell me. (Incorrect)
- I request you kindly to tell me. (Correct)

18. A pronoun after 'like', 'unlike' and 'let' takes an objective case.

Thus,

- You will never find a woman like she. (Incorrect)

- You will never find a woman like her. (Correct)
- Let I do it. (Incorrect)
- Let me do it. (Correct)

19. The relative pronoun 'that' is used instead of 'who' or 'which' after adjectives in the superlative degree.

Thus,

- This is the best which she could do. (Incorrect)
- This is the best that she could do. (Correct)

20. To show equality 'as' is used both before and after the adjective.

Thus,

- I can run as fast, if not faster than you. (Incorrect)
- I can run as fast as, if not faster than you. (Correct)

21. Even though 'More than one' indicates a plural sense, it agrees with a singular noun and takes a singular verb.

Thus,

- More than one students completed their project. (Incorrect)
- More than one student completed his project. (Correct)

22. 'Scarcely' and 'hardly' are followed by 'when' and not by 'than'.

Thus,

- Hardly had the teacher left the room than the pupils started enjoying. (Incorrect)
- Hardly had the teacher left the room when the pupils started enjoying. (Correct)

23. 'Though' is followed by 'yet' and not by 'but'.

Thus,

- Though he is poor but he is honest. (Incorrect)
- Though he is poor, yet he is honest. (Correct)

24. 'Lest' must be followed by 'should' or by nothing at all and 'Such' must be followed by 'as'.

Thus,

- Work hard lest you will fail. (Incorrect)

- Work hard lest you should fail. (Correct)
 - Work hard lest you fail. (Correct)

 - He is such a writer that everybody should read his books. (Incorrect)
 - He is such a writer as everybody should read his books. (Correct)
25. 'Unless' expresses a condition and is always used in the negative sense. Thus 'not' is never used with 'unless'.

Thus,

- Unless you do not work hard, you will not excel in the examination. (Incorrect)
- Unless you work hard, you will not excel in the examination. (Correct)

26. 'When' denotes a general sense and 'while' implies a time duration of doing something.

Thus,

- When learning how to sing, technique is of utmost importance. (Incorrect)
- While learning how to sing, technique is of utmost importance. (Correct)

After reading these amazing Error spotting techniques, do practice some exercises on the same to get a good grip on the topic. Keep looking this space as we would be coming up with more related articles to make your preparation journey easy.

You are now armed with 26 tips for spotting errors in English for SBI PO. Here are 26 more rules and you can be confident about tackling any error spotting or phrase replacement question.

1. Some nouns always use a singular verb.

Eg: Advice, scenery, stationery, mathematics, news

- Mathematics are a difficult subject. (Incorrect)
 - Mathematics is a difficult subject. (Correct)
2. 'Who' denotes the subject and 'whom' denotes the object.
 - Whom do you think won the competition? (Incorrect)
 - Who do you think won the competition? (Correct)
 - Who did you talk to? (Incorrect)
 - Whom did you talk to? (Correct)
 3. The verb and pronoun in case of two nouns joined by 'either...or' or 'neither... nor' or by 'or' take the form of the latter noun.
 - Either my father or my sister will use their credit card. (Incorrect)

- Either my father or my sister will use her credit card. (Correct)
4. The verb and pronoun are plural when there is one singular noun and one plural noun and is joined by the conjunction 'and'.
- The teacher and her students donated her money. (Incorrect)
 - The teacher and her students donated their money. (Correct)
5. When there are two nouns joined by a preposition like 'with' or 'along with', the verb and pronoun take the form of the main (first) noun.
- Mansi, along with her students, were on their way to the movies. (Incorrect)
 - Mansi, along with her students, was on her way to the movies. (Correct)
6. If the plural subject indicates a definite amount or quantity taken as a

whole, it takes the verb in the singular form.

- Eighty kilometres are a good distance. (Incorrect)
 - Eighty kilometres is a good distance. (Correct)
7. When two or more adjectives show the qualities of the same person or thing, all the adjectives must be in the same degree.
- Bhanu is more intelligent and wise than Manu. (Incorrect)
 - Bhanu is more intelligent and wiser than Manu. (Correct)
8. When two singular nouns are joined by 'and' are preceded by 'each' or 'every' the pronoun used is singular.
- Each man and each boy must be rewarded for their good deeds. (Incorrect)
 - Each man and each boy must be rewarded for his good deeds. (Correct)
9. 'No sooner' is always followed by 'than'.
- No sooner had the bell rung when the students started leaving the classroom. (Incorrect)
 - No sooner had the bell rung than the students started leaving the room. (Correct)
10. 'No sooner' is always followed by 'does/do' or 'has/have' in the present tense and by 'did' or 'had' in the past tense.
- No sooner are the boys marching than the whistle blows. (Incorrect)
 - No sooner do the boys march than the whistle blows. (Correct)
11. 'A great many' is always followed by a plural noun and a plural verb.
- A great many invention has been declared successful. (Incorrect)

- A great many inventions have been declared successful. (Correct)
12. 'Some' is used in affirmative sentences to express quantity or degree. 'Any' is to be used in negative or interrogative sentences.
- I shall buy some books. (Correct)
 - I shall not buy any books. (Correct)
 - Have you bought any books? (Correct)

But 'some' might be used in interrogative sentences which are requests.

- Will you please give me some water? (Correct)
13. 'Since' indicates a point of time and 'for' stands for the length of time.
- He has been reading the book since three hours. (Incorrect)
 - He has been reading the book for three hours. (Correct)
 - It has been raining heavily for Monday. (Incorrect)
 - It has been raining heavily since Monday. (Correct)
14. When we use 'everybody' 'everyone', 'anybody', and 'each' the pronoun of the masculine or the feminine gender is used with respect to the content.
- I shall be willing to help each of the girls in her practice. (Incorrect)

But when the gender is not mentioned, we use the pronoun of the masculine gender.

- Anyone can do this job if he tries. (Correct)
 - Each of the boys in the class has finished their tasks. (Incorrect)
 - Each of the boys in the class has finished his task. (Correct)
15. A singular pronoun is used for a collective nouns, and should be in the neuter gender if the collective noun is viewed as a whole.
- The pride gave away their location by roaring loudly. (Incorrect)
 - The pride gave away its location by roaring loudly. (Correct)
16. When pronouns of different persons are to be used together in a sentence, the sequence of persons should be as follows: second person + third + first person in a normal sentence.
- Raju, I and you have finished the work. (Incorrect)
 - You, Raju and I have finished our studies. (Correct)
17. 'Older' refers to persons as well as things and is usually followed by 'than'.
- Raju is elder than all other boys of this class. (Incorrect)
 - Raju is older than all other boys of this class. (Correct)

‘Elder’ is used for members of the family.

- Suyash is my older brother. (Incorrect)
- Suyash is my elder brother. (Correct)

18. ‘Than’ is used in the comparative degree usually , but with words like superior, inferior, senior, junior, prior, anterior, posterior and prefer ‘to’ is used.

- Gandhi is preferred than Nehru. (Incorrect)
- Gandhi is preferred to Nehru. (Correct)

19. ‘Many a’ is always followed by the singular verb.

- Many a man were influenced by the speech. (Incorrect)
- Many a man was influenced by the speech. (Correct)

20. The singular verb is used when the subject is “the number of”.

- The number of buildings are very low. (Incorrect)
- The number of buildings is very low. (Correct)

21. ‘Since’, ‘because’, ‘as’, ‘for’ are often used alternatively, however there is a difference in their degree. Stronger cases use ‘since’ and ‘because’ and ‘as’ and ‘for’ are used in weak cases.

- I respect him as he is the best teacher. (Incorrect)
- I respect him because he is the best teacher. (Correct)

22. A pronoun is sometimes incorrectly used where it is not required at all. Eliminate the redundant ones.

- He, being an M.A., he is over qualified for the position. (Incorrect)
- He, being an M.A., is over qualified for the position. (Correct)

23. The relative pronoun ‘that’ is used instead of ‘who’ or ‘which’ after adjectives in the superlative degree.

- This is the best which the doctors could do. (Incorrect)
- This is the best that the doctors could do. (Correct)

24. When ‘as if’ is used in the sense of pretension, ‘were’ is used in all cases, even with third person singular.

- She behaves as if she was a queen. (Incorrect)
- She behaves as if she were a queen. (Correct)

25. A pronoun takes an objective case after ‘let’.

- Let I show it. (Incorrect)
- Let me show it. (Correct)

26. Pronouns joined by 'and' are in the same case.

- He and me are friends. (Incorrect)
- He and I are friends. (Correct)

Both the parts of Error spotting will make you confident enough to answer questions on spotting error . Refer other verbal articles which have been drafted keeping in mind the current Exam pattern.