



Advanced skills

Editing Set 1
Articles

The Write Tribe



ERRORS TO LOOK FOR

Section 1. Articles

There is an error with articles in nearly all tests. Students commonly fail to find and correct such errors. Study this section to improve your chances of scoring this mark.

Step 1 – Reminder

The definite article **the** commonly refers to

- something specific or unique (*the Singapore River, the Queen*)
- one or more persons or things already mentioned – or familiar

The indefinite article **a** (before a consonant) or **an** (before a vowel) commonly refers to

- something for the first time in a text
- one single thing

Study the usage in the passage below, where the articles have been highlighted for you. At each usage, check how that usage fits the explanation given above. Repeat your reading until you are sure you understand.

When **the** Dalai Lama laughs, it is like **a** bell ringing. I first realised this at **an** event called Creating A Happier World, promoted by **the** organisation Action for Happiness. **The** event was to launch **a** new course about happiness. **The** co-founders of **the** organisation include George Mulgan, **an** author and social theorist who has trained as **a** Buddhist monk, been **a** van driver for **the** musical group Red Wedge and acted as **a** policy advisor to **a** Prime Minister. **The** other co-founder is Richard Layard, **an** economist, **an** expert on mental health and **the** author of *Happiness: Lessons from a New Science*, **a** new approach to economic priorities.

Step 2

Now find and highlight **all** the articles in the start of a recipe below. There would have been a list of ingredients before this.

Sift **the** flour and salt into **a** large mixing bowl with **a** sieve held high above the bowl so the flour gets an airing. Now make a well in the centre of the flour and break the eggs into it. Then begin whisking the eggs - any sort of whisk or even a fork will do - incorporating any bits of flour from around the edge of the bowl as you do so.

Next, gradually add small quantities of the milk and water mixture, still whisking. When all the liquid has been added, use a rubber spatula to scrape any elusive bits of flour from around the edge into the centre, then whisk once more until the batter is smooth, with the consistency of thin cream. Now melt the 50g of butter in a pan. Spoon 2 tbsp of it into the batter and whisk it in, then pour the rest into a bowl and use it to lubricate the pan, using a sheet of kitchen paper to smear it round before you make each pancake.

O-Level English Editing Tests

Here are the articles that you should have found:

Sift **the** flour and salt into **a** large mixing bowl with **a** sieve held high above **the** bowl so **the** flour gets **an** airing. Now make **a** well in **the** centre of **the** flour and break **the** eggs into it. Then begin whisking **the** eggs – any sort of whisk or even **a** fork will do - incorporating any bits of flour from around **the** edge of **the** bowl as you do so.

Next, gradually add small quantities of **the** milk and water mixture, still whisking. When all **the** liquid has been added, use **a** rubber spatula to scrape any elusive bits of flour from around **the** edge into **the** centre, then whisk once more until **the** batter is smooth, with **the** consistency of thin cream. Now melt **the** 50g of butter in **a** pan. Spoon 2 tbsp of it into **the** batter and whisk it in, then pour **the** rest into **a** bowl and use it to lubricate **the** pan, using **a** sheet of kitchen paper to smear it round before you make each pancake.

Step 3

Importantly, read the passage above several times, trying to hear the rhythm that the articles give to the sentence.

Step 4

Now enter the correct articles in the spaces in this passage.

A waitress at **the** hotel had told her about **an** interesting sight that lay just beyond ____ jungle-like area behind ____ hotel. She hoped she was on ____ correct path as she brushed aside ____ overhanging branch. It was dark and scary. ____ creature dashed out of ____ bush and across her path. ____ bird squawked high above. Suddenly, ____ break in ____ trees ahead showed ____ brighter patch. And then she was brushing aside ____ final undergrowth, ____ tangle of stems and leaves, and was out into ____ open. ____ bright sunlight stunned her and she was unable to see much for ____ moment. When her eyes had adjusted, she let out ____ loud gasp. She was at ____ entrance of ____ walled garden. It consisted mostly of wild plants but ____ area in one corner looked as if it was cared for.

Key Point

Articles may be short words, but they are important. They convey subtle meaning. If you miss articles out of your writing or if you do not score 20/20 on this exercise, repeat Steps 2 and 3 with other passages of good English. Any passage of correct English will be good.

Answers: See page 107

TEST 1

Carefully read the text below, consisting of 12 lines, about the problems arising from a burst water pipe.

Water flooded a localised area in the north of the island late on Saturday night. This was caused by a burst water pipe who also resulted in a part of Woodlands Road collapsing. The Land Transport Authority (LTA) explain that, at 11pm on Saturday, a burst water pipe causing a localised depression on the road surface along Woodlands Road near West View Primary School, toward the direction of the city. Workmen assess the situation and decided that, as a matter of urgency, action was needed. The affected section of the road has before been closed to traffic as work to repair the cave-in continued late into the night. Although the pipe problem and the flooding were dealt with fairly quick, it will take much longer to fill in the hole and resurface the road. In order to complete this work, both lanes were immediately closed to traffic to ensure an safety of motorists. The LTA will continue to monitor the situation and guide traffic flow during work.

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

TEST 2

Carefully read the text below, consisting of 12 lines, about how an earthquake happened.

An 8.0-magnitude earthquake struck part of the Solomon Islands on 6 February. This earthquake triggers a tsunami and numerous aftershocks, including at least three with magnitudes greater than 6.0. The tsunami killed at least five people and also damage homes in several villages. The centre of the quake was situated 81 kilometres west by the town of Lata on Santa Cruz Island, at a depth of 28.7 kilometres beneath the seafloor, according to a report by the U.S. Geological Survey. It occurred either on or near the boundary over two plates of the Earth's crust, which the northeast-moving Australian plate dives beneath the Pacific plate. Typical, large earthquakes are common in areas where such plate collisions occur. An earthquake happened where one side of the fault pushed upwards, causing move of the seafloor to displace a huge volume of water. That event unleashed a tsunami that reached several islands in the region.

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

TEST 3

Carefully read the text below, consisting of 12 lines, about the important role that the mothers of African elephant calves play in the survival of their young.

International researchers have discovered something new about elephants.	1. _____
It seems that the mothers of African elephant calves have the direct influence	2. _____
on their calf's ability to survive. In particular, researchers identified a link	3. _____
between maternal care in the first two years of a calf's life and reduce growth	4. _____
and delayed maturity. Therefore, a young mother giving birth aged 10-12 may	5. _____
not have the physical resources his calf needs. That has immediate	6. _____
consequences in that the young ones are more likely to die, but those that do	7. _____
survive then tends to be at a disadvantage, especially sons, for the rest of their	8. _____
lives. Inexperienced mums that had a mother or grandmother in the group are	9. _____
much better off than inexperienced mums within social support. However, the	10. _____
more droughts the elephants suffered, the less chance there is of such support.	
In that situation, first-time mothers in particular lose out from lack of support.	

TEST 4

Carefully read the text below, consisting of 12 lines, about a group of teenagers caught in a garden on a dare.

"Freeze!" Simultaneously, a bright light blinded us. We were shocked.	1. _____
Someone approached us with a torch. In adventure stories, we will suddenly find	2. _____
a way though the fence and run away. That was not to be. The man's voice was	3. _____
authoritative. There could be a gun on the other side in the brightness. We were	4. _____
like creatures caught in a car's headlights. The man has advanced closer. "Move	5. _____
towards the house." The voice was no more than the whisper. It was as if he had	6. _____
catch whispering from us. We stumbled forward, with the torchlight showing us	7. _____
the way forward. Someone prodded me from behind. That was when I realised	8. _____
that there had to be more than one of them. Until we rounded the front of the	9. _____
house, the man told us to stood in a line. "We were only doing a dare," said WJ.	10. _____
"Some friends dared us to enter the garden of this scare house in darkness."	
He explained that the dare was to touch the top of the back fence before we left.	

TEST 5

Carefully read the text below, consisting of 12 lines, about the role played by clouds in Earth's weather system.

Has it ever occurred to you that, without clouds, life on Earth would not exist? By reflecting solar radiation and absorb outgoing radiation, clouds are active in regulating the climate. Clouds forms when water vapour in moist, rising air condenses, resulting in precipitation – rain, hail, sleet and snow. The earth's surface climate is moderated by these clouds, which played a critical role in determining the radiation balance of an Earth and its atmosphere. The shape of a cloud reflects the way for which moist air has risen to determine its development. A type of bulbous cloud that are created by thermals from the Earth's surface is small fair-weather cumulus clouds, which may cool to such a degree when condensation occurs. At the other extreme, deep, precipitating layer clouds form within a very extensive but gentle rising expanse of air. Moist air flowing over the hills and mountains can also cause condensation.

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

TEST 6

Carefully read the text below, consisting of 12 lines, about an amazing achievement by two circus performers.

They became famous for 'the move' that won them their first gold medal. Before that International Circus Festival performance, they have both competed for many years in gymnastics but without achieve success at the highest level. Then, Wu Zhengdan and Wei Baohua join the Guangdong circus troupe and created the move. It happened by accident when Wu can not perform the movements in *Swan Lake* on her toes on the stage. They hit on the bright idea of getting Wei to support her. A result was a YouTube sensation. In it, Wu, the ballerina, dances the steps on top of his partner's head. First, she steadies herself and then performs the pirouette, her legs in vertical splits, torso arched backwards. The auditorium are silenced for one fleeting moment. Wu holds the swan-like pose, picked off in centre stage by the spotlight, like an ice sculpture. Then, even before the dismount, the audience gives them thunderous applause.

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

TEST 7

Carefully read the text below, consisting of 12 lines, about a way to keep Singapore tidy.

A correspondent has suggested a simple way for us to keep the country tidy.	1. _____
If all Singaporeans were to take a recyclable bag with her when walking a short	2. _____
distance, such as to a local shops or school, they could collect in the bag any litter	3. _____
they saw. On returning home, or when they came inside a litterbin, they could	4. _____
empty the bag. It is, in theory, an excellent idea, and anyone who do this should,	5. _____
of course, be praised. Additionally, there are problems with it. Some litter can be	6. _____
messy and might be unpleasant to pick up. It is unlikely everyone would want to	7. _____
wear special gloves. In addition, people might start using too many bags, making	8. _____
another situation badder. The logical end is difficult too. If everyone did it, they	9. _____
might realise that they shall not drop litter anyway. It would become pointless	10. _____
taking a bag out because there would be no litter in those circumstances.	
People might eventually start littering again, taking us back to square one.	

TEST 8

Carefully read the text below, consisting of 12 lines, about a scam involving mobile phones.

A 50-year-old male was arrested on Tuesday for 10 cases of alleged cheating.	1. _____
The suspect would target shoppers browsing through the mobile phones in shops	2. _____
in Singapore. Pretending to be a Singtel employee, he will start discussing the	3. _____
merits of various phones with the shoppers. Where the victims were about to	4. _____
purchase the particular model, the suspect would claim that he could get them	5. _____
substantial discounts off their phone purchases, if they went with him to the	6. _____
Comcentre for Exeter Road, where a Singtel outlet is located. After receiving	7. _____
cash from the unsuspected shoppers there, the suspect would then disappear. The	8. _____
police arrest him after receiving reports of the cheating cases. The police urged	9. _____
others who have fell victim to the scam to lodge a police report as soon as possible.	10. _____
The public is also advice not to be tempted by such attractive-sounding offers.	
They suggest extreme caution when dubious sources offer huge discounts.	