

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- ❑ Types of questions asked in this chapter
- ❑ Different types of error and how to identify those
- ❑ Modifiers Error/Parallelism Error

CAT tests only a limited number of grammar error types. Questions from this chapter are asked in two ways:

(A) Grammar Based Error

Almost all the questions asked from this type can be solved if a student is aware of a limited number of rules. Needless to say that one is not expected to master every grammar rules.

- (i) Articles
- (ii) Adjectives and Adverb
- (iii) Subject-Verb Agreement
- (iv) Pronoun Error

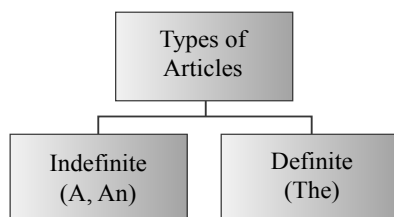
(B) Usage Based Error

- (i) Modifiers
- (ii) Parallelism

Now we will see these one by one:

GRAMMAR BASED ERROR**Articles**

A or An or The, which are demonstrative adjectives, are called Articles.

**Definite Article – The**

‘The’ is a definite article because it points to a specific thing. It is used before proper nouns and also used when we believe that the hearer/reader knows exactly what we are referring to.

Indefinite Article – A or AN

A or An is the indefinite Article because it points to a non-specific thing. Ex: A cow, A river, An elephant.

Usage of ‘A’ or ‘An’ is determined by the sound. A word beginning with a vowel sound takes ‘An’ before it.

Example

An honest politician, An hour, An umbrella, An heir, etc.

Note

The words like hours, honest, heir begin with the consonant ‘h’, but they are pronounced with a vowel sound and the initial consonant ‘h’ is silent. Hence, the article ‘An’ precedes them.

Words beginning a vowel but pronounced with consonant sound take article ‘a’ before them.

Example

A University, A European, A Unicorn, A Useful Article, A Union

The words university, unicorn, union begin with a sound ‘yu’, so despite they start with a vowel ‘U’, article ‘A’ precedes them. Similarly, the words like we use ‘A one-rupee note’ instead of ‘An one-rupee note’ or ‘A one-eyed man’ instead of ‘An one-eyed man’.

Correct	A one-eyed man	A one rupee note	A one dollar bill
Incorrect	An one-eyed man	An one rupee note	An one dollar bill

Indefinite Article's Usage

It is used:

(a) In its initial numerical sense of one.

- Ex: (i) Three feet make a yard.
(ii) Not a word was uttered.

(b) In the uncertain sense of certain.

Ex: One fine evening a rat knocked at my door as if it were a human being.

(c) In the meaning of 'any' to indicate an individual as the representative of a group.

Ex: A student should pay respect to his/her parents.

(d) To convert a proper noun into a common noun.

Ex: A Kiran Bedi is required to curb the crime.

Definite Article – The

THE is called the Definite Article because it refers to some particular person or thing.

Ex: The office: that is some particular officer.

Definite Article's Usage

THE is used in the following cases:

(a) With a particular person or thing or the one already denoted.

- Ex: i. I like the gift.
ii. The shirt you wanted has been sold.

(b) With a singular noun means to represent a whole class.

Ex: The dog thrives on tender care.
Two nouns man and woman used in the general sense to denote the whole class never have either article.
Ex: Many a time woman is behind man's success.

(c) With name of gulfs, rivers, seas, oceans, group of islands, and mountain-ranges.

Ex: The Arabian sea, The Ganges, The Atlantic Ocean, etc.

(d) With names of certain books

Ex: The Bible, The Mahabharata, The Ramayana, etc.

(e) Before names of things, unique of their kind although they are common nouns.

Ex: The Volcano, The Sun, The Ocean, etc.

(f) A common noun takes 'The' to make it an abstract noun.

Ex: Ultimately the poet in him came to the forefront.

(g) Before a proper noun only when it is qualified by an adjective or an adjectival clause.

Ex: The great Satyajit Ray, The immortal Premchand

(h) With superlatives

Ex: The darkest night has a bright morning.

(i) With ordinals

Ex: Seth was the 3rd person to speak.

(j) Before an adjective which works as a noun.

Ex: The brave are on our side.

(k) Before a noun to give the force of a superlative

Ex: Compressor is the heart (the chief part) in an AC.

(l) As an adverb with comparative

Ex: The higher the better, The more they have etc.

'THE' (Article) is omitted in the following cases

(a) Before names of materials

Ex: Copper is a soft metal.

(b) Before proper nouns

Ex: Mumbai is the Manchester of India.

When the article is used with proper nouns, they become common nouns.

Ex: This author is a second Sartre.

(c) Before a common noun used in its widest sense.

Ex: Only man has the power.

(d) Before Languages

Ex: He likes Devanagari.

(e) Before abstract nouns used in a general sense

- Ex: (i) Truth cannot be hidden for a long time.
(ii) Wisdom shines from all sides.

(f) Before words of relations like father, mother, aunt, uncle (and also cook and nurse).

TEST YOUR LEARNING 1

Fill up the blanks with an appropriate article.

- One should be _____ honourable man.
- _____ Ganga is _____ legendary river.
- _____ able man is not always rewarded in life.
- It is honest man's policy to speak _____ truth.
- We have no time to see _____ blue sky.
- Aladdin had _____ magic lamp.
- She returned after _____ hour.
- _____ college will shortly close for the Holi holidays.
- Beneras is _____ holy city.
- Tomorrow _____ European will meet at the Taj.
- Who says Portuguese is _____ easy language?
- _____ French defeated the Britishers.
- She had come in rains without _____ umbrella.
- This is _____ untidy room.
- The boys found _____ egg in the room.
- If you happen to meet him, give him _____ message.
- The traveller knows _____ way.
- Sri Lanka is _____ island.
- We should discuss _____ matter seriously.

20. He looks as expressionless as _____ owl.
21. The man is _____ honour to the institution.

Adjectives and Adverbs

Adjectives are words that describe nouns and pronouns. They may come before the word they describe (That is a cute baby) or they may follow the word they describe (That baby is cute).

Adverbs are words that modify everything but nouns and pronouns. They modify adjectives, verbs and other adverbs. A word is an Adverb if it answers how, when or where.

Example

He walks slowly.

Rule 1

Generally if a word answers the question 'How', it is an adverb. If it can have an *ly* added to it, place it there.

Example

He thinks slowly. (answers the question "how does she think").

He is a *slow* thinker. (Slow does not answer how. So no *ly* is attached. *Slow* is an adjective here).

They performed *badly*. (Here *badly* describes *how* they performed).

Rule 2

A special 'ly' rule applies when four of the senses – taste, smell, look and feel – are the verbs. Do not ask if these senses answer the question how to determine if *ly* should be attached. Instead, ask if the sense verb is being used actively. If so, use the 'ly'.

Example

Flowers smell (sweet or sweetly)?

Do the flowers actively smell with noses? No, so no *ly*. So it is flowers smell sweet.

The woman looked angry/angrily? – Did the woman actively look with eyes or are we describing her appearance, so, no *ly*. So it is "The woman looked angry".

The woman looked angry/angrily at the paintings? – Here the woman did actively look with eyes, so the *ly* is needed. So it is "The woman looked angrily at the paintings".

Rule 3

The word good is an adjective while *well* is an adverb.

Example

He did a *good* job. (Good describes the job).

He did the job *well*. (Well answers how).

Rule 4

When referring to health, always use *well*.

Example

I am not feeling *well* today.

Rule 5

A common error—Using the wrong form for comparison.

Example

To describe one thing, for example rich, as in, "he is *rich*". To compare two things, we should say *richer*, as in, "he is the richer of the two men". To compare more than two things, we should say *richest*, as in, "he is the richest of them all".

Rule 6

Never drop the *ly* from an adverb when using the comparison form.

Correct—She spoke *quickly*.

She spoke more *quickly* than he did.

Incorrect—She spoke quicker than he did.

Rule 7

This and *That* are singular, whether they are being used as adjectives or as pronouns. *This* points to something nearby while *that* points to something 'over there'.

This cat is mine.

That cat is hers.

Rule 8

These and those are plural, whether they are being used as adjectives or as pronouns. *These* points to something nearby while *those* points to something 'over there'.

Example

These are mine. *Those* are yours.

Rule 9

Using than and then—Use 'than' to show comparison. Use 'then' to answer the question 'when'.

I would rather go skiing than swimming.

First we went to play cricket; then we went skiing.

TEST YOUR LEARNING 2

Direction: *Decide whether each word in bold is being used correctly. If not, correct it.*

1. Come **quick** or we will miss the bus.
2. My father drives the car so **slow** that I am afraid someone will hit the car from behind.
3. I have never been **more surer** of anything in my life.
4. Sama was the **best** of the two sisters.
5. You did that act so **good**.
6. Rumana felt **badly** about forgetting Faisal's birthday.
7. This is the **worst** oil spill I have ever seen.
8. The jasmine has bloomed and smells very **sweet**.

9. You look **angrily**. What did I do?
10. She looked **suspiciously** at the man wearing the coat.
11. **These** tree looks as though it is infested with insects.
12. **Those** bushes need to be trimmed.
13. When was the last time Tanay had no allergy symptoms and felt **good**?
14. In the library, you have to be **more quieter** than when you are outside.
15. Priyanka felt **good** about getting her puppy.
16. She has a **more better** approach to solving that problem.
17. Which is the **worst**, a toothache or a headache?
18. She reached **swift**, which made him feel badly about insulting her.
19. The herbs in the food tasted **bitter**.
20. Ria fought **bitterly** against her in-laws for custody of their daughter.

TEST YOUR LEARNING 3

Fill in the blanks with “Few”, “A Few”, or “The Few”.

1. There are _____ friends who remain faithful in hard times.
2. He has only _____ friends.
3. _____ friends he has are really faithful to him.
4. _____ passengers were injured in the accident.
5. _____ passengers injured in the accident have been given first-aid.
6. _____ books I had have all gone out of course.
7. _____ books would serve my purpose.
8. A good man has _____ enemies.

Subject-Verb Agreement

Essence of SVA lies with the fact that “Subjects and Verbs must Agree”. The ‘subject’ of a sentence, noun or a pronoun, and the verb in the given sentence must agree in number. Singular subjects must be paired with singular verbs; and plural subjects, with plural verbs. Though it might appear very simple, but questions asked use tricky and complex constructions making it difficult to decode the Subject/Verb and its singularity/plurality.

Some of the examples of putting tricky questions are given below:

1. **Some words qualifying the subject given inserted between Subject and Verb.**

For example

- (a) *The child, together with his grandfather and his parents, is going to multiplex.*

Given statement is correct. Subject here is child, and hence, ‘is’ is correct. The accompanying words “his grandfather and his parents”, just provides the extra information.

- (b) Ritu, alongwith her friends, have gone to movie.

This statement is **incorrect**. Subject here is Ritu, and hence, verb should be singular – has.

2. Usage of deflectors

For example

- (a) *His mastery of several sports and the social graces make him a sought-after coach.*

What is the subject here – ‘His mastery’ is the subject. Hence, verb should be ‘makes’.

In this statement, “*of several sports and the social graces*” is a deflector. These words are put just to confuse you in identifying the subject.

So the correct statement would be – *His mastery of several sports and the social graces makes him a sought-after coach.*

3. Presence of Collective nouns

Collective nouns like **family, majority, audience, and committee are singular when they act in a collective fashion or represent one group**. They are plural when the members of the collective body act as individuals.

For example

- (a) The flock of birds is flying north.

This sentence is correct as it mentions “flock of birds”, as a singular entity. We are not talking about the direction of flying of one bird, but of the whole flock in unison. Hence, using singular verb ‘is’ is correct.

- (b) The team are always fighting amongst themselves.

This sentence is correct. Since the members of the team are not shown as a singular entity, rather they have been presented as individuals, hence, plural verb ‘are’ is required.

4. Use of ‘And’/‘Or’/‘Nor’

If ‘and’ has been used, verb should be plural.

For example

Maulik and Vikas are going to watch a movie. (Movie)
If ‘or’/‘nor’ has been used, verb should be singular.

For example

- (a) Maulik or Vikas is going. (Correct)

5. Use of ‘Neither – Nor’/‘Either – Or’

If two subjects are joined by ‘Either – Or’ or ‘Neither – Nor’, the verb should agree with the subject that is closer to it.

For example

- (a) Neither the principal nor the staff members were able to find the mistake.

This sentence is correct, as the verb follows the subject ‘staff members’ which is plural. Hence, ‘are’ is being used.

6. **Except for the pronouns** (few, many, several, both, all, some) that always take the plural form.

For example

Few were left alive after the flood.

7. **If two subjects are joined by *and*, they typically require a plural verb form.**

The cow and the pig **are jumping** over the moon.

8. **The verb is singular if the two subjects separated by *and* refer to the same person or thing.**

Red beans and rice **is** my Mom’s favourite dish.

See more on the Subject–Verb Agreement in Chapter 1 – Grammar.

Pronoun Error

See Chapter 1 – Grammar for Pronoun Rules and Error.

USAGE BASED ERROR

Modifiers

A modifier is a word or a phrase that describes another word or phrase. The most familiar examples are adjectives and adverbs.

Errors in Modifiers

Normally, errors in modifier are not the grammatical error; rather they are the error of English usage giving an altogether different meaning than what they are supposed to.

For example, consider the statement:

Example 1

A signboard at a restaurant says:

We provide rest rooms for the ladies that are clean and comfortable.

⇒ Analyzing this sentence, there is no grammatical error, but the phrase is wrongly placed giving rise to ambiguity in the meaning. Restaurant meant to propagate the message that they provide clean and comfortable rest rooms for the ladies, but what is conveyed is entirely different message – that they provide the restrooms only to clean and comfortable ladies.

So the correct message should be—We provide clean and comfortable rest rooms for ladies.

Example 2

Incorrect usage—Walking back from the village my wallet was lost.

In the given sentence it appears that the wallet lost itself—which cannot happen.

Correct usage

1. While ‘I’ was walking back from the village my wallet was lost.
2. Walking back from the village, I lost my wallet.

Example 3

Incorrect usage—Blinded by the storm, the car was steered in the wrong direction.

In this sentence, there is no clarity as to who steered the car.

Correct usage—Blinded by the storm, driver steered the car in the wrong direction.

Example 4

Read the following sentences and identify which one is correct:

1. I only eat pizzas and burgers.
2. Only I eat pizzas and burgers.
3. I eat only pizzas and burgers.
4. I eat pizzas and burgers only.

Solution

Grammatically, all the four sentences are correct.

1. 1st sentence conveys that all I do 24 hours is to eat pizzas and burgers.
2. 2nd sentence conveys that only I (and nobody else on the earth) eat pizzas and burgers.
3. 3rd sentence conveys that I eat nothing except pizzas and burgers.
4. 4th sentence means that I eat only pizzas and burgers.

So, it is important to choose the sentence that imparts logical and sensible meaning. Care should be taken to choose the most appropriate option as the answer.

Types of modifier errors:

There are two types of modifier errors:

Misplaced Modifier Error

- There may be an adjective, an adverb or a phrase which is inappropriately placed in a sentence causing a mismatch between the intended and perceived meaning of the sentence. There can be various ways to correct the sentence.

Dangling Modifier Error

- As name suggests, this type of modifier “hangs” without a subject. The word or phrase that modifies a word is not clearly stated in the sentence. To make such sentences sensible we need to insert a subject.

Misplaced Modifiers

Incorrect usage	Correct usage	Explanation
I could almost run all the way up the hill.	I could run almost all the way up the hill.	The first sentence does not mean what it is intended to mean. The modifier “almost” is misplaced.
I only want one.	I want only one.	Same as given above.

Dangling Modifiers

Incorrect usage	Correct usage	Explanation
While walking in the garden, Ravi arrived.	While <i>I was</i> walking in the garden, Ravi arrived.	The modifying phrase “while walking in the garden”, does not refer to a particular noun or pronoun (i.e., it dangles).

How to approach modifier question

1. Objective is to make the meaning clear.
2. First step to identify the modifier whether its a phrase, adjective or adverb.
3. Analyse the meaning intended to be conveyed.
4. Modify the sentence by placing the modifier next to what it is modifying.

5. Check if the ambiguity has been done away with (making meaning clear).

Parallelism

In parallel structures or parallelism different parts of a sentence should be in symmetry. The symmetrical order is maintained in a sentence by using the same verb form, same tense and other parts of speech should also be same, like noun or adjective.

Consider the sentences below:

1. I like to play guitar and singing. (Incorrect)
I like playing guitar and singing. (Correct)
 2. Mansi likes to watch television, ice-creams and carrom. (Incorrect)
Mansi likes to watch television, eat ice creams and play carrom. (Correct)
 3. The idea is fantastic but a danger. (Incorrect)
The idea is fantastic but dangerous. (Correct)
- The concept of parallel structures is very important in the english usage section and sometimes two to three options can be eliminated because they do not follow a parallel structure in a sentence. If you see a window in a room of which one pane is painted and the other is not. This will look non-symmetrical and to make it look symmetrical you would want to paint the other pane also. This is exactly what parallelism in language does, it makes the structure symmetrical!

PRACTICE EXERCISES

PRACTICE EXERCISE

Direction for questions 1 to 16: *In each of the following sentences, a part of the sentence is underlined. Beneath each sentence, four/five different ways of phrasing the underlined part are indicated. Choose the best alternative from among the four/five.*

- Q.1** Amar, Binod, Chand and me were all cited for contempt of Court.
 (a) Amar, Binod, Chand and me were all cited
 (b) Amar, Binod, Chand and I were all cited
 (c) Amar, Binod, Chand and I were the ones cited
 (d) Amar, Binod, Chand and I were cited
- Q.2** It is often better to try repairing an old vehicle than to junk it.
 (a) to try repairing an old vehicle than to junk it
 (b) to repair an old vehicle than to have it junked
 (c) to try repairing an old vehicle than to junking it
 (d) to try to repair an old vehicle than to junk it
- Q.3** Vijayendra eats faster than me.
 (a) Vijayendra eats faster than me
 (b) Vijayendra eats the fastest of us two
 (c) Vijayendra eats the fastest of us both
 (d) Vijayendra eats faster than I
- Q.4** I think everybody in this office works faster than me.
 (a) everybody in this office works faster than me
 (b) everybody in this office works faster than I
 (c) everybody in this office works more quickly than me
 (d) everybody in this office works more quickly than I do
- Q.5** Neither of the two boys' explanations were satisfactory.
 (a) neither of the two boys' explanations were
 (b) neither of the two boys' explanation were
 (c) neither of the two boys' explanations was
 (d) neither of the two boy's explanations were
- Q.6** I have to admit that she is smart of all the students.
 (a) she is smart of all the students
 (b) she is smartest of all the students
 (c) she is most smartest of all the students
 (d) she is the smartest of all the students
- Q.7** I want Prakash and she to be the house captains for the rest of the year.
 (a) she to be the house captains
 (b) her to be the house captains
 (c) she to lead the project
 (d) her as the house captains
- Q.8** You may appoint whoever you think is the best of us.
 (a) whoever you think
 (b) anybody you think
 (c) someone you think
 (d) whomever you think
- Q.9** Neither the winner nor the sponsors is prepared to face the press reporters.
 (a) neither the winner nor the sponsors is
 (b) neither the winner nor the sponsors are
 (c) neither the winner nor the sponsors was
 (d) either the winner nor the sponsors is
- Q.10** It was us who had left before he arrived.
 (a) we who had left before time he had arrived
 (b) us who had went before he arrived
 (c) us who had went before had arrived
 (d) we who had left before he arrived
- Q.11** The MP rose up to say that, in her opinion, she thought the Women's Reservation Bill should be passed on unanimously.
 (a) rose to say that she thought the Women's Reservation Bill should be passed
 (b) rose up to say that, the Women's Reservation Bill should be passed on
 (c) rose to say that, in her opinion, she thought that the Women's Reservation Bill should be passed
 (d) rose to say that, in her opinion, the Women's Reservation Bill should be passed on
- Q.12** Mr Pillai, the president of the union and who is also a member of the community group, will be in charge of the negotiations.
 (a) since he is a member of the community group
 (b) also being a member of the community group
 (c) a member of the community group
 (d) in addition, who is a member of the community group
- Q.13** Since the advent of cable television, at the beginning of this decade, the entertainment industry took a giant stride forward in our country.
 (a) this decade saw the entertainment industry taking
 (b) this decade, the entertainment industry has taken
 (c) this decade, the entertainment industry had taken
 (d) this decade, the entertainment industry took

Q.14 Bacon believes that the medical profession should be permitted to ease and quicken death where the end would otherwise only delay for a few days and at the cost of great pain.

- (a) be delayed for a few days
- (b) be delayed for a few days and
- (c) be otherwise only delayed for a few days and
- (d) otherwise only delay for a few days and

Q.15 If you are on a three-month software design project and, in two weeks, you've put together a programme that solves part of the problem, show it to your Boss without delay.

- (a) and, you've put together a programme that solves part of the problem in two weeks

(b) and, in two weeks, you've put together a programme that solves part of the problem

(c) and, you've put together a programme that has solved part of the problem in two weeks

(d) and, in two weeks you put together a programme that solved only part of the problem

Q.16 Many of these environmentalists proclaim to save nothing less than the planet itself.

(a) to save nothing lesser than

(b) that they are saving nothing lesser than

(c) to save nothing less than

(d) that they save nothing less than

ANSWER KEYS

- | | | | | | | | | | |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|--------|--------|--------|---------|
| 1. (b) | 2. (d) | 3. (d) | 4. (b) | 5. (c) | 6. (d) | 7. (b) | 8. (a) | 9. (b) | 10. (d) |
| 11. (a) | 12. (c) | 13. (b) | 14. (c) | 15. (b) | 16. (d) | | | | |