

Sentence Structure

COMPLETE CONCEPT EXPLANATION

1. Definition

A sentence is a grammatically complete unit of language that expresses a thought, conveys a complete meaning, and can stand independently. For a group of words to qualify as a sentence, it must contain at minimum a subject (who or what the sentence is about) and a predicate (what the subject does, is, or has). The systematic arrangement of these components — and the rules governing their arrangement — is called sentence structure.

Sentence structure is the backbone of all written and spoken English. A mastery of sentence structure enables writers to communicate with precision, avoid ambiguity, and control meaning at the highest level.

2. Essential Components of a Sentence

- Subject — the noun, pronoun, or noun phrase about which something is stated. It answers 'Who?' or 'What?'. Example: The tired teacher sat down.
- Predicate — the verb phrase that tells what the subject does, is, or experiences. It must agree with the subject in number and person.
- Object — the noun or noun phrase that receives the action of a verb. A direct object answers 'What?' or 'Whom?'; an indirect object answers 'To whom?' or 'For whom?'.
- Complement — a word or phrase that completes the meaning of a linking verb. Subject complements describe or rename the subject.
- Modifier — words, phrases, or clauses that provide additional information about nouns or verbs. Misplaced or dangling modifiers are a primary source of structural errors.

3. Types of Sentences by Structure

Every English sentence belongs to exactly one of four structural categories:

Type	Independent Clauses	Subordinate Clauses	Example
Simple	1	0	The dog barked.
Compound	2 or more	0	The dog barked, and the cat fled.
Complex	1	1 or more	Although it rained, we played.
Compound-Complex	2 or more	1 or more	She sang while he danced, and they bowed.

4. Types of Sentences by Purpose

Type	Function	Punctuation	Example
Declarative	States a fact or opinion	Period (.)	Water boils at 100°C.
Interrogative	Asks a question	Question mark (?)	Are you ready?
Imperative	Gives a command or request	Period or (!)	Close the door.
Exclamatory	Expresses strong emotion	Exclamation mark (!)	What a terrible loss!

5. Clauses — The Building Blocks of Sentence Structure

A clause is a group of words containing both a subject and a predicate. There are two fundamental kinds:

- Independent Clause (Main Clause) — expresses a complete thought and can stand alone as a sentence.
 Example: She finished the report.

- **Dependent Clause (Subordinate Clause)** — has a subject and predicate but cannot stand alone; it depends on an independent clause for its full meaning. Example: ...because she worked all night.

Dependent clauses are further classified by their function:

Clause Type	Function	Introduced By	Example
Noun clause	Acts as subject, object, or complement	that, what, whether, who, how	What she said surprised everyone.
Adjective (Relative) clause	Modifies a noun or pronoun	who, whom, which, that, whose	The man who called is my uncle.
Adverb clause	Modifies a verb, adjective, or adverb	because, although, when, if, unless	She left before he arrived.

6. Phrases — Key Structural Units

A phrase is a group of related words that lacks either a subject, a predicate, or both. Unlike clauses, phrases cannot stand alone as sentences.

Phrase Type	Core Element	Function	Example
Noun phrase	Noun + modifiers	Subject, object, complement	The old, ruined castle stood tall.
Verb phrase	Main verb + auxiliaries	Predicate	She has been working since dawn.
Prepositional phrase	Preposition + noun phrase	Adjective or adverb modifier	The book on the shelf is mine.
Participial phrase	Participle + complements	Adjective modifier	Running at full speed, he tripped.
Gerund phrase	Gerund + complements	Noun function	Swimming every morning improves health.

Infinitive phrase	Infinitive + complements	Noun, adjective, or adverb	To win the race was her goal.
Absolute phrase	Noun + participle	Sentence modifier	Weather permitting, we will travel.

7. Core Rules of Sentence Structure

RULE 1 Every complete sentence must contain at least one independent clause with a stated or clearly implied subject and a finite verb.

Ex. 1	✓ She laughed. [Subject: She; Verb: laughed — complete sentence]
Ex. 2	✗ Running through the park every morning. [No subject; no finite verb — fragment]
Ex. 3	✓ Run! [Implied subject 'You'; Verb: run — imperative sentence, grammatically complete]

RULE 2 A sentence fragment — a group of words punctuated as a sentence but missing a subject, finite verb, or complete thought — is a structural error.

Ex. 1	✗ Because the train was delayed. [Subordinate clause alone — fragment]
Ex. 2	✓ Because the train was delayed, we missed the meeting. [Dependent clause + independent clause = complete sentence]
Ex. 3	✗ The ancient, moss-covered bridge over the river near the village. [Noun phrase, no predicate — fragment]

RULE 3 A run-on sentence occurs when two or more independent clauses are joined without proper punctuation or a coordinating conjunction. It must be corrected by using a period, semicolon, comma + FANBOYS conjunction, or a subordinating conjunction.

Ex. 1	✗ She studied hard she failed the exam. [Two fused independent clauses — run-on]
Ex. 2	✓ She studied hard; however, she failed the exam. [Semicolon + conjunctive adverb — correct]
Ex. 3	✓ Although she studied hard, she failed the exam. [Subordinating conjunction — correct]

RULE 4 A comma splice is a specific run-on error: two independent clauses joined by only a comma. A comma alone cannot join independent clauses.

Ex. 1	✗ It was raining, we stayed inside. [Comma splice]
Ex. 2	✓ It was raining, so we stayed inside. [Comma + coordinating conjunction 'so' — correct]
Ex. 3	✓ It was raining. We stayed inside. [Two separate sentences — correct]

RULE 5 Coordinating conjunctions (FANBOYS: For, And, Nor, But, Or, Yet, So) join elements of equal grammatical rank. When joining two independent clauses, place a comma before the conjunction.

Ex. 1	✓ The results were poor, but the team remained motivated. [Comma before 'but' joining two independent clauses]
Ex. 2	✓ She ordered coffee and a sandwich. [No comma — 'and' joins two noun phrases, not two clauses]
Ex. 3	✗ The report was thorough but, it lacked a conclusion. [Incorrectly placed comma after 'but']

RULE 6 Subordinating conjunctions create dependent clauses. When a dependent clause precedes the main clause, use a comma after it. When it follows the main clause, no comma is generally needed.

Ex. 1	✓ When the alarm rang, she woke up immediately. [Dependent clause first — comma used]
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Ex. 2	✓ She woke up immediately when the alarm rang. [Main clause first — no comma needed]
Ex. 3	✗ She woke up immediately, when the alarm rang. [Incorrect comma after main clause]

RULE 7 Parallel structure: elements joined by coordinating conjunctions must belong to the same grammatical category (noun with noun, verb with verb, phrase with phrase, clause with clause).

Ex. 1	✗ She likes swimming, to run, and cycling. [Mixed forms: gerund, infinitive, gerund — not parallel]
Ex. 2	✓ She likes swimming, running, and cycling. [All gerunds — parallel]
Ex. 3	✗ He is intelligent, hardworking, and shows creativity. [Two adjectives + verb phrase — not parallel]

RULE 8 A modifier must be placed as close as possible to the word it modifies. A misplaced modifier creates ambiguity or absurdity.

Ex. 1	✗ She almost drove her children to school every day. [Implies she almost did it — not that it was nearly every day]
Ex. 2	✓ She drove her children to school almost every day. [Modifier 'almost' correctly placed next to 'every day']
Ex. 3	✗ The surgeon operated on the patient with great skill and a broken leg. [Was the patient's leg broken, or the surgeon's?]

RULE 9 A dangling modifier is an introductory modifier whose implied subject differs from the grammatical subject of the main clause. The main clause must be rewritten so the subjects match.

Ex. 1	✗ Walking to the station, the rain began. [Dangling — 'the rain' was not walking to the station]
Ex. 2	✓ Walking to the station, she was caught in the rain. [Correct — 'she' was walking]

Ex. 3 ✗ Having finished the assignment, the TV was switched on. [The TV did not finish the assignment]

RULE 10 Relative clauses: use 'who/whom/whose' for persons, 'which' for non-restrictive clauses (set off by commas), and 'that' for restrictive clauses (no commas). Do not use 'that' for non-restrictive clauses.

Ex. 1 ✓ The book that I borrowed was excellent. [Restrictive — no comma; 'that' correct]

Ex. 2 ✓ My car, which is quite old, needs repairs. [Non-restrictive — commas; 'which' correct]

Ex. 3 ✗ My car, that is quite old, needs repairs. [Incorrect — 'that' cannot introduce a non-restrictive clause set off by commas]

RULE 11 Subject-verb agreement is a structural requirement: the verb must agree in number with its subject, not with a nearby noun phrase. Intervening phrases between subject and verb do not affect agreement.

Ex. 1 ✗ The quality of the products are poor. [Subject is 'quality' — singular; verb should be 'is']

Ex. 2 ✓ The quality of the products is poor. [Singular subject 'quality' — singular verb 'is']

Ex. 3 ✓ Each of the students was given a certificate. ['Each' is always singular]

RULE 12 Correlative conjunctions (either...or, neither...nor, not only...but also, both...and) must connect grammatically parallel elements. With 'either...or' and 'neither...nor', the verb agrees with the subject nearer to it.

Ex. 1 ✓ Not only did she work hard, but she also produced excellent results. [Parallel clauses]

Ex. 2 ✗ Either the manager or the employees is responsible. [Subject nearer to verb is plural 'employees' — verb should be 'are']

Ex. 3 ✓ Neither the teacher nor the students were informed. [Nearer subject 'students' — plural verb 'were']

RULE 13 An appositive is a noun or noun phrase placed beside another noun to identify or describe it. Non-restrictive appositives (those providing extra, non-essential information) are set off by commas.

Ex. 1 ✓ My brother, a doctor, lives in Mumbai. [Non-restrictive appositive — set off by commas]

Ex. 2 ✓ The poet Keats died young. [Restrictive appositive — no comma; identifies which poet]

Ex. 3 ✗ My brother a doctor lives in Mumbai. [Missing commas around non-restrictive appositive]

RULE 14 Sentence inversion (changing the standard Subject-Verb-Object order) is used for questions, emphasis, and after certain adverbs (seldom, rarely, never, hardly, scarcely). After negative adverbs, the auxiliary verb precedes the subject.

Ex. 1 ✓ Never have I seen such courage. [Inversion after 'Never' — auxiliary 'have' before subject 'I']

Ex. 2 ✗ Never I have seen such courage. [Incorrect — no inversion]

Ex. 3 ✓ Rarely does she complain. [Inversion after 'Rarely']

RULE 15 Noun clauses acting as subjects take a singular verb when the clause is treated as a single unit. Do not confuse the noun clause's internal verb with the main verb.

Ex. 1 ✓ What she said was completely false. [Noun clause 'What she said' is the subject — singular verb 'was']

Ex. 2 ✗ What she said were completely false. [Incorrect plural verb]

Ex. 3 ✓ That they survived the ordeal is a miracle. [Noun clause as subject — singular verb 'is']

8. Common Errors — Correct vs. Incorrect

✓ CORRECT	✗ INCORRECT
Because she was late, she missed the bus.	Because she was late. She missed the bus.
He runs fast, and he jumps high.	He runs fast, he jumps high.
Swimming is good exercise.	To swim is good exercise. (inconsistent in a parallel list)
The dog that bit him was captured.	The dog which bit him was captured. (restrictive — should use 'that')
Never have I witnessed such bravery.	Never I have witnessed such bravery.
The committee has reached a decision.	The committee have reached a decision. (British usage aside, in formal tests: singular)
Having read the notice, she left quietly.	Having read the notice, the office was left quietly.
She not only sings but also dances.	She not only sings but also is dancing.
Either he or his friends are coming.	Either he or his friends is coming.
My sister, an architect, designed this.	My sister an architect, designed this.

9. Memory Tricks & Mnemonics

- FANBOYS — For, And, Nor, But, Or, Yet, So: the seven coordinating conjunctions. Any two independent clauses may be joined with comma + one of these.
- SWABI — Subordinating conjunctions introduce adverb clauses: Since, When, Although, Because, If (and many more — these are just common anchors).
- 'Who walks, Which talks' — use WHO for people, WHICH for things (in non-restrictive clauses), THAT for things (in restrictive clauses).

- Parallel train tracks — items in a series are like train tracks: they must run in the same direction (same grammatical form).
- 'Modifier magnet' — every modifier is magnetically attracted to the nearest noun. Place it beside exactly the word it should attract.
- 'NEVER rule': after Never, Rarely, Seldom, Hardly, Scarcely, Little — the auxiliary verb leaps before the subject.
- The 'it' test for noun clauses: replace the noun clause with 'it'. If the sentence still makes sense, the clause is functioning as a noun.

RULES SUMMARY

A consolidated quick-revision reference of all 15 rules covered in this document.

#	RULE	QUICK EXAMPLE
1	Every sentence needs a subject + finite verb (independent clause).	She laughed. / Run! (implied 'you')
2	Sentence fragments are incomplete — they lack a subject, verb, or complete thought.	Because he left. → FRAGMENT
3	Run-on sentences must be corrected with a period, semicolon, or conjunction.	She sang he danced. → INCORRECT
4	A comma alone cannot join two independent clauses (comma splice).	It rained, we stayed. → INCORRECT
5	FANBOYS join equal elements; comma required before FANBOYS between two clauses.	...poor, but the team stayed calm.
6	Adverb clause first → comma after it. Adverb clause last → no comma.	When it rained, they left. / They left when it rained.

7	Parallel structure: joined elements must share the same grammatical form.	singing, dancing, and running — NOT singing and to run
8	Modifiers must be placed next to the word they modify.	'almost every day' — not 'almost drove'
9	Dangling modifiers: the introductory phrase's implied subject must match the main subject.	Walking to school, she was late. — NOT Walking to school, the bell rang.
10	That = restrictive (no comma); which = non-restrictive (comma); who/whom = persons.	The book that I read / My car, which is old...
11	Verb agrees with grammatical subject, not an intervening noun phrase.	'The quality of products is' — not 'are'
12	Either...or / Neither...nor: verb agrees with nearer subject. Parallel elements required.	Neither he nor they were... (nearer = plural)
13	Non-restrictive appositives need commas; restrictive appositives do not.	My brother, a doctor,... / The poet Keats...
14	After negative adverbs (never, rarely, hardly), invert auxiliary verb before subject.	Never have I seen... — NOT Never I have seen...
15	A noun clause as subject takes a singular verb.	What she said was false.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS — PART 1: ALL 60 QUESTIONS

This section contains all 60 questions organised into 4 categories. Answers and explanations are provided in Part 2.

Category 1 — Spot the Mistake (Q1–Q15)

Skill tested: You must identify the grammatical error in each sentence, name the type of error, and write the corrected version. Demands precision in detecting structural flaws.

- Q1.** Roaming through the dense forest for hours, the hidden waterfall was finally discovered.
- Q2.** Neither the principal nor the teachers was informed about the policy change.
- Q3.** She is one of those managers who insists on perfection from everyone.
- Q4.** The report that the committee, which had been working overtime, submitted it was well-received.
- Q5.** Not only he was late, but he also forgot to bring the documents.
- Q6.** The team of researchers have published their findings in three international journals.
- Q7.** Hardly had the ceremony started, the lights went out.
- Q8.** He is the sort of person that you can always depend on him in a crisis.
- Q9.** What makes this novel unique are the non-linear narrative and its psychological depth.
- Q10.** Running the marathon, dehydration began to affect his performance after mile eighteen.
- Q11.** She not only edited the draft but also was suggesting several structural changes.
- Q12.** The director, along with all the producers, were present at the premiere.
- Q13.** It was her, not her colleagues, who submitted the winning proposal.
- Q14.** He spoke so quiet that nobody in the back row could hear him.
- Q15.** Having been denied admission, the university's appeal process was his only option.

Category 2 — Fill in the Right Word (Q16–Q30)

Skill tested: Selecting the grammatically correct and precise word from options designed to look plausible. Demands understanding of structural rules, not just vocabulary.

- Q16.** _____ she works, the better the results tend to be.
(a) The harder

- (b) The more hard
- (c) Harder
- (d) More harder

Q17. He is one of the few politicians who _____ actually kept their promises.

- (a) has
- (b) have
- (c) had
- (d) having

Q18. The committee recommended that the proposal _____ reconsidered.

- (a) is
- (b) was
- (c) be
- (d) were

Q19. She insisted on _____ the meeting herself, despite her illness.

- (a) to chair
- (b) chairing
- (c) chair
- (d) to chairing

Q20. Scarcely had he entered the room _____ the alarm went off.

- (a) than
- (b) then
- (c) when
- (d) that

Q21. The data _____ collected over three years clearly shows a warming trend.

- (a) were
- (b) has been
- (c) have been

(d) was

Q22. It was _____ who first proposed the idea of a joint venture.

(a) her

(b) she

(c) hers

(d) herself

Q23. He speaks English _____ than any other student in the programme.

(a) more fluently

(b) most fluently

(c) more fluent

(d) flunter

Q24. _____ the heavy snowfall, the match was cancelled.

(a) Because of

(b) Because

(c) Due to that

(d) Owing that

Q25. The news _____ broadcasting on every channel last night.

(a) were

(b) was

(c) are

(d) have been

Q26. Neither of the solutions _____ completely satisfactory.

(a) are

(b) were

(c) is

(d) have been

Q27. The scientist, _____ research is widely cited, has won three awards.

- (a) who
- (b) whom
- (c) whose
- (d) that

Q28. He spent his holiday _____ in the mountains and _____ local art.

- (a) hiking / to study
- (b) to hike / studying
- (c) hiking / studying
- (d) hike / study

Q29. It is essential that every employee _____ the new safety protocol.

- (a) follows
- (b) follow
- (c) followed
- (d) is following

Q30. The professor asked us _____ our phones during the lecture.

- (a) that we silence
- (b) silencing
- (c) to silence
- (d) silence

Category 3 — Choose the Correct Sentence (Q31–Q45)

Skill tested: Identifying the single structurally flawless sentence from four options. Demands simultaneous awareness of multiple rules and the ability to eliminate near-misses.

Q31. Choose the structurally correct sentence:

- (a) Running for the bus, his hat blew off.
- (b) Running for the bus, he lost his hat.
- (c) Running for the bus, the hat of his blew off.
- (d) His hat blew off while running for the bus.

Q32. Choose the structurally correct sentence:

- (a) She is wiser than me in this matter.
- (b) She is more wiser than me in this matter.
- (c) She is wiser than I in this matter.
- (d) She is the wiser than I in this matter.

Q33. Choose the structurally correct sentence:

- (a) The reason for his failure is because he did not prepare.
- (b) The reason for his failure is that he did not prepare.
- (c) His failure is because of not preparing.
- (d) The reason that his failure is because of poor preparation.

Q34. Choose the structurally correct sentence:

- (a) No sooner had the match begun when the rain started.
- (b) No sooner had the match begun then the rain started.
- (c) No sooner had the match begun than the rain started.
- (d) No sooner the match began than the rain started.

Q35. Choose the structurally correct sentence:

- (a) The manager told the staff that the meeting will be postponed.
- (b) The manager told the staff that the meeting would be postponed.
- (c) The manager told the staff the meeting will be postponed.
- (d) The manager told to the staff that the meeting would be postponed.

Q36. Choose the structurally correct sentence:

- (a) He is the best candidate, and additionally being highly qualified.
- (b) He is the best candidate and is also highly qualified.
- (c) Not only is he the best candidate, but he is also highly qualified.
- (d) He is not only the best candidate but also having high qualifications.

Q37. Choose the structurally correct sentence:

- (a) Each of the boys must carry their own luggage.

- (b) Each of the boys must carry his own luggage.
- (c) Each of the boys must carry its own luggage.
- (d) Each of the boys must carrying their own luggage.

Q38. Choose the structurally correct sentence:

- (a) Whoever comes first will get the prize.
- (b) Whomever comes first will get the prize.
- (c) Whoever that comes first will get the prize.
- (d) Who comes first will get the prize.

Q39. Choose the structurally correct sentence:

- (a) I prefer to work alone rather than working in a group.
- (b) I prefer working alone rather than work in a group.
- (c) I prefer to work alone rather than to work in a group.
- (d) I prefer working alone instead to work in a group.

Q40. Choose the structurally correct sentence:

- (a) Despite of the poor weather, the festival continued.
- (b) Despite the poor weather, the festival continued.
- (c) Despite of that the weather was poor, the festival continued.
- (d) In spite, the festival continued.

Q41. Choose the structurally correct sentence:

- (a) Neither the CEO nor the board members was present.
- (b) Neither the CEO nor the board members were present.
- (c) Neither the CEO nor the board members has been present.
- (d) Neither the CEO or the board members were present.

Q42. Choose the structurally correct sentence:

- (a) The article, that was published last week, caused a controversy.
- (b) The article that was published last week caused a controversy.
- (c) The article which was published last week caused a controversy.

(d) The article, which was published last week caused a controversy.

Q43. Choose the structurally correct sentence:

- (a) Having submitted the report, the praise from the director pleased her.
- (b) Having submitted the report, she was pleased by the director's praise.
- (c) Having submitted the report, the director praised her greatly.
- (d) The director praised her, having submitted the report.

Q44. Choose the structurally correct sentence:

- (a) The number of errors in the document are unacceptable.
- (b) The number of errors in the document is unacceptable.
- (c) A number of errors in the document is unacceptable.
- (d) The number of errors in the document have been unacceptable.

Q45. Choose the structurally correct sentence:

- (a) Scarcely she had finished speaking when the objections began.
- (b) Scarcely had she finished speaking when the objections began.
- (c) Scarcely had she finished speaking than the objections began.
- (d) Scarcely she finished speaking when objections had begun.

Category 4 — Analyse, Rewrite & Explain (Q46–Q60)

Skill tested: Deep structural analysis, clause identification, competing rule resolution, and critical rewriting.
Demands the highest level of grammatical reasoning and synthesis.

Q46. Identify all clauses in the following sentence and state their type (independent, dependent noun, adjective, or adverb clause): 'Although the board rejected the proposal that she had submitted, she believed that persistence would eventually bring success.'

Q47. The following sentence contains two errors. Identify both, name them, and write the fully corrected version: 'Running the project single-handedly, the deadline were met despite of numerous setbacks.'

Q48. Explain why the following sentence is ambiguous. Provide TWO different readings and rewrite the sentence to express each meaning unambiguously: 'The police were told to stop drinking in the park.'

Q49. Rewrite the following paragraph correcting all structural errors (there are 5). Identify each error by type before writing the corrected paragraph: 'He arrived late. Because the traffic was terrible. He apologised to everyone, the meeting had already started. Being a professional, punctuality should always be maintained. He vowed to never again be late, or arriving unprepared.'

Q50. Analyse the use of parallelism (or its violation) in the sentence below and rewrite it with correct parallel structure in THREE different grammatical forms (all gerunds, all infinitives, all noun phrases): 'Her hobbies include painting watercolours, to play chess online, and she enjoys long-distance cycling.'

Q51. The sentence below violates the rules for both relative clause usage and punctuation. Identify both errors and rewrite correctly: 'The bridge, that connects the two neighbourhoods which had been built in the 1920s was declared unsafe.'

Q52. Explain the difference in meaning between the following two sentences, and identify what structural feature creates that difference: A) 'The teachers who came late were fined.' B) 'The teachers, who came late, were fined.'

Q53. The following sentence has a misplaced modifier and a parallel structure violation. Find both, explain each error, and rewrite: 'She nearly spent three hours correcting and to improve the report before submitting it.'

Q54. Combine the following four simple sentences into ONE compound-complex sentence, maintaining all the information without any loss of meaning. Identify the clauses in your final sentence: (1) The scientist made a discovery. (2) The discovery was groundbreaking. (3) She had been researching for a decade. (4) Her colleagues were sceptical at first.'

Q55. Explain, with examples, the competing structural interpretations of the following sentence, and state which reading is grammatically dominant: 'I saw the man with the telescope.'

Q56. Rewrite the following sentence in FOUR different structural forms — simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex — without changing the core meaning: 'Despite his efforts, the project failed, and the team was disappointed.'

Q57. The following sentence uses inversion. Is the inversion correct? Explain the rule governing inversion in this context and correct the sentence if needed: 'Not until she resigned did people realise how valuable she was to the organisation.'

Q58. Identify and explain the structural issue with the use of 'which' in the following sentence. Rewrite it to eliminate the vague pronoun reference: 'The board approved the merger, which surprised many investors, which had been opposed for months.'

Q59. Analyse the following sentence for subject-verb agreement. The sentence has one hidden agreement error — identify the true grammatical subject, explain why agreement fails, and rewrite: 'The findings of the decade-long research conducted by teams across three continents suggests that the theory is flawed.'

Q60. Discuss the grammatical justification for treating the following sentence as either correct or incorrect under two different competing grammatical frameworks. Then state which version you would accept and why: 'Who did you speak to at the conference?' vs. 'To whom did you speak at the conference?'

PRACTICE QUESTIONS — PART 2: ALL 60 ANSWERS

Detailed explanations for all 60 questions, organised by category. For MCQs, each wrong option is explained individually.

Category 1 — Spot the Mistake: Answers (Q1–Q15)

Ans Q1:

Error type: Dangling modifier.

The introductory participial phrase 'Roaming through the dense forest for hours' has an implied subject — whoever was roaming. However, the main clause's grammatical subject is 'the hidden waterfall', which cannot roam. The modifier therefore dangles.

Corrected: Roaming through the dense forest for hours, they finally discovered the hidden waterfall.

Ans Q2:

Error type: Subject-verb agreement with 'neither...nor'.

With 'neither...nor', the verb agrees with the subject nearer to it. The nearer subject is 'the teachers' (plural), so the verb must be 'were', not 'was'.

Corrected: Neither the principal nor the teachers were informed about the policy change.

Ans Q3:

Error type: Subject-verb agreement in a 'one of those who' construction.

In the construction 'one of those [plural noun] who', the relative clause 'who...' refers to the plural noun (managers), not to 'one'. Therefore, the verb in the relative clause must be plural: 'insist', not 'insists'.

Corrected: She is one of those managers who insist on perfection from everyone.

Ans Q4:

Error type: Pronoun redundancy (resumptive pronoun error).

The subject of the main verb 'was well-received' is already established by the relative clause 'that the committee...submitted'. The pronoun 'it' after 'submitted' is redundant and creates a structural error. 'that' serves as both the object of 'submitted' and the relative pronoun connecting the clause.

Corrected: The report that the committee, which had been working overtime, submitted was well-received.

Ans Q5:

Error type: Inversion after 'not only' when used at the start of a clause.

When 'not only' begins a clause (and is not used mid-sentence), subject-auxiliary inversion is required. The auxiliary verb must precede the subject.

Corrected: Not only was he late, but he also forgot to bring the documents.

Ans Q6:

Error type: Subject-verb agreement with a collective noun.

'Team' is a collective noun used as a single unit. In formal written English (and in most standardised tests), collective nouns take a singular verb. The phrase 'of researchers' is a prepositional modifier and does not affect agreement.

Corrected: The team of researchers has published their findings in three international journals.

Ans Q7:

Error type: Incorrect conjunction after 'Hardly'. Missing inversion.

'Hardly...when' is the correct correlative pair. After 'Hardly' at the start of a clause, subject-auxiliary inversion is required. The sentence also needs the auxiliary to precede the subject.

Corrected: Hardly had the ceremony started when the lights went out.

Ans Q8:

Error type: Redundant pronoun in a relative clause.

The relative pronoun 'that' already refers to 'person' and functions as the object of the preposition 'on'. Adding 'him' after 'on' creates a double object — a common but incorrect construction.

Corrected: He is the sort of person that you can always depend on in a crisis. (OR: ...on whom you can always depend...)

Ans Q9:

Error type: Subject-verb agreement with a noun clause as subject.

'What makes this novel unique' is a noun clause functioning as the subject of the main verb. A noun clause is treated as a singular unit, requiring the singular verb 'is', not 'are'.

Corrected: What makes this novel unique is the non-linear narrative and its psychological depth.

Ans Q10:

Error type: Dangling modifier.

'Running the marathon' implies the runner as the subject. But the main clause's subject is 'dehydration', which cannot run a marathon. The modifier dangles.

Corrected: Running the marathon, he began to experience dehydration after mile eighteen.

Ans Q11:

Error type: Parallel structure violation with 'not only...but also'.

'Not only edited' (simple past) must be parallel with 'but also suggested' (simple past) — not 'was suggesting' (past continuous). Both elements must share the same grammatical form.

Corrected: She not only edited the draft but also suggested several structural changes.

Ans Q12:

Error type: Subject-verb agreement with a parenthetical phrase.

'Along with all the producers' is a parenthetical phrase, not part of the compound subject. The true grammatical subject is 'The director' (singular). The verb must be 'was', not 'were'.

Corrected: The director, along with all the producers, was present at the premiere.

Ans Q13:

Error type: Pronoun case error (subjective vs. objective).

After the linking verb 'was', the complement must be in the subjective case. 'It was she...' is the grammatically correct form. 'her' is the objective case, incorrect as a subject complement.

Corrected: It was she, not her colleagues, who submitted the winning proposal.

Ans Q14:

Error type: Adverb vs. adjective confusion.

'Quiet' is an adjective; it cannot modify the verb 'spoke'. The adverb 'quietly' is required to modify the verb.

Corrected: He spoke so quietly that nobody in the back row could hear him.

Ans Q15:

Error type: Dangling modifier.

'Having been denied admission' implies the person who was denied. However, the main clause's subject is 'the university's appeal process', which was not denied admission. The human subject needs to appear in the main clause.

Corrected: Having been denied admission, he saw the university's appeal process as his only option.

Category 2 — Fill in the Right Word: Answers (Q16–Q30)

Ans Q16:

Correct answer: (a) The harder.

This is a correlative comparative structure: 'The harder... the better...'. Both parts require the definite article 'the' followed by a comparative adjective. (b) 'more hard' is non-standard (harder is the correct comparative). (c) 'Harder' alone omits the required article. (d) 'More harder' is a double comparative — incorrect.

Ans Q17:

Correct answer: (b) have.

In 'one of the few [plural noun] who', the relative clause 'who...' refers back to the plural noun 'politicians', not to 'one'. Therefore, the verb is plural: 'have'. (a) 'has' incorrectly treats the antecedent as 'one'. (c) 'had' introduces an unnecessary past tense shift. (d) 'having' creates a dangling participial structure.

Ans Q18:

Correct answer: (c) be.

After verbs of recommendation, suggestion, or necessity (recommend, suggest, insist, demand, require), the subjunctive mood requires the base form of the verb: 'be', not 'is', 'was', or 'were'. This is the mandative subjunctive. (a) 'is' and (b) 'was' are indicative. (d) 'were' is the past subjunctive, used in hypothetical conditions, not mandative clauses.

Ans Q19:

Correct answer: (b) chairing.

After prepositions ('on'), the gerund (-ing form) must be used, not the infinitive. 'Insisted on' requires 'chairing'. (a) 'to chair' is an infinitive — wrong after a preposition. (c) 'chair' is the bare infinitive — also wrong here. (d) 'to chairing' is grammatically impossible.

Ans Q20:

Correct answer: (c) when.

'Scarcely...when' is the fixed correlative pair, just as 'hardly...when' and 'no sooner...than'. (a) 'than' is used with 'no sooner', not 'scarcely'. (b) 'then' is an adverb of sequence, not a subordinating conjunction. (d) 'that' does not collocate with 'scarcely' in this structure.

Ans Q21:

Correct answer: (b) has been.

'Data' is treated as a singular uncountable noun in formal written English when it refers to a body of information (as opposed to individual data points). The verb must be singular: 'has been'. (a) 'were' and (c) 'have been' are plural. (d) 'was' would also be singular but the sentence describes a completed-to-present process, making the present perfect 'has been' most precise.

Ans Q22:

Correct answer: (b) she.

After the linking verb 'was' in an it-cleft sentence ('It was ___ who...'), the complement must be in the subjective case: 'she'. (a) 'her' is objective. (c) 'hers' is a possessive pronoun. (d) 'herself' is reflexive/emphatic — incorrect here.

Ans Q23:

Correct answer: (a) more fluently.

Since the comparison involves two parties ('any other student'), the comparative form is required, not the superlative. 'Fluently' is an adverb and takes 'more' in its comparative form. (b) 'most fluently' is a superlative — incorrect in a two-item comparison. (c) 'more fluent' uses the adjective form to modify 'speaks' — wrong. (d) 'fluentier' is not a valid English word.

Ans Q24:

Correct answer: (a) Because of.

'Because of' is a prepositional phrase followed by a noun phrase ('the heavy snowfall'). (b) 'Because' is a conjunction and must be followed by a full clause (subject + verb). (c) 'Due to that' is non-standard. (d) 'Owing that' is grammatically incorrect; the correct form would be 'owing to' + noun phrase.

Ans Q25:

Correct answer: (b) was.

'News' is an uncountable singular noun despite its plural-seeming form. It always takes a singular verb. (a) 'were' and (c) 'are' are plural. (d) 'have been' is plural and also shifts unnecessarily to the present perfect.

Ans Q26:

Correct answer: (c) is.

'Neither of the solutions' — 'neither' as a pronoun is grammatically singular. Even with a prepositional phrase following it, the verb remains singular. (a) 'are' and (b) 'were' are plural. (d) 'have been' is plural.

Ans Q27:

Correct answer: (c) whose.

The blank precedes a noun ('research') and indicates possession. 'Whose' is the possessive relative pronoun for both persons and things. (a) 'who' is subjective. (b) 'whom' is objective. (d) 'that' cannot express possession.

Ans Q28:

Correct answer: (c) hiking / studying.

After 'spent his holiday', gerunds are required. Both activities must be in parallel gerund form: 'hiking' and 'studying'. (a) and (b) mix gerund and infinitive forms — parallel structure violation. (d) uses bare infinitives — incorrect after 'spent time'.

Ans Q29:

Correct answer: (b) follow.

After 'It is essential that', the mandative subjunctive requires the base form of the verb: 'follow', regardless of the subject. (a) 'follows' is the indicative third-person singular. (c) 'followed' is past tense indicative. (d) 'is following' is a continuous form — all are incorrect in subjunctive contexts.

Ans Q30:

Correct answer: (c) to silence.

After 'asked [object]', the infinitive is required: 'asked us to silence'. (a) 'that we silence' is also grammatically possible but the more natural and preferred form is the to-infinitive. Among the given options, (c) is the clearest and most standard. (b) 'silencing' (gerund) cannot follow 'asked us'. (d) 'silence' (bare infinitive) is incorrect after 'asked'.

Category 3 — Choose the Correct Sentence: Answers (Q31–Q45)

Ans Q31:

Correct answer: (b) Running for the bus, he lost his hat.

(a) 'his hat blew off' — the hat cannot run for a bus; dangling modifier. (b) 'he' correctly identifies the person running — no dangling modifier. (c) 'the hat of his blew off' — both the dangling modifier error and an

unnatural possessive construction. (d) 'his hat blew off while running for the bus' — 'running' still has no explicit subject and is ambiguous.

Ans Q32:

Correct answer: (c) She is wiser than I in this matter.

In formal English, the pronoun after 'than' in a comparison is in the subjective case when it is the subject of an elliptical clause: 'than I [am]'. (a) 'than me' is widely used informally but 'than I' is formally correct. (b) 'more wiser' is a double comparative — incorrect. (d) 'the wiser' introduces a definite article incorrectly into a simple comparison.

Ans Q33:

Correct answer: (b) The reason for his failure is that he did not prepare.

(a) 'The reason is because' is redundant; 'because' already means 'for the reason that'. The correct construction is 'the reason is that'. (b) Uses 'that' correctly. (c) 'is because of not preparing' is non-standard. (d) 'The reason that...is because' combines both errors.

Ans Q34:

Correct answer: (c) No sooner had the match begun than the rain started.

'No sooner...than' is the fixed correlative pair. Inversion after 'No sooner' is mandatory: the auxiliary 'had' must precede the subject. (a) and (b) use 'when' and 'then' respectively — incorrect collocations with 'no sooner'. (d) lacks inversion: 'No sooner the match began' is wrong.

Ans Q35:

Correct answer: (b) The manager told the staff that the meeting would be postponed.

In reported speech, when the reporting verb is past ('told'), the reported verb must also shift to past tense: 'would be', not 'will be'. (a) 'will be' violates sequence of tenses. (c) omits 'that' — acceptable informally but (b)

is the more complete and precise construction. (d) 'told to the staff' — 'tell' does not take 'to' before an indirect object.

Ans Q36:

Correct answer: (c) Not only is he the best candidate, but he is also highly qualified.

(a) 'additionally being' introduces a dangling participial construction. (b) is grammatically correct but does not use 'not only...but also' — which (c) does, with correct inversion after 'not only'. (d) 'having high qualifications' breaks parallel structure with 'is the best candidate'; the 'but also' element must parallel the 'not only' element in form.

Ans Q37:

Correct answer: (b) Each of the boys must carry his own luggage.

'Each' is a singular pronoun and requires a singular verb and singular pronoun reference. In formal grammar, the singular generic is 'his'. (a) 'their' is plural — incorrect in formal agreement with 'each'. (c) 'its' refers to non-persons — incorrect for boys. (d) 'must carrying' is not a valid verb form.

Ans Q38:

Correct answer: (a) Whoever comes first will get the prize.

'Whoever' acts as the subject of the clause 'Whoever comes first', so the subjective form is correct. (b) 'Whomever' is objective — incorrect when the pronoun is the clause's subject. (c) 'Whoever that comes' adds a redundant 'that'. (d) 'Who comes first' is also subjective but less standard as the subject of a noun clause; 'whoever' is the preferred indefinite relative pronoun.

Ans Q39:

Correct answer: (c) I prefer to work alone rather than to work in a group.

'Prefer to do X rather than to do Y' — both elements must be parallel. (c) correctly pairs two infinitives. (a) mixes 'to work' with 'working' — parallel structure violation. (b) mixes 'working' with 'work' — also not parallel in formal usage. (d) 'instead to work' is grammatically impossible.

Ans Q40:

Correct answer: (b) Despite the poor weather, the festival continued.

'Despite' is a preposition and must be directly followed by a noun phrase — never by 'of'. (a) 'Despite of' is always incorrect. (c) 'Despite of that' is doubly wrong. (d) 'In spite' alone is incomplete; the correct form is 'In spite of'.

Ans Q41:

Correct answer: (b) Neither the CEO nor the board members were present.

With 'neither...nor', the verb agrees with the nearer subject. The nearer subject is 'the board members' (plural), so 'were' is correct. (a) 'was' incorrectly agrees with the farther singular subject. (c) 'has been' is singular. (d) 'neither...or' is grammatically incorrect; the correct correlative is 'neither...nor'.

Ans Q42:

Correct answer: (b) The article that was published last week caused a controversy.

This is a restrictive relative clause (identifying which article), so 'that' is used with no commas. (a) 'The article, that...' — 'that' cannot introduce a non-restrictive clause set off by commas. (c) 'which' in a restrictive clause (no commas) is acceptable in British English but (b) is the formally preferred standard. (d) 'The article, which was published last week caused' — the second comma is missing, creating a structural error.

Ans Q43:

Correct answer: (b) Having submitted the report, she was pleased by the director's praise.

(a) 'the praise...pleased her' — the participial phrase's implied subject should be the human who submitted; 'the praise' did not submit the report. (b) 'she' correctly matches the implied subject of 'Having submitted'. (c)

'the director praised her, having submitted the report' — implies the director submitted the report. (d) Ambiguous — 'having submitted' appears to modify 'the director'.

Ans Q44:

Correct answer: (b) The number of errors in the document is unacceptable.

'The number of' takes a singular verb because the head noun is 'number', which is singular. 'A number of' takes a plural verb because it functions as a quantifier meaning 'several'. (a) 'are' is plural — incorrect with 'The number'. (c) 'A number of errors is' — incorrect; 'a number of' should take 'are'. (d) 'have been' is plural — incorrect.

Ans Q45:

Correct answer: (b) Scarcely had she finished speaking when the objections began.

After 'scarcely' at the start of a clause, subject-auxiliary inversion is mandatory. The correct correlative is 'scarcely...when'. (a) 'Scarcely she had finished' — missing inversion. (c) 'than' is used with 'no sooner', not 'scarcely'. (d) 'Scarcely she finished' — no inversion; wrong tense usage.

Category 4 — Analyse, Rewrite & Explain: Answers (Q46–Q60)

Ans Q46:

Sentence: 'Although the board rejected the proposal that she had submitted, she believed that persistence would eventually bring success.'

Clause Analysis:

1. 'she believed that persistence would eventually bring success' — INDEPENDENT CLAUSE (main clause).
Subject: she; Verb: believed.
2. 'Although the board rejected the proposal that she had submitted' — DEPENDENT ADVERB CLAUSE introduced by 'Although'. It modifies the main verb 'believed' and cannot stand alone.
3. 'that she had submitted' — DEPENDENT ADJECTIVE (RELATIVE) CLAUSE. It modifies the noun 'proposal'. Relative pronoun 'that' acts as the object of 'submitted'.

4. 'that persistence would eventually bring success' — DEPENDENT NOUN CLAUSE. It functions as the object of 'believed'. Introduced by 'that'.

Total: 1 independent clause + 3 dependent clauses = COMPLEX sentence.

Ans Q47:

Original: 'Running the project single-handedly, the deadline were met despite of numerous setbacks.'

Error 1 — Dangling modifier: 'Running the project single-handedly' implies a human runner. However, the main clause's subject is 'the deadline', which cannot run a project. The modifier dangles.

Error 2 — Incorrect preposition: 'despite of' is always incorrect. 'Despite' is a preposition and must NOT be followed by 'of'. The correct form is 'despite' + noun phrase OR 'in spite of' + noun phrase.

Corrected: Running the project single-handedly, she met the deadline despite numerous setbacks.

Ans Q48:

Sentence: 'The police were told to stop drinking in the park.'

Source of ambiguity: The modifier 'drinking in the park' can attach to two different elements, creating two distinct meanings.

Reading 1: The police were told to stop [people who were] drinking in the park. [The police's job was to prevent public drinking.]

Reading 2: The police themselves were told to stop drinking in the park. [The police were the ones drinking.]

Unambiguous rewrite for Reading 1: The police were told to stop people from drinking in the park.

Unambiguous rewrite for Reading 2: The police officers were told that they must stop drinking in the park.

Ans Q49:

Original paragraph:

'He arrived late. Because the traffic was terrible. He apologised to everyone, the meeting had already started. Being a professional, punctuality should always be maintained. He vowed to never again be late, or arriving unprepared.'

Error 1 (Sentence 2): 'Because the traffic was terrible.' — FRAGMENT. A subordinate clause punctuated as a full sentence.

Error 2 (Sentence 3): 'He apologised to everyone, the meeting had already started.' — COMMA SPLICE. Two independent clauses joined by only a comma.

Error 3 (Sentence 4): 'Being a professional, punctuality should always be maintained.' — DANGLING MODIFIER. 'Being a professional' implies a person; the main subject is 'punctuality', which is not a professional.

Error 4 (Sentence 4): PASSIVE VOICE creating structural awkwardness — contributes to the dangling modifier.

Error 5 (Sentence 5): 'to never again be late, or arriving unprepared' — PARALLEL STRUCTURE VIOLATION. 'to be late' (infinitive) is not parallel with 'arriving' (gerund).

Corrected paragraph: He arrived late because the traffic was terrible. He apologised to everyone; however, the meeting had already started. Being a professional, he knew that punctuality should always be maintained. He vowed never to be late or to arrive unprepared again.

Ans Q50:

Original: 'Her hobbies include painting watercolours, to play chess online, and she enjoys long-distance cycling.'

Violation: The sentence mixes a gerund phrase ('painting watercolours'), an infinitive phrase ('to play chess online'), and a full clause ('she enjoys long-distance cycling'). All three joined elements must be in the same grammatical form.

All gerunds: Her hobbies include painting watercolours, playing chess online, and cycling long distances.

All infinitives: Her hobbies include painting watercolours — Note: After 'include', gerunds are strongly preferred in natural English, but the exercise demands structural parallel forms: Her hobbies are to paint watercolours, to play chess online, and to cycle long distances.

All noun phrases: Her hobbies are watercolour painting, online chess, and long-distance cycling.

Ans Q51:

Original: 'The bridge, that connects the two neighbourhoods which had been built in the 1920s was declared unsafe.'

Error 1 — Relative clause word choice: The clause 'that connects the two neighbourhoods' is set off by a comma, making it non-restrictive. 'That' cannot introduce a non-restrictive clause. 'Which' must be used.

Error 2 — Punctuation: The non-restrictive clause 'which connects the two neighbourhoods' requires commas on BOTH sides. The sentence opens with a comma before the clause but closes without one before 'which had been built'.

Additionally, the second relative clause 'which had been built in the 1920s' should clearly attach to 'the bridge', not 'the neighbourhoods'. Restructuring improves clarity.

Corrected: The bridge, which connects the two neighbourhoods and which had been built in the 1920s, was declared unsafe.

Ans Q52:

Sentence A: 'The teachers who came late were fined.'

Sentence B: 'The teachers, who came late, were fined.'

Structural feature creating the difference: The presence or absence of commas around the relative clause signals whether it is RESTRICTIVE or NON-RESTRICTIVE.

Sentence A — Restrictive relative clause (no commas): 'who came late' is essential to identify which teachers. It implies that only some teachers came late — only those were fined. The other teachers (who were on time) were not fined.

Sentence B — Non-restrictive relative clause (commas): 'who came late' is additional, non-essential information about ALL the teachers. It implies that all the teachers came late and all were fined. The clause merely adds a fact about all of them.

In short: A restricts the group; B describes the entire group.

Ans Q53:

Original: 'She nearly spent three hours correcting and to improve the report before submitting it.'

Error 1 — Misplaced modifier: 'nearly' is placed before 'spent', suggesting she almost spent time (but didn't). The intended meaning is that she spent close to three hours. 'Nearly' should modify 'three hours', not 'spent'.

Error 2 — Parallel structure violation: 'correcting and to improve' mixes a gerund ('correcting') with an infinitive ('to improve'). Both must be in the same form.

Corrected: She spent nearly three hours correcting and improving the report before submitting it.

Ans Q54:

Original sentences: (1) The scientist made a discovery. (2) The discovery was groundbreaking. (3) She had been researching for a decade. (4) Her colleagues were sceptical at first.

Combined compound-complex sentence: Although her colleagues were initially sceptical, the scientist who had been researching for a decade made a groundbreaking discovery that changed everything.

Clause identification in the combined sentence:

1. 'the scientist...made a groundbreaking discovery' — INDEPENDENT CLAUSE (main clause).
2. 'Although her colleagues were initially sceptical' — DEPENDENT ADVERB CLAUSE (subordinating conjunction: Although).
3. 'who had been researching for a decade' — DEPENDENT ADJECTIVE CLAUSE (modifies 'the scientist').

Structure: 2 independent clauses are not strictly required for compound-complex — one main clause with multiple subordinate clauses suffices if we add: ...the scientist, who had been researching for a decade, made a groundbreaking discovery, and her colleagues, who had been sceptical at first, were ultimately convinced. This version has 2 independent clauses + 2 dependent clauses = compound-complex.

Ans Q55:

Sentence: 'I saw the man with the telescope.'

This sentence is a classic example of a PREPOSITIONAL PHRASE ATTACHMENT AMBIGUITY. The phrase 'with the telescope' can logically attach to two different elements:

Reading 1: 'I [using the telescope] saw the man.' — 'with the telescope' modifies the verb 'saw'; the telescope was the instrument of seeing.

Reading 2: 'I saw the man [who had the telescope].' — 'with the telescope' modifies the noun phrase 'the man'; the man was carrying a telescope.

Grammatically dominant reading: Reading 2 is typically dominant in natural speech because modifiers tend to attach to the nearest preceding noun phrase ('the man'). This is called the principle of minimal attachment / late closure in psycholinguistics.

Disambiguated for Reading 1: Using the telescope, I saw the man. OR: I saw the man through the telescope.

Disambiguated for Reading 2: I saw the man who had the telescope. OR: I saw the man carrying the telescope.

Ans Q56:

Original: 'Despite his efforts, the project failed, and the team was disappointed.'

SIMPLE: Despite all his efforts, the project failed, leaving the team disappointed. [One independent clause with a participial phrase]

COMPOUND: The project failed despite his efforts, and the team was deeply disappointed. [Two independent clauses joined by 'and']

COMPLEX: Although he made every effort, the project still failed. [One independent clause + one dependent adverb clause — the team's disappointment is incorporated as implication or can be added as a modifier]

COMPOUND-COMPLEX: Although he made every effort, the project failed, and the team was left deeply disappointed. [Dependent adverb clause + two independent clauses]

Ans Q57:

Sentence: 'Not until she resigned did people realise how valuable she was to the organisation.'

The inversion is CORRECT. Here is the rule: When a sentence begins with a negative or restrictive adverbial expression such as 'not until', 'not only', 'never', 'hardly', 'seldom', 'scarcely', or 'only when', subject-auxiliary inversion is required in the main clause.

Structure breakdown: 'Not until she resigned' — negative adverbial phrase (contains a subordinate clause 'she resigned'). 'did people realise' — inverted main clause: auxiliary 'did' precedes subject 'people'. 'how valuable she was to the organisation' — noun clause, object of 'realise'.

The inversion applies to the MAIN clause, not to the subordinate clause embedded within 'not until she resigned' — and that is handled correctly here. No correction is needed. This is a grammatically exemplary sentence.

Ans Q58:

Original: 'The board approved the merger, which surprised many investors, which had been opposed for months.'

Structural issue: The second 'which' clause ('which had been opposed for months') has an unclear antecedent. It could refer to: (1) the merger — which was opposed for months, or (2) the board's decision to approve — which surprised investors for months. The stacked 'which' clauses create a vague, confusing reference.

Additionally, two successive 'which' non-restrictive clauses create a structurally cluttered sentence that is difficult to parse.

Rewritten (if 'which had been opposed' refers to the merger): The board approved the merger — which had been opposed for months — a decision that surprised many investors.

Rewritten (if 'which surprised' refers to the approval of a long-opposed merger): Although the merger had been opposed for months, the board's decision to approve it surprised many investors.

Ans Q59:

Original: 'The findings of the decade-long research conducted by teams across three continents suggests that the theory is flawed.'

Hidden agreement error: The verb 'suggests' is singular. The true grammatical subject is 'The findings' — PLURAL. The long intervening prepositional phrase ('of the decade-long research conducted by teams across three continents') distracted attention from the plural head noun.

'Research' in the prepositional phrase 'of the research' is NOT the subject — it is the object of the preposition 'of'. The subject is always the noun that performs or is described by the main verb.

Rule violated: Rule 11 — the verb must agree with the grammatical subject, not with a noun in an intervening phrase.

Corrected: The findings of the decade-long research conducted by teams across three continents suggest that the theory is flawed.

Ans Q60:

The two sentences: (A) 'Who did you speak to at the conference?' vs. (B) 'To whom did you speak at the conference?'

Framework 1 — Prescriptive Traditional Grammar: (B) is the strictly correct form. 'Whom' is the objective case pronoun, and since it functions as the object of the preposition 'to', the objective case is required. Additionally, ending a sentence with a preposition ('speak to') is traditionally discouraged — the preposition should precede 'whom'. Under this framework, (A) is incorrect on two counts: wrong pronoun case and a stranded preposition.

Framework 2 — Descriptive / Usage-Based Modern Grammar: (A) is natural, fluent, and entirely acceptable. Modern linguists (following Fowler, Quirk, and Huddleston) accept stranded prepositions as a long-established feature of English — even Shakespeare used them. 'Who' in informal usage functions acceptably as an object when the sentence structure makes the meaning unambiguous. Under this framework, insisting on (B) in all contexts is unnecessarily formal and artificial.

Preferred answer for formal writing and standardised tests: (B) 'To whom did you speak at the conference?' is the formally superior choice because it uses the correct objective pronoun 'whom', front-positions the preposition for formal register, and applies inversion correctly. However, (A) is entirely grammatical in conversational and informal contexts and should not be labelled 'wrong' in a descriptive sense.
