

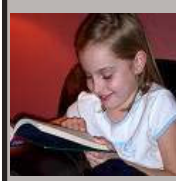
# ENGLISH MANUAL



## CHAPTER 17

### WORDS COMMONLY MISUED





## WORDS COMMONLY MISUED

A few typical errors which are often met with in the writings of students and others are dealt with below. Study them carefully and avoid them in your writings. This list can be by no means either complete or exhaustive.

### 1. A or An:

(a) A European or **an** European?

A European is correct. The rule is that **an** is used before words beginning with a vowel sound. Though **E** in **European** is a vowel, its sound is that of 'you', where "y" is a consonant.

(b) A one-eyed man or **an** one-eyed man?

A one-eyed man is correct. Here, one is pronounced like 'vone', therefore use 'an' to words starting with 'one'.

(c) A honour or **an** honour?

**An** honour is correct. **H** in **honour** is silent and the first sound is therefore a vowel-sound.

### 2. And etc.:

He packed the nails, screws, washers **and etc.**, in the same box.

**And etc.** is wrong; the contracted form of **etc.** is **et cetera** which means and **other things**. Since **and** is included in it, it is wrong to use 'and' before it. The sentences should be:- He packed the nails, screws, washers, **etc.** in the same box.

It is better to avoid "etc." wherever possible. We may say: "He packed the nails, screws, washers and the like in the same box."

3. **As or like:**

He acts **like** he says.

The use of **like** here is wrong. **Like** is only a preposition and cannot be used as a conjunction. Here **like** is used as a conjunction, which is incorrect. The sentence should be: He acts **as** he says.

4. **As good as:**

The transaction is **as good as** settled.

The phrase **as good as** is used for comparing the goodness of two **things** or **sets of things**. In the above example, it is used to mean **practically** and its use here is, therefore incorrect. The correct form will be: The transaction is practically settled.

5. **As follows or as follows:**

The names, addresses and qualifications of the directors are **as follows**:

**As follows** is the correct expression. It has an impersonal subject understood and is therefore invariable in number.

6. **As to:**

(a) **As to** what course he will pursue is known only to himself.

Here, **as to** is unnecessary. The rule is not to use **as to** to introduce words which could stand without it. The correct form will be: What course he will pursue is known only to himself.

It is quite correct to say: Any question **as to** his sanity should not be allowed to influence our view.

(b) We do not know his view **as to** this affair.

Here **as to** has been used as a substitute for the preposition **of**, which is wrong. The sentence should be: We do not know his view of the affair.

(c) The committee met to decide **as to** whether it was necessary to take evidence on the different aspects of the proposal.

**As to** is not at all necessary before **whether**, and so should be dropped from the sentence.

7. **Ask a question to:**

The teacher **asked a question** to Rama.

The correct form: The teacher **asked** Rama a **question**.

8. **Badly or very much:**

We will be missing you **badly**.

Here, **badly** is used to mean **very much**. This use is incorrect. The sentence should be: We will be missing you **very much**.

9. **Blame it on:**

Don't **blame it on** him; he was not here then.

**Blame on** is not good usage. You **blame** a person **for** a thing. So the sentence should be: Don't **blame** him for it; he was not here then.

10. **Character:**

These transactions are of a **shady character**.

The use of **character** in this way is uncouth and unnecessary. The sentence may be written as: These transactions are shady.

**11. Choice:**

We have a **choice** of exercising our franchise today.

The use of the word **choice** in such sentences is wrong. **Choice** is used to indicate **choice** of a thing out of several, **choice** between two or more things, or **choice** between one thing and another. In the given sentence, there is no need for a choice. What is meant by **choice** is **opportunity**. The sentence should therefore be: We have an opportunity of exercising our franchise today.

**12. Costed:**

This pen **costed** fifteen rupees.

This error is very common. The past tense of **cost** is **cost** and **not costed**. The correct form is: This pen **cost** fifteen rupees.

**13. Cut jokes:**

You must not **cut jokes** in the class.

**Cut jokes** is not an accepted idiom. You can say, therefore, you cannot **crack jokes** or **cannot joke** in the class.

**14. Couple or two:**

I want a **couple** of rupees.

This use of couple is faulty. **Couple** is used of two things, linked or united. You can say, a married couple or a couple of links. The correct form of the sentence will be: I want **two** rupees.

**15. Cousin brother:**

My **cousin brother** will be coming to Madras tomorrow.

The word **cousin** means the son or daughter of an uncle or aunt. It denotes both sexes. So the correct form of the sentence will be: My **cousin** will be coming to Madras tomorrow.

16. **Deceased:**

(a) The hunters picked up the **deceased** creatures.

In this sentence, the use of **deceased** is wrong because it is used only of persons and not of animals.

(b) All of a sudden my father **deceased** yesterday.

This use of **deceased** also is wrong. **Deceased** is not used as a verb. Say **died** instead of **deceased**.

17. **Dispose of of dispose off:**

My friend **disposed off** all his property in his village.

The correct phrase is **dispose of** which means sell away. **Off** is wrongly used here. This is a very common mistake which should be carefully avoided.

18. **Dozen and dozens:**

(a) I have **seven dozens eggs** in the basket.

The correct expression is: I have **seven dozen eggs** in the basket. If a number precedes the word, use only **dozen**.

(b) There are **many dozens** pens in the box.

The correct form is: There are **many dozens of** pens in the box. The use of **dozen** after **many** is right; this too should be followed by **of**.

19. **Due to or owing to:**

**Due to** the inclement weather, the match is postponed.

The correct form is: **Owing to** inclement weather the match is postponed. **Due to** is not a compound preposition. So, its use in the sentence cited above is wrong. A safe rule will be to **use due to** only after forms of the verb 'to be', where it will

**WHY LEARN  
ENGLISH?**

**Watch Hollywood  
films in the  
original.  
Once you try it,  
you'll never go  
back to dubbed  
versions!**

be correctly used as a **predicative adjective**. e.g.: The postponement of the match was **due to** the inclement weather.

**Note:** Don't begin a sentence with **Due to**.

#### 20. Flown:

All the surplus water has **flown** over the dams.

The use of **flown** is incorrect. It is not the past participle of **flow**. The past participle of **flow** is **flowed**. So, the sentence should be: All the surplus water has **flowed** over the dams.

#### 21. Hardly:

(a) He works very **hardly**.

The use of the word, **hardly**, is wrong here. It is used wrongly for **hard**. **Hardly** means **with difficulty** or **barely**. We use the word **hardly** to indicate that he rarely works. The correct form will be: He works **very hard**.

(b) The campers had **hardly** food enough for two days.

**Hardly** is generally used to imply that a thing is done with difficulty. It is not used to indicate quantitative ideas. In that sense we use the word **scarcely**. So, the correct form will be: The campers had **scarcely** food enough for two days.

#### 22. Help:

Don't cough more than you **can help**.

The word, **help**, is used with **cannot** or **could not** when it is used idiomatically to denote **necessity**. The correct form of the sentence will be: Don't cough more than you **cannot help**, which sounds strange and illogical. To get over this difficulty the sentence may be written as: "Don't cough more than you must."

23. **Home:**

- (a) My mother is **in the home**.

The word **home** is preceded by the preposition, **at**. The sentence should be: My mother is **at home**.

- (b) The children are going to home.

Here the word **home** can be used by itself and the preposition to is unnecessary. The sentence should be: The children are **going home**.

24. **Ill:**

- (a) My grandfather is an **ill** old man.

The word, **ill**, in the meaning of 'sick or ailing' is used as predicative adjective and not before the noun it qualifies.

The sentence should be: My grandfather is an old man who is **ill**, or My grandfather is an **ailing** old man.

25. **Individual:**

There was quite a large number of people at the function but most of them were quite ordinary **individuals**.

The word, **individual**, is to be used when it is necessary to distinguish the particular from the general. So, the word should not be used in the general sense but should be used only in the distinctive sense. The word **individuals** in the sentence cited is used only in the general sense. It must be replaced by the word **persons**. The following is an illustration of the correct use of the word: The merit of the scheme is such that the benefits thereof accrue to the whole group and as such to each **individual** in it.



**26. Infringe:**

The recent enactments of the legislature tend to **infringe upon** the privilege of the citizens unnecessarily.

**Infringe** is a transitive verb and does not need **on** or **upon** to complete its function. The use of **on** or **upon** makes the word intransitive. So, the sentence would be correct if the preposition **upon** is omitted.

**27. In the light of:**

**In the light of** their needs, the Government has decided to increase their emoluments.

The phrase, **in the light of**, is used to imply that what follows is the result of information gained. It does not mean 'in consideration of' or 'with regard to'. In the sentence cited, it is used in the latter sense. The phrase should be replaced by 'In view of'.

**28. Limited:**

In the **limited** time at his disposal, he was able to do a lot.

**Limited** means **confined within limits** and is not synonymous with short or little. So, the sentence should be: In the **short** time at his disposal he was able to do a lot.

**29. Nearby:**

The bookshop and the printing press are **nearby**.

**Nearby** is not an adverb. **Near** is enough.

30. **Need:**

There is no **need** for being sorrowful at his failure.

The preposition **for** followed by a noun is used after **need**. The sentence should be: There is no **need** for sorrow at his failure, or There is no **need** to be sorrowful at his failure.

31. **Never I have seen:**

**Never I have seen** such a grand picture before.

When the word **never** is used at the beginning of a sentence, the verb is put before the subject. The sentence should be: **Never have I seen** such a grand picture before.

32. **No any:**

I have **no any** money with me now.

**No any** is not the opposite of **any**. Say, I have **no** money with me now.

33. **Not only.... but also:**

He **not only** talked to the manager **but also** to the managing director.

**'Not only'** and **'but also'** are correlatives and so, each must be followed by the same kind of words or phrases. So the sentence must be cast thus: He talked **not only** to the manager **but also** to the managing director.

The following sentence is also faulty.

The firm began **not only** full-scale advertisement of its manufactures, **but** personal canvassing **was also** started.



***Done or finished?***

**“Today both done and finished are standard, and you may use whichever one meets the style requirements of your speech or writing”.**

**34. Nothing like:**

My little daughter is **nothing like** so active as she was.

This use of **nothing like** is wrong because it is used to mean **not nearly**. The sentence may be corrected by substituting **not nearly** for **nothing like**.

**35. Nothing more to pen:**

I have **nothing more to pen**.

Avoid the use of the word **pen** and replace it by **write**.

**36. nth degree:**

The performance was grand to the **nth degree**.

The use of the phrase, **nth degree**, is wrong. **nth degree** is used to indicate an unspecified or indefinite number and does not mean **to the highest** or **greatest extent**. It is better to avoid such usage. In its appropriate sense the phrase is used in the following sentence. You have to carry out these calculations to the **nth degree**.

**37. O, Oh:**

(a) **O**, dear, what has happened to you?

(b) **Oh** yes! You are quite correct.

(a) **O** is used before a noun in the vocative case or as part of a longer exclamation or with the word **for** in expressing a wish. But it is never followed by a mark of punctuation. The sentence should be: O dear, what has happened to you?

(b) **Oh** is used independently and is always followed by a comma or an exclamation mark. The sentence should be: Oh, yes! You are quite correct.

38. **Other:**

He had no **other** choice but to accept defeat.

The word **other** has the comparative sense and takes **than** after it and not **but**. The sentence should therefore be: He had no other choice **than** to accept defeat.

39. **Otherwise:**

Please check the correctness or **otherwise** of the accounts.

**Otherwise** is an adverb and it cannot be joined to a noun (here, correctness) by the conjunction **or**. In cases like the one in this sentence, the phrase **or otherwise** is superfluous and may be safely omitted without any loss of meaning.

40. **Overflown:**

The flood water has **overflown** the fields on either side of the river.

**Overflown** is on the analogy of **flown**. There is no verb, **overfly** of which it could be the past participle. The verb is **overflow**: its past participle is **overflowed**. The correct form of the sentence will be: The flood-water has **overflowed** the fields on either side of the river.

41. **Pass away the time:**

He is walking in the park to **pass away the time**.

**To pass away** does not mean **spend**; the phrase means, to **die**. So, its use is obviously wrong. The sentence should read: He is walking in the park to pass (or spend) the time.

42. **In possession of**

The stolen article was found **in possession of** the thief.

As it is, the sentence means that the possessor of the thief is the stolen article. **In possession of** is the active form, while the passive form is **in the possession of**.

The sentence should be: The stolen article was found **in the possession** of the thief. The following sentence where, '**in possession of**' is in the active, is correct: The thief is found **in possession of** the stolen article.

43. **Prefer:**

- (a) She **prefers** singing **than** dancing.

**Prefer** should be followed by **to** and not by **than**. The correct form of the sentence is: She **prefers** singing **to** dancing.

- (b) She **prefers** to sing than to dance.

The infinite **to dance** complicates the case. We cannot say "she prefers to sing to dance". In such cases, the uncouth construction is avoided by a change in the form of the sentence, as: She **prefers** to sing; she does not care to dance. We may also say, 'She **prefers** singing to dancing'.

44. **More preferable:**

Which of these two pens is **more preferable**?

**Preferable** is from **prefer** which means like **better**.

The comparative degree is implied in it. So, **more** should not be used with it.

The sentence should be: Which of these two pens is **preferable**?

45. **Protagonist:**

He is a **protagonist** of industrial reform.

**Protagonist** means the **chief** or **most conspicuous** personage in any affair and does not mean an **advocate** of a cause. Here, the word is used to mean **advocate**, which is wrong. The word a **protagonist** is to be replaced by **an advocate**.

46. **Keeping quiet:**

My nephew has not yet secured an employment; he is **keeping quiet** at home.

**Quiet** means noiseless. **Keeping quiet** means he is not making any noise. The phrase does not mean he is **unemployed**, though it is used in that sense in the sentence. It is better to avoid the use of such phrases.

47. **The same:**

(a) We have sent the things ordered for by you. We hope you will find the **same** satisfactory.

**The same** is used here as substitute for the pronoun **them**. Such use is considered incorrect and careful writers avoid it. Substitute **them** for **the same**.

(b) We are well here and hope to hear **the same** from you.

Here the phrase, **the same** stands for the clause, "We are well here". The sentence means that you want the addressee to write to you that you are well, though the intention is that you expect to hear from the addressee that his (the addressee's) people are well. Such constructions are to be avoided altogether.

48. **Search:**

He has lost a rupee and is **searching** it.

You search a person or a place but you search **for** a thing. The correct form will be: He has lost a rupee and is **searching for** it. But if a person or place is used, **for** is not necessary. **e.g.:** The policeman **searched** the thief. The detective **searched** the place thoroughly for any traces of the crime.

**Can I or may I?**

**Can** implies ability:

**'Can you (are you able to) lift that heavy box?'**

**May** denotes

**permission: 'May I (Have I permission to) swim in your pool?'**

49. **Since:**

I am here **since** the past five months.

(a) A definite point of time in the past should be used after **since** like **July last**, or **the 20th of last month**. A period of time like **five months** should not be used. '**For**' is the word that is to be used here. The correct form of the sentence is: I am here for the past five months.

(b) In verbs used with **since**, the auxiliary, **have** or **had**, must find a place.

The sentence will be correct if it is written thus: I have been here **since** last June.

50. **Stimulus, stimulant:**

(a) Coffee is a great **stimulus**.

(b) The **stimulant** of ambition spurred him on.

**Stimulus** is an incentive to action or effort. **Stimulant** is anything that stimulates or excites. These words are not interchangeable. Sentence (a) should be: Coffee is a great **stimulant**; and sentence (b) should be: The **stimulus** of ambition spurred him on.

51. **Such like:**

We detest such actions **like** these.

**Like** is not to be used after **such**. **As** is used, if needed. In the above sentence **like** should be replaced by **as**.

52. **Supposing if:**

**Supposing if** I get a good job in Delhi, I will be settling down there.

**Supposing** does not need **if** to supplement it. The word itself expresses a condition. The sentence will be correct if the word, **if** is used.

53. **Thanks:**

He gave me **much** thanks for my timely help to him.

**Much** is an adjective of quantity and should, therefore, be replaced by **many**.

**Thanks very much** is wrong. **Thanks very many** is correct; but **thank you very much** is better.

54. **Transpire:**

We do not know what **transpired** between them.

**Transpire** means to come to light or become known. It should not be used in the sense of **happen**. The word, **happen**, may be substituted for the word, **transpired**, in the above sentence.

55. **Unique:**

This is, indeed, a **very unique** occasion.

**Unique** means, one of its kind, *without a like or equal*. It is not capable of comparison. As such, it should not be qualified by words like **very**, **most** or **extremely**. The sentence can be made correct by dropping the qualifying word, **very**.

56. **Whatever:**

**Whatever that** you say will be acceptable to us.

**Whatever** itself means **all that**. The addition of **that** after **whatever** is, therefore, unnecessary and wrong. The sentence should read: whatever you say will acceptable to us.





## *Good or Well?*

**Good and well are often misused. According to The Grammar Bible, “good is an adjective. It can only modify nouns and pronouns. Well is an adverb. It can only modify verbs, adjectives, and other adverbs. Too many people use good, the adjective, when they need well, the adverb. I scored good on my spelling test.(incorrect) The new car runs good. (incorrect) In each example, the adjective good modifies a verb, scored and runs, respectively. Only adverbs modify verbs. These situations call for the adverb well.**