PolicePrep Comprehensive Guide to Canadian Police Officer Exams

www.policeprep.com

Common Grammar Errors

It is beyond the scope of this book to cover all grammar errors that can occur during a government examination. Below are merely some examples you may come across. If you feel your grammar is a significant barrier to landing the job, it would be prudent to review a grammar textbook, or perhaps take an English grammar course.

The Use of "Then" and "Than"

"**Then**" is used to indicate time. It has the same meaning as "afterwards", "subsequently" or "followed by".

>	Ex: I went to the play, **and then** I went home.

"**Than**" is used in comparison. It can be used with the word "rather". It has the same meaning as "as opposed to", or "instead of".

>	Ex: I would rather play baseball **than** hockey.

The Use of "Is When"

This is not correct. Use the term "occurs when."

>	Ex: The best part of the movie **occurs when** the killer is revealed.

Subordinate Clauses

Be careful with subordinate clauses. If one clause has less emphasis (less importance) in a sentence, it is subordinate or dependent on the other clause. When these clauses occur at the beginning of the sentence, they can be tricky.

>	Ex:	**Since you began training,** you have been unable to work an entire shift.

If you rearrange the sentence you can understand how "since" acts as the conjunction.

>	Ex:	You have been able to work an entire shift **since you began training.**

Forming Plurals

It is difficult to determine the plural form of many words. Examples include:

Goose	Geese	Man	Men
Woman	Women	Mouse	Mice
Mother-in-Law	Mothers-in-Law		

Comparative Adjectives and Adverbs

Single Syllable Words:

To form the comparative adjective or adverb for most single syllable words, add "**-er"** to the end of the word. If there are three or more parties to compare, use the ending "**-est**."

Rafik was strong.	Sean is fast.
Bill was ***stronger*** than Rafik.	Sean is the faster of the two.
Pratik was the ***strongest*** of the three.	Sean is the fastest of the three.

Be careful. There are always exceptions to the rule in the English language. You should be able to tell by the sound of the words when you should use an alternative method of comparison.

I had a fun time at the party this year.
I had ***more fun*** this year than last year.
I had the ***most fun*** this year compared to all the other parties.

The words "funner"and "funnest" do not exist.

Multiple Syllable Words:

As with the example "fun", multiple syllable words use linking words while making comparisons. When comparing two parties, use the word "***more***"; and while comparing three or more parties, use the word "***most***".

He was ***more eager*** than her to finish the project.
He was the ***most eager*** of the three to finish the project.

Shelley was ***more intelligent*** than Michael.
Lucy was the ***most intelligent*** of the group.

Subject / Verb Agreement

It is important to make sure that the verb agrees with the noun it relates to. There are six types of persons in the English language:

I	We
You (singular)	You (plural)
He / She / It	They

In English, there are several ways that subjects and verbs relate to each other. Here are a couple:

I	*run / do / was*	We	*run / do / were*
You	*run / do / was*	You	*run / do / were*
He / She / It	*runs / does / was*	They	*run / do / were*

Be careful of confusing the subject and verb agreement.

Example: I run fast. I do well. I **don't** understand.
He run**s** fast. He do**es** well. He **doesn't** understand.

This can be difficult if there is a clause between the subject and the verb. When analyzing a sentence, try to read the sentence without the clause to determine if there is subject / verb agreement.

Example: *Dheena*, along with the rest of us, *does* well.
Read aloud: *Dheena does well.* "Dheena do well" doesn't sound right.

The Use of "It's" and "Its"

This is often wrongly expressed.
"It's" is a contraction that translates into "it is".

It's getting late. = *It is* getting late.
I'm tired and *it's* time to go. = I'm tired and *it is* time to go.

"Its" refers to possession. It is the equivalent to an apostrophe "s".

The train and all *its* passengers were safe.
The train and all **the train's** passengers were safe.

The Use of "There", "Their" and "They're"

These are also often confused. Here are the definitions:

There: a location, nearby, in attendance, present
The book is over **there,** on the table.

Their: a possessive pronoun implying ownership, belonging to them,
I took **their** advice and followed through with the job.

They're: a contraction, meaning "they are"
They're going to arrive late because of the snow.

The Use of "Two", "To", and "Too"

Make sure you follow these definitions. Use the correct "to/too/two" in the proper place.

> To: in the direction, toward, near, in order to.
>   I went **to** the store **to** buy some bread.

> Too: also, as well, in addition, besides, and excessively.
>   The teacher handed out an "A" to Bill and to Cindy, **too.**
>   Shayna and Jeff just left **too**.
>   The pizza deliverer took **too** long, so the pizza was free.

> Two: the number
>   There were **two** beavers sitting on the log.

Verb Tenses

When reading a passage, ensure that the verbs in a sentence agree and that verbs discussing the same idea are in the same tense. For example, if you are speaking in the past in one sentence, you must remain consistent in the sentence following.

> Incorrect
> Bill **ran** to the store very quickly. He **is taking** Sally with him.
> Sean **reads** at a fourth grade level and **studied** very hard.

> Correct:
> Bill **ran** to the store very quickly. He **took** Sally with him.
> Sean **reads** at a fourth grade level and **studies** very hard.

Adverbs and Adjectives

Adverbs are used to modify or compliment verbs, adjectives or other adverbs. They generally explain how (gently), when (soon), or where (fully). A common trait of adverbs is to end in "**-ly"**. However, this is not a reliable way to tell adverbs and adjectives apart.

Adjectives are used with nouns to describe a quality or modify a meaning. (old, tall, curly, Canadian, my, this...)

If the word you are describing or modifying is a noun, make sure you use the adjective form of the word. If the word is a verb, adjective, or adverb, use the adverb format.

> He ran **quickly** down the street.   - Adverb quickly (how he runs)
> He was a very **quick** thinker.   - Adjective quick (describing the thinker)
>
> It was a **very large** house.   - Adverb very (describing large)
>   - Adjective large (describing house)

It was a **loud** song.	- Adjective loud (describing song)
She sang **loudly**.	- Adverb loudly (modifying sang)

Uses of Commas in Lists

When a list is presented in a sentence, use commas between list items and a conjunction to separate the last two items on the list. It is not wrong to add an additional comma before the conjunction, but it is unnecessary.

He was going to bring his **toys, clothes, books and cookies** to class.

Angela was going to the Maritimes by **plane, train or boat**.

Uses of the Apostrophe

Apostrophes are used to indicate ownership.

Bill's school was one of the best in the country. (the school to which Bill went)
Martha's mirror was cracked. (the mirror belonging to Martha)

Meanings of "Fair" and "Fare"

People often confuse these two words. Definitions are listed below.

Fair: just, reasonable, light, fair haired, pale

He was a **fair** judge and handed down reasonable sentences.
The boy was very **fair**, and would burn easily in the sun.

Fare: charge, price, ticket, tariff, passenger

The **fare** for the plane was rather steep.

Subject / Object Noun Agreements

Depending on its role in the sentence, pronouns take on different forms. Below is a list.

Subject		**Object**	
I	We	Me	Us
You	You	You	You
He / She / It	They	Him / Her / It	Them

If the pronoun is acting as a subject, use a subject pronoun.

Subject	**Object**
Tim and I went to the baseball game.	Tim threw the ball to me.
He was the last one to leave.	Shayna surprised her at the party.
They will come later.	Alex passes the gravy to them.

The major distinction between a subject and an object is the manner in which the verb relates to the pronouns. A subject tends to perform the verb, while an object tends to have the verb performed on it. Read the examples above and see if you understand the difference. If not, you will have to check with a grammar textbook.

Double Negatives

Avoid using double negatives when both speaking and writing,. Examples include:

I do **not** want **no** gum.	I do **not** want **any** gum.
You ca**n't** go to **no** store.	You ca**n't** go to **any** store.
The sergeant has**n't no** time.	The sergeant has**n't any** time.

The uses of "From" and "Off"

When receiving objects, goods or information, remember that the word "from" is correct even though in common spoken language we often use the word "off".

The doctor received the X-rays **from** the technician.
She pulled the book **from** the cupboard.

The Uses of "Stayed" and "Stood"

This is similar to the "From" and "Off" problem mentioned above. You often hear the word "stood" used in spoken language, but "stayed" is the correct word to use.

Stood is the past tense of stand (position, place, locate). Stayed is the past tense of stay (remain, wait, reside.)

I should have stayed with my fellow officers in the tough times.
The nurse stayed by the patient all night long.

The Use of Amount and Number

Generally speaking, we use "**amount**" with something that is measured or can't be counted, such as weights or volumes. We use "**number**" to describe quantities that are countable.

She had a large **amount** of liquid in the test tube.
There was a large **amount** of chocolate used in the recipe.

There were a large **number** of soldiers in the army.
The **number** of signs on the highway is enormous.

Run-On Sentences

Watch out for run-on sentences when writing. When two or more separate independent clauses are incorrectly joined, this is a run-on sentence. An independent clause is the part of a sentence that could stand alone. If you put a period at the end of an independent clause, it could serve as a sentence.

Here is an example of a run-on sentence:

Jamie was extremely angry when he missed his final chemistry exam, he went back to his dormitory and yelled at his roommate for failing to wake him up.

There are several ways to deal with a run-on sentence.

1) Make two Separate Sentences.

This is the easiest way to correct the problem. Simply add a period and start the second sentence with a capital letter.

Correct:
Jamie was extremely angry when he missed his final chemistry exam. He went back to his dormitory and yelled at his roommate for failing to wake him up.

2) Use a semicolon to separate the independent clauses.

Semicolons can often replace periods, but a comma can't. Do not capitalize the word immediately after a semicolon.

Correct:
Jamie was extremely angry when he missed his final chemistry exam; he went back to his dormitory and yelled at his roommate for failing to wake him up.

3) Use a subordinating conjunction with one of the clauses.

A subordinating conjunction is used to turn one of the clauses from an independent clause to a dependent clause. Examples of subordinating conjunctions include "because" and "since".

Correct:
Since Jamie was extremely angry when he missed his final chemistry exam, he went back to his dormitory and yelled at his roommate for failing to wake him up.

4) Use a comma and a coordinating conjunction between the two clauses.

Coordinating conjunctions can connect two clauses. The most common coordinating conjunctions include "and", "or", "but", and "so".

> Correct:
> Jamie was extremely angry when he missed his final chemistry exam, so he went back to his dormitory and yelled at his roommate for failing to wake him up.

5) Use a semicolon, conjunctive adverb and comma to separate the clauses.

Conjunctive adverbs can connect clauses. Examples of these adverbs include: "therefore", "moreover", "however", and "nonetheless". In order to properly use these adverbs, place a semicolon before the adverb and a comma after the adverb.

> Incorrect:
> Jamie was extremely angry when he missed his final chemistry exam, therefore he went back to his dormitory and yelled at his roommate for failing to wake him up.

> Correct:
> Jamie was extremely angry when he missed his final chemistry exam; therefore, he went back to his dormitory and yelled at his roommate for failing to wake him up.

Sentence Fragments
A sentence fragment is an incomplete sentence. There are two ways to change a sentence fragment to a complete sentence.

1) Add Words
Incorrect:
    Justin, running across the front lawn and enjoying his childhood days.
                    (incomplete sentence)
Correct:
    Justin was running across the front lawn and enjoying his childhood days.
                    (complete sentence)

2) Take Away Words

Creating a complete sentence from a sentence fragment can also be achieved by removing words from the sentence fragment.

Incorrect:
 While Trevor was completing the exam but having difficulty coming up with the answer to question #51.

Correct:
Trevor was completing the exam but having difficulty coming up with the answer to question #51.

Other Common Grammar Errors

Attend -   go to, be present at, concentrate
Tend -   be inclined, be likely, to have a tendency

Lose -   misplace, unable to find, to be defeated
Loose -   unfastened, wobbly, slack, movable

Threw -   hurled, tossed, past tense of "to throw"
Through -   from first to last, during, in the course of

Weather -   the seasons, elements, temperatures
Whether -   question of if, introducing an alternative possibility

Bear -   an animal in the woods, or to tolerate, stand, put up with
Bare -   to expose, naked, uncovered