



Advanced skills

Editing Set 2

Verb Tenses and Agreement

The Write Tribe



ERRORS TO LOOK FOR

Section 2. Verb Tenses and Agreement

Another common error to expect is with verb tenses and agreement. There is likely to be at least one in every Test – and possibly more, so it is important to know about them.

Step 1 – Reminder

The problem you may have with verbs is that they are words with various endings. In particular,

- the endings of verbs show tense
- the ending may depend on whether the subject is singular or plural (subject-verb agreement)

Study the usage in the passage below, where the main verbs have been highlighted for you. At each usage, check how and why the verb is singular or plural. Which verb is in a past tense? Repeat your reading until you are sure you understand.

“The new student **walks** slowly into the room. She **wears** a new uniform which **makes** ours look dull because they **look** a little worn as we **are** now halfway through the school year. Our teacher **smiles** and **welcomes** Anna, as we **learn** her name to be. Then **comes** a moment I **was dreading** as Mrs Tan **points** at the seat next to mine and **tells** Anna to sit there.” I **see** all this clearly now, years later, as I **sit** next to her as she **waits** – we **wait** – for her husband-to-be to enter the Registry Office.

Step 2

Now find and highlight **all** the main verbs in the passage below.

Ideal School **is** at the end of Upthere Avenue. The buildings **look** out of place at the end of such a suburban street, which contains old detached houses. The three-storey classroom block cuts off light from the nearest house and the windows reflect sunlight when the sun is shining so that pedestrians outside on the street have to blink and look away. The modern appearance continues inside as the visitor walks along the corridors. Each classroom door has a smart computerised sign that states which class is due to be in that room at that time. Each desk inside has a link to the computerised screen that serves as a blackboard. The teacher sits at a desk to the side at the front. Elsewhere in the building, students exercise in the Main Hall as the teacher shouts instructions. Many science labs fill the rest of the ground floor. More classrooms are found on the upper floors where the visitor finds the Principal’s Office. Beside that, the Main Office faces the large Staffroom. The school is certainly ideal in its facilities.

O-Level English Editing Tests

Here are the verbs that you should have found:

Ideal School **is** at the end of Upthere Avenue. The buildings **look** out of place at the end of such a suburban street, which **contains** old detached houses. The three-storey classroom block **cuts** off light from the nearest house and the windows **reflect** sunlight when the sun **is shining** so that pedestrians outside on the street **have** to blink and **look** away. The modern appearance **continues** inside as the visitor **walks** along the corridors. Each classroom door **has** a smart computerised sign that **states** which class **is** due to be in that room at that time. Each desk inside **has** a link to the computerised screen that **serves** as a blackboard. The teacher **sits** at a desk to the side at the front. Elsewhere in the building, students **exercise** in the Main Hall as the teacher **shouts** instructions. Many science labs **fill** the rest of the ground floor. More classrooms **are** found on the upper floors where the visitor **finds** the Principal's Office. Beside that, the Main Office **faces** the large Staffroom. The school **is** certainly ideal in its facilities.

Step 3

Importantly, read the passage above several times, noticing the verb endings and making sure you understand why they are as they are.

Step 4

Now enter the correct form of the verb in the spaces in the passage below.

A rainforest has diverse and abundant vegetation that provides many places where jungle creatures **live**. From the top of the tallest trees down to the forest floor, these habitats **are** stratified into several identifiable layers. The tallest trees (FORM) _____ the emergent layer, which (RECEIVE) _____ the most light, heat, and rain. Beneath the giant trees of the emergent layer (BE) _____ a second, more uniform layer of tall trees called the canopy. Because of the wet conditions, canopy trees (SUPPORT) _____ an abundance of plant growth such as mosses, orchids, and bromeliads. These plants (CALL) _____ epiphytes, or air plants, as they (OBTAIN) _____ nutrients and moisture from the air and rain, not from the trees. Under the canopy (EXIST) _____ a variety of smaller or younger trees, as well as many vines, lianas, and the infamous strangler fig. The strangler fig (BEGIN) _____ life as an epiphyte, but (GROW) _____ downwards from the canopy to take root in the ground, eventually it (STRANGLE) _____ the host tree with its interconnecting tendrils. Whenever light (BE) _____ available, an abundance of tropical plants (COVER) _____ the ground of the rainforest. This (PROVIDE) _____ hiding places and food sources for many animals.

Key Point

This is an important item of grammar to be aware of. If you miss it in tests or if you do not score 14/14 on this exercise, repeat Steps 2 and 3 using other passages of good English.

Answers: See page 107

TEST 9

Carefully read the text below, consisting of 12 lines, a narrative describing a group of teenagers exploring an overgrown garden.

Over halfway down the garden, we discovered something we had not expected.	1. _____
The large shrubs hid a wooden fence, which separate the final section. We could	2. _____
not see much of the fence itself, and it was only by pushing branches aside that	3. _____
we discovered two fences, one from each side in the garden, but they did not	4. _____
meet in the middle. That leaves a gap through which we were able to struggle to	5. _____
reach the rear section of the garden. It was not at all what we had expected. This	6. _____
area was tidier, but surrounded by the trees we have seen from the house. As	7. _____
soon as we came up the gap in the fence, we understood. In the back of the	8. _____
garden stood a large shed. It butted up right again the fence, although anyone	9. _____
looking that way would not have saw this from above, as a thick-leaved fir rose	10. _____
above it. We approached the building as noiseless as we could, fascinated.	
Something was strange about the shed but, at first, I didn't realise what it was.	

TEST 10

Carefully read the text below, consisting of 12 lines, about a newsworthy tennis victory.

The hardworking underdog beat the high-profile player, pleasing spectators.	1. _____
Such a surprise result fascinates most, except the avid fans of the star player. So it	2. _____
was in Miami when Germany Tommy Haas – who has been on the tennis circuit	3. _____
for many years – turn back the clock to stun two-time defending champion Novak	4. _____
Djokovic 6-2, 6-4 in the four round in Tuesday's night session. In his post-match	5. _____
interview, Haas expressed his happy and pride at being able to defeat such a great	6. _____
player who have been dominating the sport for a couple of years. Haas took	7. _____
advantage in the opportunities he was given and played extremely well. It was	8. _____
only a second time in his career that Haas had notched up a win against a World	9. _____
No. 1, the first being 14 years earlier against Andre Agassi. With his sensational and	10. _____
unexpected win, Haas become the oldest competitor to beat any No. 1 player.	
The previous oldest winner had been 30 years before Haas' sensational win.	

TEST 11

Carefully read the text below, consisting of 12 lines, about Mr Chandranagan, an imaginary character from Singapore's past.

Mr Chandranagan lived, in 1872, at No. 212 Orchard Road in Singapore.	1. _____
His house stood next to one of the original orchards, so he never care about not	2. _____
having a garden himself. He looked out in his window each day at a garden. That	3. _____
was enough for him. He was, physically, one of the most noticeable members of	4. _____
the Town Club, though he seems always to avoid attracting attention. Anyone	5. _____
would have described him as a enigmatic person, about whom little was known,	6. _____
except that he was wealthy. Strange though, he was never seen in the city, nor in	7. _____
warehouses beside the river where all the business was done. No boats ever came	8. _____
into the Singapore River with good bound for his warehouse. Indeed, it was not	9. _____
even known if he have a warehouse, which every business needed. He certainly	10. _____
did not manufacture goods whom would have required at least one factory.	
All anyone seemed to know was his address and that he belonged to the Town Club.	

TEST 12

Carefully read the text below, consisting of 12 lines, about how mangoes became an important fruit to the Chinese.

It seems that the mango was unknown in China until the autumn of 1968.	1. _____
In that year, Pakistan's Foreign Minister arrived for Beijing and presented	2. _____
Chairman Mao with a case of the fruit. In turn, the Great Helmsman decide to	3. _____
use the exotic fruit to make the political statement. He sent the case, containing	4. _____
roughly 40 mangoes, to a group of workers which occupied the campus of	5. _____
Tsinghua University at that time. Astonished by the miraculous gift, they	6. _____
agreed to send one mango to every of Beijing's most important factories. The	7. _____
mangoes there are regarded as a symbol of Chairman Mao's love for the	8. _____
workers and quickly became holy relics, such was the cult of personality	9. _____
around the Chinese leader. Workers lined up to file past the mango, solemn	10. _____
bowing to it. Later, it was carefully peeled and then boil in a huge vat of water.	
Each worker drank a sip of the water in which the holy mango had been boiled.	

TEST 13

Carefully read the text below, consisting of 12 lines, about road safety.

Road safety is a topic always on the agenda these days when roads are so busy. There are conflicting interests by, on the one hand, users such as motorists and motorcyclists and, on the other hand, most vulnerable groups such as cyclists and pedestrians. The former group needs to consider their behaviours when any pedestrians and cyclists are nearby. After all, they have the speed and the power to do damages. However, it is also essential that pedestrians and cyclists should be aware of such speed and power and not be in positions when there might be a problem. Apart from lessons for young (and maybe older) children, adults of all ages also needed regular reminders of appropriate behaviour. Everyone should be aware that the rules of the road are not inconvenience and irrelevant governmental impositions, so guidelines for our safety as we move from one place to another. The government, meanwhile, is responsible for the laws and the road system.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

TEST 14

Carefully read the text below, consisting of 12 lines, about what the writer thinks happiness means.

What is happiness? I'm sure everyone would give a slightly different answer. Although, certain factors would be fairly constant. One of these is having a good family around you. That does not mean a life without differences of opinion or arguments. It is simply that if you know that you can depend on your family when you need them, and that you are there for any one of them when the time comes – that went a long way to happiness. Much the same can be said of friends, who have the ability to making you happy. However, deep happiness may depend on your own self and your feelings on yourself and your place in the world. That is why some poor people live in poverty can remain happy, while some wealthy people are most unhappy with their lot. Now comes the question: which would you choose if offered the choices of a life of wealth or a life of great happiness? My personal view is that I would opt for happiness without any question.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

TEST 15

Carefully read the text below, consisting of 12 lines, about a TV cookery show.

The time has come to see who will win this year's Kitchen Couples title. Wang Yang and Janice Tay believe that their cool, calm approach would help them overcome its main rivals, Roger Ho and Tan Mei Lin, who have divided viewers' opinions, with many criticising them for their bluntness around the dinner table. Wang Yang thinks that when Roger and Mei Lin appear to be quite handy in the kitchen and are certainly confident, their tendency to argue with each other in times of pressure could be an problem for them, even though it seems viewers liking these moments. While Roger and Mei Lin ruffled feathers early on, the couple in Hougang have been a hit with viewers and judges. The personal trainers score perfect 10s in the last show for both their zesty prawn salad and their spelt, berry and macaroon tart — a splendid and rare achievement indeed! These have been the most-viewed recipes on the Kitchen Couples webpage.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

TEST 16

Carefully read the text below, consisting of 12 lines, about a cultural diversity day for students.

Hundreds of primary school children visited 10 countries in a day last week. They did that without even have to leave the Tampines area. The local junior college invite 230 children, along with their teachers, to join their own students for a 'diversity day'. They spent the time taking part in spectacle workshops and events, including taiko drumming from Japan, henna tattooing from India and wish tree decorating from China. Students took a time to study traditional types of clothing in the 10 countries, aided by a presentation by the junior college students. In between this programme items, a range of tasty mouth-watering food were available, with offerings from Finland, Spain and Italy among others. At the Opening Ceremony, the Principal says with determination in her voice: "We are committed for helping our students become outward-looking global citizens." She was delighted to welcome so many students from the local communities.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

TEST 17

Carefully read the text below, consisting of 12 lines, about a football match.

Northern Rovers braved the downpour on Saturday to take an early 3-0 lead.	1. _____
It seemed that the much-anticipated game against West End Seekers is theirs to lose.	2. _____
Despite the Rovers kept their lead until half-time, West End received	3. _____
encouragement during the break and started strong in the second half by quickly	4. _____
pulling one back. The Rovers found it increasingly difficulty to keep the ball and	5. _____
ultimately paid the price. West End won the number of corners and the stronger	6. _____
side won nearly every header after some quality crosses. At 3-3, Northern	7. _____
Rovers did have two chances to win, but one shot hit the crossbar and the other	8. _____
chance brought a spectacular save for the Seekers' young goalkeeper, Maidun.	9. _____
In the last minute of the game, West End snatched the victory when their	10. _____
midfielder, a talented forward, go on a run unchallenged by the defenders.	
Mohammed Nor then drove the ball hard past the goalkeeper and into the net.	

TEST 18

Carefully read the text below, consisting of 12 lines, a narrative about a frightened man.

I was just fitting my key into my front door when I noticed a man at my elbow.	1. _____
I had not seen him approach, and his sudden appearance alarm me momentarily.	2. _____
He was a slim man, of a short brown beard and small, piercing blue eyes. I	3. _____
recognised him as the occupant of an apartment on an top floor, with whom I had	4. _____
passed the time of day on the stairs. "Can I speak to you?" he say. "May I come in	5. _____
for a minute?" His voice rose and fell rapidly, who frightened me somewhat, but,	6. _____
sensing the urgency of his request, I opened my door and motioned him in. No	7. _____
soon was he over the threshold than he made a dash for my back room. Then he	8. _____
bolted back. "Is the door lock?" he asked feverishly, and he fastened the chain	9. _____
with his own hand. "I'm very sorry," he said humble. "It's a big liberty, but you	10. _____
looked the kind of man who would understand me in my present dilemma.	
Will you do me a good turn that will not harm you at all, but would help me?"	

TEST 19

Carefully read the text below, consisting of 12 lines, about the sound quality of dialogue on our television sets.

Televisions have never looked better – and they have never sounded worse.	1. _____
That is the verdict with a growing number of viewers – or listeners. Chief among	2. _____
the complaints have been that dialogue is increasingly hard to hear. While such	3. _____
criticism may often be put down to deafness, in fact it is sometimes also due to an	4. _____
way TVs process sound. When TVs with straightforward stereo combine dialogue	5. _____
with other sound, its clarity was lost. To make matters worse, the space for	6. _____
speakers, previously hidden in enormous cabinets, have shrunk to almost nothing.	7. _____
This results from TVs now being marketed on their ultra-slim designs. In	8. _____
additionally, speakers inside TV sets often face backwards. There are other	9. _____
explanations for sound problems. Some think when sound quality has more to do	10. _____
with the way actors and presenters on television use their voices these days.	
Many mumble and whisper, making hearing and comprehension difficult.	

TEST 20

Carefully read the text below, consisting of 12 lines, about a novel way to provide drinking water in desert conditions.

It is one of the most eye-catching answers to the problem of water resources.	1. _____
A huge signboard just outside Lima, an capital of Peru, announces boldly, "A	2. _____
billboard that produce drinking water from the air", and that is exactly what it	3. _____
does. The panel produces clean water from the humidity in the air, through filters.	4. _____
This initiative shows that it is possible to solve people's problem through	5. _____
engineering and technology. A panel traps humidity in the air and transforms it	6. _____
into water. Simple! Internally, the panel consist of five devices that extract water	7. _____
vapour from the surrounding air using a condenser and filters. Water is than	8. _____
stored in tanks at the top of the structure. Once filtered, it flows to a tap,	9. _____
accessible of everybody. So far, in this desert-like area, the simple, effective	10. _____
signboard has already produce over 9,000 litres of drinking water – 96 litres a day.	
Engineering succeeds where many have no other access to clean water.	