

Would you have marked it wrong?

The candidate wrote:

1. Of course this hotel was *fully* unknown to me.
2. "Now, will you come and help, or *not*?"
3. When he asked him what he was *in search of*, the old man replied ...
4. But when I came there, I found it (the hotel) *pulled down* and a cinema theatre *in its place*.
5. He was eager to *excuse himself*.
6. "Excuse me please, sir, *that I distrusted* you.
7. They were anxious, because they knew that a great *part* of them had to die.
8. He must get out of this terrible country *as long as* he had the chance.
9. The necessity for driving this beast out *got imperative*.
10. After these words she ran back blushing *about* her own impulsiveness.
11. We read poetry and heard something of St. Crispin.
12. It (the voice) must belong to the nicest *girl of the world*.

The examiner corrected:

- ... *entirely* ...
- ... *won't you?*"
- ... *searching for* ...
- ... *had been pulled down* ...
- ... *built in* ...
- ... *apologize*.
- ... *for having distrusted* ...
- ... *number* ...
- ... *while* ...
- ... *became* ...
- ... *at* ...
- ... *about* ...
- ... *in* ...

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Would you have marked it wrong? Schlüssel

Vergleiche Seite 60.

1. Of course this hotel was *fully* unknown to me. ... *entirely* ...

'Fully' does sound odd in this context, though I would hesitate to say that it could never be heard there. It means 'to the full', 'completely, i.e. without deficiency'. Consequently it tends to be used with words denoting something positive, e.g. 'I was fully aware ...', 'I fully knew ...', 'fully grown'. A good contrast would be between 'I was fully dressed by three o'clock' and 'I was fully undressed by three o'clock', the latter of course being unacceptable. 'Entirely' or 'completely' are more general terms which do not have such a restriction.

2. "Now, will you come and help, or *not*?" ... *won't you?*"

Both sentences are quite acceptable: the only difference is a stylistic one, the candidate's version being rather more abrupt than the

examiner's. One should note that there is rather more potential for intonational variation on the examiner's sentence – a wider range of attitudinal contrasts can be expressed.

3. When he asked him what he was *in search of*, the old man replied ... *searching for* ...

Both sentences are correct. I can detect no semantic difference between them.

4. But when I came there, I found it (the hotel) *pulled down* and a cinema theatre *in* its place. ... *had been pulled down* ... *built in* ...

Apart from the greater specificity of 'built', there is no difference between these sentences, and both are acceptable. The only point I would make is that if one does use the examiner's version, one must keep a participle before the preposition 'in'. It would be wrong to say ... *had been pulled down* ... *in* ...

5. He was eager to excuse himself. ... apologize.

The candidate's version is an acceptable sentence, but it means something rather different from the examiner's. It could mean either that 'he was eager to get himself out of trouble' or 'he was eager to leave the room, i.e. to go to the toilet'. 'Apologize' means simply 'to express regret'.

6. Excuse me please, sir, that I distrusted you. ... for having distrusted ...

The examiner is correct. 'Excuse', like 'forgive', requires a participial form of the verb preceded by a preposition. ... for distrusting ... would also be possible.

7. They were anxious, because they knew that a great part of them had to die. ... number ...

There are two aspects of the meaning of 'part' which make it inappropriate in this sentence: firstly it has inanimate reference (whereas the implication here is obviously personal - number of people); secondly, its basic sense of 'one constituent of a whole' does not imply that the constituent itself has further constituents (as would also be required for the sense 'number of people').

8. He must get out of this terrible country as long as he had the chance. ... while ...

There are two sources of error here, and the examiner has picked on one. 'As long as' means 'provided that', and is clearly inappropriate in this context. But 'while' needs to be supplemented by a tense change if the examiner's sentence is to be fully acceptable - either of 'had' to 'has', if a dramatic narrative in the present is intended, or of 'must' to 'had to', if the narrative is in the past.

9. The necessity for driving this beast out got imperative. ... became ...

The candidate's sentence is simply the more colloquial of the two. 'Got' is something of a shibboleth among many teachers of English in schools, who take it to be an 'ugly', 'vulgar' word; but in fact it is extremely widely used in educated informal speech.

10. After these words she ran back blushing about her own impulsiveness. ... at ...

The candidate has chosen the wrong preposition here. 'At' is normal, especially when an event is involved, e.g. 'I blushed at the idea'; but when one is referring to one's own emotions, 'with' can be used ('she blushed with shame'), and 'for' is used when one is blushing on account of someone else ('I blushed for her').

11. We read poetry and heard something of St. Crispin. ... about ...

Both sentences are possible, but the first is rather more literary in flavour.

12. It (the voice) must belong to the nicest girl of the world. ... in ...

The candidate has got the idiom wrong: it is 'in the world'. (I doubt whether the candidate is so sophisticated as to have intended 'of', which would be possible as a humorous utterance. 'You're a girl of the world' would mean 'a girl used to the world's ways'; and I can readily conceive of someone saying 'You're the nicest girl of the world I've met this week!' But the mind boggles at the context!)

DAVID CRYSTAL

Would you have marked it wrong?

The candidate wrote:

1. And then *the disaster happened*.
2. He promised them more freedom in the future if they *kept* the peace.
3. When he was *thirty years*, he had made so much money that ...
4. When he was so *old that he could see* what happened about him, he mostly was in his father's factory.
5. Irene Crane was a yellow-haired, beautiful girl, *full of laughter*.
6. Eddie began to read the document, word by word, line by line. *At last* he said ...
7. Read it, please, and when you sign it, your secretary *is going* to witness it.
8. The government was very unpopular and the new Home Secretary was not *much* estimated.
9. One stormy afternoon Philip suggested to go to see the old lady.
10. *Mr Bagley's face* changed as he heard these words.
11. Elizabeth sat knitting in a chair and looked *astonished* at Margaret.
12. And in the following three years the family got accustomed to *its* maid.

The examiner corrected:

... *they met with disaster*.

... *would keep* ...

... *thirty years old* ...

... *old enough to see* ...

... *always laughing*.

... *Finally* ...

... *will* ...

... *highly* ...

... *that they should* ...

The expression on Mr Bagley's face ...

... *in astonishment* ...

... *their* ...

Would you have marked it wrong? Schlüssel

Vergleiche Seite 191.

1. And then *the disaster happened*. ... *they met with disaster*. Both versions are possible. I imagine the reason for the examiner's correction is stylistic: "happen" is semantically a rather 'weak' verb, compared with the vivid meaning of "disaster", and the effect is a little anti-climactic.

2. He promised them more freedom in the future if they *kept* the peace. ... *would keep* ...

It depends on what was actually said. If the original sentence was "I promise you more freedom in the future if you keep the peace", then the normal change in reported speech would be to "... kept ...". But if the original sentence was "... if you will keep the peace", then the conditional form would be normal. Of course, in the if-clause in direct speech, the presence of "will" makes very little difference to the meaning of the sentence. Perhaps because of this, there is a flexibility as to which form is required in the reported speech version also. At any rate, both versions here are possible.

3. When he was *thirty years*, he had made so much money that ...
... *thirty years old* ...

The candidate has made an elementary error. The expression of age in English requires specification of a generic term, e. g. "old", or "of age". (Incidentally, do readers know the analogous, humorous usage, "... thirty years young"?)

4. When he was so *old that he could see* what happened about him, he mostly was in his father's factory. ... *old enough to see* ...
The examiner's version is the appropriate expression of what the candidate was presumably intending to say. As it stands, the candidate's version gives a much more absolute sense to "old" – the implication being that

only very old people are able to see what happens around them. (In passing, a more likely verb form for this sentence would be "... was happening ..."; a more likely preposition would be "around"; and "mostly" should appear after the verb.)

5. Irene Crane was a yellow-haired, beautiful girl *full of laughter*. ... *always laughing*. Both versions are acceptable (and would require a comma after "girl").

6. Eddie began to read the document, word by word, line by line. *At last* he said ...
... *Finally* ...

"At last" has more of a sense of the passing of time, of lengthy duration, before an event is accomplished; whereas "finally" carries more the implication that an event was one of a series. But both are possible.

7. Read it, please, and when you sign it, your secretary *is going to* witness it.
... *will* ...

Both are possible, but the meaning could be different. "Is going to" in this context implies obligation: "your secretary will have no choice but to witness it". "Will" *could* have this meaning, but only if the sentence were said in the appropriate, 'grim' tone of voice (and "will" would usually have a strong stress). In a neutral tone of voice, however, the sentence would simply imply future time.

8. The government was very unpopular and the new Home Secretary was not *much* estimated. ... *highly* ...

The examiner should have ignored "much", and picked on the verb "estimate" instead. "Estimate" is no longer used in the sense of "esteem", and tends to have a reference implying quantitative or logical reasoning (as in "We had the value of our house estimated" or "I estimated that we should be there by noon"). If "esteemed" were used instead,

these words. *The expression on Mr Bagley's face . . .*

Both versions are possible. The figure of speech in which the name of one thing is used for that of something else with which it is associated is traditionally called metonymy (e. g. "the crown" in the sense of "government" – in Britain, at least!); and this is the effect in the first sentence.

11. Elizabeth sat knitting in a chair and looked *astonished* at Margaret. . . . *in astonishment . . .*

being in the orientation given to the concept. The examiner's use here is far more appropriate than the candidate's, as it implies that "the family" is a collection of units, each of which individually has the expectation of service from the maid, which is surely the correct interpretation. If one could imagine a situation where the maid provided service only when the family was together, and the service affected the whole family simultaneously, then it would be more appropriate to talk of "it"!

DAVID CRYSTAL

Would you have marked it wrong?

The candidate wrote:

1. He *ordered* to stop.
2. There was only one among us who *had no fear* at all.
3. He did not want to use ordinary ink, but to write it *with* a nice colour.
4. The years *passed by*.
5. His son was very interested in new machines.
6. Once his sister asked him *for printing* her name on the cover of a book.
7. Elizabeth was *no* success.
8. Both of them *got* more and more fond of her.
9. I think the best *is you go*.
10. *With* a bus they were taken to the farm.
11. He left his native village *for living* in a large city.
12. Roy was telephoned *to search* for other farm labourers.
13. About three years had already passed when the catastrophe *broke out*.
14. The Irish people were often *at the point* of rebellion.

The examiner corrected:

... *ordered them to stop.*
... *was not scared ...*

... *in ...*

... *passed.*

... *greatly ...*

... *to print ...*

... *not a ...*

... *became ...*

... *for you is to leave.*

In ...

... *to live ...*

... *to seek ...*

... *happened.*

... *on ...*

Would you have marked it wrong? Schlüssel

Vergleiche Seite 311.

1. He *ordered to stop*. ... *ordered them to stop*.

"Order" is a transitive verb in almost all its uses in English, and thus the examiner's insertion of the pronoun is correct. (Readers should note the intransitive use, as in "I should like to order", said in a restaurant, for example.)

2. There was only one among us who *had no fear* at all. ... *was not scared* ...

Both versions are possible; but whereas the examiner's is the more everyday expression, the candidate's is more literary and dramatic.

3. He did not want to use ordinary ink, but to write it *with* a nice colour. ... *in* ...

The examiner is correct, as the interpretation intended is clearly that the writing is the thing that is coloured. But one should remember that "colours" can also mean "coloured pencils" or "coloured chalks", and a conceivable interpretation could allow "with" – "he wanted a nice colour to write with".

4. The years *passed by*. ... *passed*.

Both are possible, with no difference in meaning. "Pass by" in some contexts can however mean something different from "pass", e. g. "I would pass them by, if I were you" means "disregard" or "ignore".

5. His son was very interested in new machines. ... *greatly* ...

Both are possible. The examiner's version is stylistically the more forceful and rather formal.

6. Once his sister asked him *for printing* her name on the cover of a book. ... *to print* ...

The examiner is correct: "ask" requires the infinitive form in this construction. (One could of course imagine an alternative interpretation in which the candidate's structure would be all right, viz. because he had printed her name on the cover of a book, she asked him; but this is perhaps rather unlikely.)

7. Elizabeth was *no success*. ... *not a* ...

Both are possible, but the meanings are subtly different. The examiner's version has "success" in its countable use, implying a specific context (e. g. success in an examination); the candidate's version implies a more general statement (e. g. in general, Elizabeth was not very good at doing things).

8. Both of them *got* more and more fond of her. ... *became* ...

"Got" is a perfectly acceptable form in colloquial English, though there is a tendency to avoid it in the written medium.

9. I think the best *is you go*. ... *for you is to leave* ...

Neither version is acceptable. Possible ways of saying what is intended here include the following. (Brackets indicate that the portion enclosed may be omitted, leaving the rest of the sentence acceptable.) "I think the best thing (for you) (to do) is (to) leave", "I think it will be best for you to leave", "I think it will be best for you if you leave".

10. *With* a bus they were taken to the farm. *In* ...

I imagine the sense intended is that the people were inside the bus and not travelling separately from it, and thus the examiner is correct. But in both cases, the adverbial phrase should come at the end of the sentence!

11. He left his native village *for living* in a large city. ... *to live* ...

Cf. no. 6 above. The examiner is right; but one could imagine a judge, for instance, saying "for living in a large city, you are condemned to leave your native village", which could produce the candidate's version as a comment.

12. Roy was telephoned *to search* for other farm labourers. ... *to seek* ...

"Seek" is a rather general term, meaning simply "look for" in this context (in other words, Roy knows where there are likely to be some farm labourers, and he is going to find them). "For" is not needed after the verb in this sense. "Search" implies a more thorough, purposeful seeking (in other words, the farm labourers have been lost, and Roy is being asked to help find them). But both versions are possible.

13. About three years had already passed when the catastrophe *broke out*. ... *happened*.

A catastrophe is a *sudden* disaster or climax – a single, complete event. As such "break out" is an inappropriate verb, implying the onset of a process of activity.

14. The Irish people were often at the point of rebellion. . . . *on* . . .

"On" is the normal form for this context; but "at" is to be heard, perhaps because it is often used in phrases with "point", e. g. "at boiling point", "at the lowest point", "at the point of no return". There could be sen-

tences differentiated by the two prepositions, e. g. "they were at the point of re-entry" (viz. they had reached it) and "they were on the point of re-entry" (viz. they hadn't quite reached it). But there is no such ambiguity in example 14.

DAVID CRYSTAL

Would you have marked it wrong?

The candidate wrote:

1. Now Henry had got what he *wished*.
2. He signed the document Mr. Bagley had *given to him*.
3. Without the plant it would be nonsense to buy it, but so it is a great chance for me.
4. A terrible plague had spread *in* our town.
5. "Yes, you are right, I'll alter it later on," Eddie said *without any astonishment*.
6. During the rest of his life he could *work what* he liked. (The man spoken about has made a lot of money with an invention).
7. On his way home he *reflected that* he had paid a hundred times more than the brass for this powder must cost.
8. *At first* he reformed harsh out-of-date laws, which the government had *still* refused to remove.
9. They had lived together *nearly three years*.
10. *In one word*, the idea had become a full success.

The examiner corrected:

- ... *wished for*.
- ... *given him*.
- ... *as it is*, ...
- ... *over* ...
- ... *without revealing any astonishment*.
- ... *work at what* ...
- ... *reflected on the fact that* ...
- ... *First ... so far* ...
- ... *for almost three years*.
- In a word*, ...

Would you have marked it wrong? Schlüssel

Vergleiche Seite 419

1. Now Henry had got what he *wished*. ... *wished for*.

Both forms are possible. When *wish* is followed by a single noun phrase, then *for* is normally obligatory (e.g. *I wish for a book*); when it is followed by more complex structures, it is usually omitted (e.g. *I wish the problem settled*; *I wish him to come* [where it means "command"]). In final positions, as here, it is normally present; but in the transitive sense of the verb (= "desired") it can be omitted. *Wish* is one of those verbs which has developed many subtle differences in meaning; its syntax is complex, and as yet not fully understood.

2. He signed the document Mr. Bagley had *given to him*. ... *given him*.

Both are possible. The *to* of the indirect object is omitted especially if (a) the direct object does not intervene (**I gave the document him* is impossible), (b) what it governs is a single word, e.g. a pronoun or a proper

noun (*He signed the document Mr. Bagley had given the man in the street* is unlikely), and (c) the indirect object occurs at the end of a clause (*Mr. Bagley had given to him the document* is also highly unlikely, though not impossible). (N.B. *I gave it the man* is a regional variant in English.)

3. Without the plan it would be nonsense to buy it, but so it is a great chance for me. ... *as it is*, ...

The candidate's version is impossible. Some such phrase as the examiner's is required.

4. A terrible plague had spread *in* our town. ... *over* ...

The examiner is correct, but *through* is a further alternative.

5. "Yes, you are right, I'll alter it later on," Eddie said *without any astonishment*. ... *without revealing any astonishment*.

The candidate's version is alright, though one must remember that it is normal to give any

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some emphasis in speech. The examiner's change is unnecessary. Other alternatives would be *without astonishment*, and *with no astonishment*.

6. During the rest of his life, he could *work what* he liked. . . . *work at what* . . .

The examiner is correct; the only alternative is to change *what* to some such phrase as *in whatever field*.

7. On his way home he *reflected that* he had paid a hundred times more than the brass for this powder must cost. . . . *reflected on the fact that* . . .

The examiner's addition is unnecessary, but both sentences are possible as regards this construction. What is wrong is the verb in the subordinate clause, where the tense should be perfective, viz. . . . *than the brass for this powder must have cost*.

8. *At first* he reformed harsh out-of-date laws, which the government had *still* refused to remove. . . . *First* . . . *so far* . . .

There is a strange mixture of times here. Let me first eliminate the question of the initial word. Both *at first* and *first* are possible, but the implications differ: *at first* means simply "to begin with"; *first* however implies that there are further specific points coming very soon after, i.e. that the writer is categorising a list of items. *Still* is wrong because it im-

plies a continuation of previous activity, which is ruled out by the initiating meaning of *at first*. *So far* is wrong here too, because the candidate's sentence is past narrative, whereas *so far* looks on an event from the point of view of the present, and usually co-occurs with the perfect tense. What is required is . . . *which the government had always/till then refused to move*. (It would also be better to make the first noun phrase more definite, e.g. *the* or *those harsh* . . . , as the writer is presumably thinking about certain specific laws, and not laws in general).

9. They had lived together *nearly three years*. . . . *for almost three years*.

The candidate's version is used in colloquial speech, but *for* is more normal. The choice between *nearly* and *almost* has nothing to do with syntax, however. Usually they can be used as synonyms; but there is sometimes a very slight difference in implication - *nearly* being used when proximity is implied (e.g. *we are nearly there*), *almost* when there is an emphasis on any deficiency (e.g. *this is almost too good to be true*). The nuance is not worth worrying too much about from a pedagogical point of view, though.

10. *In one word*, the idea had become a full success. . . . *In a word* . . .

The examiner is correct.