



STUDY NOTES

EPISODE 25: GRAMMAR CHECKLIST

GRAMMAR CHECKLIST

To achieve a higher score in your writing you need to demonstrate good language control. The number of mistakes you make indicates the accuracy of your writing and therefore your level of proficiency. So, the fewer the grammar, cohesive and spelling errors, the better your result will be.

There are some common grammatical and cohesive features that can cause difficulties and therefore affect the accuracy of your writing. Spelling can also be troublesome.

Checking problematic areas and correcting any mistakes can make a difference in the number of errors made, and subsequently the **grammatical accuracy** of your writing, which is one of the criteria by which you are assessed.

IELTS Tip

Leave 2-3 minutes in the writing test to check your letter, summary or essay for any grammar, spelling and punctuation errors.

Reducing the number of mistakes in your writing can make a difference to the score you achieve for the criterion of grammatical accuracy.

Common grammar, cohesive and spelling errors

Here is a checklist which identifies common grammar, cohesive and spelling errors. It is good practice to leave 2-3 minutes in the test to check your writing for these problems. The main areas to check include:

- subject-verb agreement
- pronoun, determiner or adjective + noun agreement
- reference agreement
- countable and uncountable nouns
- word forms
- articles
- spelling

Subject-Verb Agreement (1)	
Check	verb must agree with the subject (person or thing) in number (singular or plural) and person (s/he, it, they etc.)
Example	The satellite information provides data on how far down in the water column the sunlight can penetrate.
Explanation	subject information agrees with the verb provides (3 rd person singular); a final -s is used with 3 rd per. sg. subjects in the present tense
Subject-Verb Agreement (2) There is and There are Sentences	
Check	subject follows the verb
Examples	There is some pollution in those cities. There are many polluted areas in those cities.
Explanation	subject some pollution is sg. so 3 rd person singular present tense verb is subject many polluted areas is plural so 3 rd person plural verb
Another example	Most other cities around the world have similar problems.
Explanation	subject cities is plural so 3 rd person plural of the verb to have
Reminder	
Remember to use the -s form for the 3 rd person singular present tense and has for the 3 rd person singular present tense of the verb have and does for the verb do . In an IELTS essay you would be writing about general truths and habits so the present tense would generally be used.	



Pronoun, Determiner or Adjective + Noun Agreement	
Check	pronouns (eg. his, her, their, they), determiners (eg. some, most, many, every) or adjectives (eg. economical, bright, environmental) must agree in number (singular or plural) with the noun
Example	Most other cities around the world have similar problems.
Explanation	cities is plural because of most and other ; determiners such as most, other, several, many, some and others are used with plural nouns and also some uncountable nouns.
Another example	It is important to understand what is happening with the water quality and find ways to measure these changes .
Explanation	these agrees with changes in number (plural)

Reference Agreement	
Check	Referent words (eg. it, they, them, this, that, these) are used to refer to other words, things, people or ideas, so these two words must refer to the same thing and agree
Example	In the past, storm water, treated sewerage and other forms of pollution have caused damage to what is underneath the sea. They have damaged the ocean bed by killing seagrasses and changing the shape of the beaches.
Explanation	the referent is they ; it refers back to 3 things: storm water, treated sewerage and ... pollution ; so, these 3 things have damaged the ocean bed ...; they is also the subject of the sentence, so the 3 rd person plural pronoun agrees with the verb have
Another example	They have damaged the ocean bed by killing seagrasses and changing the shape of the beaches . This damage is likely to increase as the population of Adelaide increases.
Explanation	This (damage) refers back to a longer segment of text in the previous sentence which specifies the kind of damage, i.e. killing seagrasses and changing the shape of the beaches ; this also agrees in number with the noun damage
Reminder	When using referents it is important to check that the correct pronoun (eg 'it', 'they') or determiner (eg 'this', 'these') is used and that it agrees in number, i.e. the singular or plural, with the word, thing, person or idea it is referring to. Referents are used to eliminate repetition in your writing.

Countable and Uncountable Nouns	
Check	In an IELTS essay you would be writing about issues and things in general, so the plural would be used. Check your use of countable and uncountable nouns in particular.
Example	This includes storm water generated from the roofs of houses, streets, treated sewerage and other forms of pollution .
Explanation	countable nouns are: roofs of houses and streets ; the plural of regular countable nouns is formed by adding an -s ending. The plural is used because the discussion is about storm water that is generated from the roofs of houses and streets in general, not a specific roof or street. uncountable nouns are: storm water, sewerage and pollution ; they do not take an -s ending.
Reminder	Here is a list of some uncountable nouns that are commonly and frequently used in IELTS essays. communication, education, equipment, experience, justice, happiness, health, information, intelligence, knowledge, peace, pollution, poverty, progress, technology, time, traffic, transport, violence, wealth, work



Word Forms	
Check	Depending on the position of the word in the sentence, check that the correct part of speech is used.
Example	It is important to acknowledge the valuable contributions that healthy aged individuals can make. There is no denying that healthy aged individuals can contribute to society in a positive way.
Explanation	In the first sentence the noun form of contributions is used because it functions as the subject but in the second sentence it is the verb (can) contribute .

Articles – Definite (the) and Indefinite(a, an)	
Check	The definite article the is used when the reader knows what it is you are referring to, for example: <i>We are watching Study English: IELTS Preparation now. The episode is about checking your writing.</i> The indefinite article a/an is used when talking about something in general (non-specific) or something that is unknown to the reader, for example, <i>We usually watch an episode of Study English: IELTS Preparation everyday.</i>
Example	It was important to get a sample of the ocean, so a bottle was dropped in the water from the jetty.
Explanation	a sample of the ocean The indefinite article a is used in a sample because the reference is to a non-specific sample or just a sample in general. The definite article the is used in the ocean because it refers to the ocean in a general sense as well. The reference is to a scientist who studies the way the ocean works, so it is not a specific ocean that is being studied but rather the ocean in general. the is used in English when referring to things in our physical environment. For example, <i>I like living by the sea but my sister prefers the countryside.</i> sea and countryside refer to our physical environment and it is assumed that everybody knows what the sea, countryside, mountains etc. are when we refer to them.
	a bottle in the water from the jetty a in the expression a bottle is also used in a general way, i.e. a specific bottle is not being used to collect the sample. The definite article is used in the expression the water because it is known which body of water the scientist is referring to, i.e. the water in the ocean. The definite article is also used in the expression the jetty because it is known exactly which jetty or platform the scientist is referring to.

Spelling	
Check	There are some particular features of English spelling that can be troublesome. Watch out for the following features.
Capital Letters	
names of days, months and public holidays	days: Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday months: January, February, March, April, May, June, July, August, September, October, November, December holidays: Christmas, Easter, New Year's Day, Good Friday, Chinese New Year, Lunar New Year, Eid al Adha NB: seasons are not capitalised, eg spring, summer, autumn (fall), winter



names of people and places	female names: Alice, Anna, Christine, Diane, Elizabeth, Grace, Helen, Irene, Jane, Janet, Karen, Linda, Margaret, Mary, Nicola, Olive, Patricia, Rosemary, Sally, Sandra male names: Adrian, Allan, Bill, Brian, Charles, David, Eric, George, Henry, Jack, John, Kevin, Mark, Matthew, Michael, Oliver, Richard, Steven, Tom, William places: Antarctica, Australia, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indian Ocean, Japan, South Korea, Mexico, Pacific Ocean, Saudi Arabia, United States of America, United Kingdom, Great Britain, England, Washington, Ontario, New South Wales	
nationalities, languages, religions	English, Australian, North American English, Hindi, Thai, Italian, Chinese, Indian, Vietnamese, Buddhist, Christian, Muslim	
Troublesome Words		
	noun	verb
	advice	advise
	choice	choose
	effect	affect
	practice	practise
	adjective	verb
	loose	lose
adjectives	later (late, later, latest): Classes will be starting later in the week. latter : The latter paragraph discusses the effects of pollution.	
Plural Endings in Nouns		
regular plural -s/-es	year – years, day – days, branch – branches, bus – buses, house – houses	
irregular plurals		
vowel change	man – men, woman – women, tooth – teeth, foot – feet	
-en ending	child – children	
ends with -o	tomato – tomatoes, potato – potatoes	
ends with -is	analysis – analyses, crisis – crises, diagnosis – diagnoses	
ends with -on/-um	criterion – criteria, phenomenon – phenomena medium – media, curriculum – curricula; datum – data	
f → v	life – lives, knife – knives, half – halves, leaf – leaves, loaf – loaves, shelf – shelves	
person	people (more common and less formal) and persons	