

Would you have marked it wrong?

The candidate wrote:

1. Art *are* all the beautiful things in one's life, except nature.
2. If he had not arrested Bob, he would have *broken* his *highest* principle, namely honesty.
3. Only a small group of people *look* at the information a work of art gives.
4. The audience *do* not only hear the sound of music, but *they get* the feelings that the composer wants to express.
5. Some animals were merely injured, but quite a lot *was* killed.
6. Suddenly I *saw Stapleton went* to the out-house.
7. "Bob, *are you that?*" he asked doubtfully.
8. He has sold his *mother's-in-law* house.
9. The people are only sometimes, *namely in election, able to regulate the government.*
10. Do not *make a god out of someone* who you don't even know.
11. There was much time *till evening.*
12. All they wanted to do was *taking away* the gold secretly.

The examiner corrected:

... *is* ...

... *violated* ... *basic* ...

... *looks* ...

... *does* ... *it gets* ...

... *were* ...

... *that Stapleton went* ...

"... *is that you?*" ...

... *mother-in-law's* ...

... *able to exert an influence on the government, namely when there is an election.*

... *make anyone a god* ...

... *till the evening.*

... *to take away* ...

Die Besprechung der einzelnen Punkte erfolgt auf S. 62.

Would you have marked it wrong? Schlüssel

Vergleiche S. 59.

1. Art *are* all the beautiful things in one's life, except nature. . . . *is* . . . The examiner is correct. The verb agrees with the subject, not the complement. If the sentence had been reversed in order ("All the beautiful things . . ."), then the verb would have been in the plural.

2. If he had not arrested Bob, he would have broken his *highest* principle, namely honesty. . . . *violated* . . . *basic* . . .

This is not a grammatical question. The collocation of *violate* with such nouns as *principle*, *law*, *rights*, is very common, and is stylistically a more careful choice than the general-purpose verb *break*; but either could be used. Likewise, principles can be both *high* and *basic*.

3. Only a small group of people *look* at the information a work of art gives. . . . *looks* . . .

Doubtless the candidate has chosen the plural concord because of the possible collective sense of "group", along with the proximity of the plural concept of "people"; but grammatically, the subject is singular ("group"), and the sense intended is probably that of the group as a unity, and not as a collection of individuals – in which case the correction is appropriate.

4. The audience *do* not only hear the sound of music, but *they get* the feelings that the composer wants to express. . . . *does* . . . *it gets* . . .

As with Number 3, it is a question of point of view. Is the audience seen as a single, unified phenomenon, or as a group of individuals? Both versions are possible.

5. Some animals were merely injured, but quite a lot was killed. . . . *were* . . .

The context, and in particular the clear plural in *animals*, warrants the interpretation of *lot* as a collection of units, and the plural verb is thus required. (In an abstract sense, the singular could of course be used, as in "A lot was happening").

6. Suddenly I *saw Stapleton went* to the house. . . . *that Stapleton went* . . .

The examiner's grammar is basically correct, but it still produces an odd sequence of tenses. Rather more likely would be ". . . (that) Stapleton had gone", ". . . Stapleton go", ". . . Stapleton going", or ". . . (that) Stapleton was going". The candidate's version is definitely deviant.

7. "Bob, *are you that?*" he asked doubtfully. ". . . *is that you?*" . . .

The examiner is correct. An alternative correction could have been "Are you there?"

8. He has sold his *mother's-in-law* house. . . . *mother-in-law's* . . .

The genitive always occurs at the end of a compound, and the correction is needed. Perhaps the candidate is getting confused with "mothers-in-law", the traditional plural form, which is often these days replaced by "mother-in-laws".

9. The people are only sometimes, *namely in election able to regulate the government*. . . . *able to exert an influence on the government, namely when there is an election*.

The candidate's version is stylistically awkward, and rhythmically disjointed, but there is nothing much wrong with its syntax. A better preposition than *in* would be *during*, followed by *an election*, *elections*, or *election-time*. *Regulate* is also a rather odd choice of word, implying total, mechanical control: the examiner's circumlocution is a great improvement. But there is certainly no need to alter the general order of the sentence, as a parenthetical appositional comment is quite possible in a sentence of this kind.

10. Do not *make a god out of someone* who you don't even know. . . . *make anyone a god* . . .

The candidate's version is quite alright, and the examiner has made matters worse, by introducing an ambiguity – in his sentence it might be the god who isn't known. *Who* in the candidate's sentence is of course omissible, and it might have been wise to leave it out, as in an implicitly formal context, the use of *whom* would have been the more appropriate choice.

11. There was much time *till evening*. . . . *till the evening*.

The thing that is wrong with the candidate's sentence has not been noticed by the examiner, whose correction was unnecessary. The problem is over *much*, which is rarely used in a predicative noun phrase unless the verb is negative. Cf. "We haven't much time" vs. "We have much time", which is a common English learners' mistake. Given the positive verb, then a replacement determiner is needed, e.g. "a great deal of".

12. All they wanted to do was *taking away* the gold secretly. . . . *to take away* . . .

The examiner is correct; but *to* is omissible, especially when it has been used immediately previously.

DAVID CRYSTAL

Would you have marked it wrong?

The candidate wrote:

1. They *seem not to have remarked* that we have followed them.
2. They always enter the house *by* that French window.
3. They went off *for* shooting.
4. The *base* of this policy is the complete power over men.
5. He said that he was no longer interested in the post they had offered *to him*.
6. People were happy *at* those ancient times.
7. "He is the greatest", one could *hear out of the mouth of everybody*.
8. They got *off* the car and *into* the train that had just arrived.
9. There is no way left *than* to use terror against the terror of the Party.
10. In a minute I made up my mind *that I wanted to live* here in Alexandria and *give up* my career.
11. But poor Aunt keeps expecting *them back*.
12. There are certain things that resist the total oppression *of* the Party.
13. If he had known that that day *was* the last day *where* help was possible, he surely would have helped her.
14. I'm waiting for my wife. But it doesn't seem *as if she'll ever come*.

The examiner corrected:

- ... *don't seem to have remarked* ...
- ... *through* ...
- ... *to go* ...
- ... *basis* ...
- ... *offered him*.
- ... *in* ...
- ... *hear everybody say*.
- ... *out of ... on* ...
- ... *but* ...
- ... *to live ... to give up* ...
- ... *them to come back*.
- ... *by* ...
- ... *was to be ... that/when* ...
- ... *as if she'd ever come / that she'll ever come*.

Die Besprechung der einzelnen Punkte erfolgt auf S. 164.

Would you have marked it wrong? Schlüssel

Vergleiche S. 158.

1. They *seem not to have remarked* that we have followed them.

... *don't seem to have remarked* ...

Traditionally, the rules governing the placement of *not* have always given grammarians heartburn. The problem is essentially one of determining how much of the sentence is governed by the negative form. For example, we may have 'I definitely don't want to participate' as well as 'I don't definitely want to participate', and these have clearly contrasting meanings. In the same way, we might also have 'I definitely want not to participate' – though this is a less likely expression (and the *not*, in such an instance, would be strongly stressed). Placing the *not* immediately before the stretch of utterance it governs is therefore a regular process in English; but it is one which can produce very formal, semantically careful utterances, which would seem inappropriate or unwarranted in a casual colloquial context. This is what happened to the candidate's version. His version is possible, but it is artificial, in that the implied semantic precision is unlikely to have been justified by the context. The examiner has correctly substituted the more colloquial form, where the auxiliary takes the negative. There is no danger here of ambiguity, because the verb *seem* (which now falls under the scope of the negating word) is not one which readily allows a negative contrast (you cannot easily 'not seem').

2. They always enter the house *by* that French window ... *through* ...

Through would be the usual preposition to express the idea of movement here. *By* could also be used, though it means strictly 'by means of' or 'via' (therefore tending to collocate more with such nouns as *door* and *entrance*).

3. They went off *for* shooting ... *to go* ...

The trouble with the candidate's version is the multiple ambiguity of the *-ing* form. 'We're going to Scotland this weekend for the shooting' is a quite normal utterance, as is 'That rifle's not for waving, it's for shooting!', and also 'We only keep these birds here for shooting' (i.e. to be shot, when occasion arises). The examiner has interpreted the candidate to mean the action, and his correction resolves the ambiguity.

4. The *base* of this policy is the complete power over men. ... *basis* ...

4 *Base* is used to refer to the physically definable foundation of a structure; *basis* is used when one is talking of an abstract foundation (e.g. 'the basis of a set of beliefs'). Here the latter sense is clearly intended and the examiner is correct.

5. He said that he was no longer interested in the post they had offered *to him* ... *offered him*.

Both versions are possible, with minimal stylistic differences.

6. People were happy *at* those ancient times ... *in* ...

The sense of 'during' cannot be expressed by *at*, which is generally restricted to the identification of a specific, physical point of reference.

7. "He is the greatest", one could *hear out of the mouth of everybody* ... *hear everybody say*.

The candidate's version is quite unidiomatic. ... *on everyone's lips* would be the natural expression. But in addition, it is worth pointing out that English tends to avoid sequences of *of*, and if the expression with *mouth* were used, the idiom would tend to be in the form 'out of everybody's mouth'. But it is uncommon, whichever way one puts it.

8. They got *off* the car and *into* the train that had just arrived. ... *out of* ... *on* ...

The examiner is right to correct *off* to *out of*. The travellers were presumably inside the vehicle and not riding on top of it, or attached to its outside in some way! But given the rhythmic antithesis of the sentence, and the contrast of movement implied, one would expect the second preposition to be a dynamic one – and either *into* or *onto* could be used, the former implying more literally 'motion inside', the latter being more idiomatic.

9. There is no way left *than* to use terror against the terror of the Party ... *but* ...

Than is used in comparative constructions, and is therefore inappropriate in this context, where we are not comparing the pre-*than* and post-*than* parts of the sentence, but paraphrasing the first part by the second part. The examiner's substitution is correct; *except* would be an alternative.

10. In a minute I made up my mind *that I wanted to live* here in Alexandria and *give up* my career ... *to live* ... *to give up*.

The first correction is needed only if, stylistically, one feels the candidate is being tautologous; but it is possible, one supposes, to be in a state of philosophical indecision whereby what the candidate is uncertain about is his feeling rather than the actual place. Secondly, it is not obligatory to keep the *to* before the infinitive in coordinate constructions, but one should note the contrast between 'I want you to come here and hit me' (i.e. one event is intended) and 'I want you to come here and to hit me' (where two events are intended).

11. But poor Aunt keeps expecting *them back* . . . *them to come back*.

Both are possible. The candidate's version is more colloquial. Compare: 'I'm expecting John in very shortly', where there would normally be a break in the rhythm after *in*, and *in* would be stressed.

12. There are certain things that resist the total oppression *of* the Party . . . *by* . . .

The trouble with the candidate's version is that the *of* is ambiguous: is the Party oppressing or being oppressed? The examiner makes it clear.

13. If he had known that that day *was* the last day *where* help was possible, he surely would have helped her . . . *was to be* . . . *that/when* . . .

The appropriate conjunction for the temporal context is *when*. *That* should be avoided on stylistic grounds – it has already appeared twice! But the candidate's verb form is acceptable as it stands; the examiner simply makes the implicit time reference more explicit.

14. I'm waiting for my wife. But it doesn't seem *as if she'll ever come*. . . . *as if she'd ever come / that she'll ever come*.

The candidate's version is acceptable, as is the second of the examiner's versions. But his first correction is out of place. To use the conditional, the context would have to be *didn't* . . . *would*.

Would you have marked it wrong?

The candidate wrote:

1. Something must have happened in *that* ten minutes.
2. I *have the opinion* that such a conduct is appalling.
3. I earn enough money *for living*.
4. The old reformers had the aim of giving the human being the life *it* wanted to live.
5. Some minutes later the man *addressed himself to me*, "Excuse me, sir, . . ."
6. They *shouted so long until* the truck was coming and *ran over the animals*.
7. He *has the metropolitan police under him*.
8. She also *saw cars* full of commuters were piling up.
9. The reader of a newspaper *reads not only* facts, but also the newspaper's opinion.

The examiner corrected:

- ... *those* ...
- ... *am of the opinion* ...
- ... *to live upon* ...
- ... *he* ...
- ... *addressed me* ...
- ... *shouted until/till* ...
ran the animals over.
- ... *is in charge of the metropolitan police.*
- ... *saw that cars* ... (saw cars full of
commuters piling up.)
- ... *does not only read* ...

Would you have marked it wrong? Schlüssel

Vergleiche S. 279.

1. Something must have happened in *that* ten minutes. . . . *those* . . .

There are many cases in English where a singular determiner is used with a plural noun, e.g. 'that was a long six *miles*'. In such cases, the determiner imposes a singular aspect on the noun phrase, which is then interpreted as a collective fact rather than as an aggregate of items. The difference between the two versions is thus one of point of view. The candidate sees the ten minutes as a single, unified experience. The examiner, on the other hand, gives emphasis to each of the minutes retaining a separate 'identity', as it were, and an impression of a longer period of time elapsing is achieved. (A more appropriate preposition would then be 'during'.)

2. I *have* the opinion that such a conduct is appalling. . . . *am* of the opinion. . . .

Both are possible, with the examiner's version the more formal. Neither have noticed that *conduct* is uncountable: the indefinite article should be deleted.

3. I earn enough money *for* living. . . . *to* live upon.

Neither is correct. The appropriate correction would be . . . *to* live on.

4. The old reformers had the aim of giving the human being the life *it* wanted to live. . . . *he* . . .

The function of *it* in such contexts is to depersonalise; *he*, on the other hand, reinforces the notion of personal identity. In the present example, the notion of *human being* is an intrinsically personal one, and *it* is accordingly inappropriate (unless the candidate was being intentionally sarcastic or rude).

5. Some minutes later the man *addressed himself to me*, "Excuse me, sir . . .". . . . *addressed me* . . .

The main meaning of the verb 'address oneself' is to direct one's efforts or attention towards a specific matter, or to raise a specific point directly with a person. Thus, one may address oneself to a task, a question, a problem, etc., or to someone with a particular role to play ('He addressed himself to the judge in no uncertain terms'). If the candidate means to express this nuance, then his sentence is correct; but if only a general enquiry is intended, the examiner's version is the appropriate one.

6. They shouted *so long until* the truck was coming and *ran over* the animals. . . . *until / till* . . . *ran the animals over*.

The examiner's first correction is certainly needed; but his second correction is unnecessary. But apart from this, there is a more fundamental awkwardness in the sentence construction. *Until* governs both verbs, and it is odd to find the extended duration of time (expressed by the continuous verb-form) and the momentary action (expressed by the simple past) juxtaposed in this context. '. . . until the truck came and ran over . . .' would be a better sequence here; or, of course, one could separate the two clauses, e.g. '. . . was coming; when it came, it ran over . . .'

7. He *has* the metropolitan police under him. . . . *is in charge* of the metropolitan police.

The candidate's version is simply a more casual way of referring to this state of affairs, which some people might object to, on the grounds that one does not have an august body such as the metropolitan police 'under' someone in the same manner as one has a group of workers 'under' a supervisor. Apart from this nuance, either version could be used.

8. She also *saw cars* full of commuters were piling up. . . . *saw that cars . . . / (saw cars full of commuters piling up)*.

The candidate's version is possible. 'She saw cars were piling up, so she avoided the road'. As soon as *cars* is postmodified, however, then it is normal to introduce *that*, so that the subordinate clause interpretation is clearly anticipated. English seems to want to avoid a situation whereby speakers are led towards one reading (namely, 'She saw cars full of commuters') and then forced to reanalyse the sentence upon encountering the verb phrase.

9. The reader of a newspaper *reads not only* facts, but also the newspaper's opinion. . . . *does not only read* . . .

The candidate's version is quite alright as it stands, and indeed in the written language is better than the examiner's, as it avoids the potential ambiguity of being led to expect a correlative verb (e.g. 'does not only *read* facts, but also understands them'). In speech, of course, international emphasis would make any ambiguity unlikely.

DAVID CRYSTAL

Would you have marked it wrong?

The candidate wrote:

1. I'm expecting them back *every* minute.
2. Oh, then you don't *know about* my aunt.
3. This social system presupposes *every single human being accepting and respecting it*.
4. He promised to tell her when they *would arrive* in Ellenville.
5. These feelings are as important as physical things, or more important than *they*.
6. He *does not want but* to be happy.
7. They could not do any other work *than* working in the fields.
8. Then the professor went *to* a restaurant *for having* lunch.
9. She had given him a letter of introduction *for* the Sappleton family so that he should not be *too* alone.
10. There *are still existing* men of that kind.
11. Please, take the money, you need it *worse* than I do.
12. In war everyone has to act *like he*.

The examiner corrected:

- ... *any* ...
- ... *know anything about* ...
- ... *that every single human being accepts and respects it*.
- ... *arrived* ...
- ... *these* ...
- ... *only wants* ...
- ... *but* ...
- ... *into* ... *to have* ...
- ... *to* ... *lonely*.
- ... *still exist* ...
- ... *more* ...
- ... *like him. (as he did)*.

Die Besprechung der einzelnen Punkte erfolgt auf S. 386.

Would you have marked it wrong? Schlüssel

Vergleiche S. 384.

1. I'm expecting them back *every* minute.
... *any* ...

The examiner's correction is almost certainly what the candidate intended, i.e. the idiomatic sense of 'shortly'. The use of *every* with a temporal noun is possible, of course, but this would involve a literal meaning, e.g. *I expect him to come every day* = 'each day I perform the action of expecting'. This might be compared with *I expect him to come any day* = 'I expect him to come soon', or possibly 'I expect him to come on some unspecified day' (the ambiguity would be resolved by expanding the first into ... *any day now*, and the second into ... *come on any day*). Note that *any* in this use needs to be stressed. The oddity of the candidate's version is due not to grammatical reasons, but to the conceptual difficulty of having someone perform a sequence of actions of expecting in successive minutes.

2. Oh, then you don't *know about* my aunt.
... *know anything about* ...

Both versions are possible, but with rather different meanings. The examiner's version constitutes the more general, literal enquiry: 'do you have any knowledge about my aunt'. The candidate's

version is more restricted in scope, involving the presupposition that there is something specific to be known, e.g. that she has just fallen ill.

3. This social system presupposes *every single human being accepting and respecting it*. ... *that every single human being accepts and respects it*.

The examiner's version is the more natural, but the candidate's is quite possible.

4. He promised to tell her when they *would arrive* in Ellenville. ... *arrived* ...

Both are possible: different time-reference is expressed. The candidate's version means that the speaker has promised to tell her of their time of arrival in Ellenville, whereas in the examiner's version the telling will take place after the arrival.

5. These feelings are as important as physical things, or more important than *they*. ... *these*.

Informal and formal English make a different selection of pronoun form after comparative *than*: formal English prefers the subjective case, informal the objective. The traditional argument in favour of the former is that it permits the resolution of ambiguity, as in such cases as: *He kicked the ball more than I* and *He kicked the ball more*

than me, expandable into . . . *than I kicked* and . . . *than he kicked me* respectively. In informal speech, however, the subjective form sounds very awkward, and is generally avoided, context usually resolving the ambiguity. This whole question is one of the traditional shibboleths of English grammar, and as a result many modern writers avoid being placed in a position where they have to make a choice, by using some alternative expression. This seems to be what the examiner has done here, but his version is stylistically awkward, with the immediate repetition of *these*. A simpler alternative might have been to omit the *than* construction altogether, perhaps adding an intensifier to the preceding phrase to preserve the rhetorical effect, e.g. *or even more important*.

6. He *does not want but* to be happy. . . . *only wants* . . .

The candidate's syntax is archaic: the construction with *but* is no longer used. The examiner's is the natural colloquial version, with stress on *only* and *happy*. (Some say that *only* is mis-placed in this position, and would be construed to modify *wants*, and that therefore it should be placed after the verb. This is a theoretically possible ambiguity in written English, but context would make such a misunderstanding highly unlikely in speech, and the post-verbal position immediately adds a precise, literary flavour to the sentence, which would be inappropriate in informal conversation.)

7. They could not do any other work *than* working in the fields. . . . *but* . . .

The examiner is correct. One wants a preposition expressing the concessive relation of part to whole rather than one which compares two distinct concepts. *But*, or *except*, would be possible. The sentence is still stylistically awkward, however, with the close repetition of *work* in different word-classes. Given a noun as the superordinate concept, one expects a noun as the compared item also (e.g. . . . *work except dentistry*): *working* could be nominal in function, but it could also be verbal, and the reader's sense of this possibility makes for an awkward antithesis in the sentence.

8. Then the professor went *to* a restaurant *for* having lunch. . . . *into* . . . *to have* . . .

The candidate clearly intends an adverbial function, i.e. 'for the purpose of having lunch', and the examiner's version is the correct way of expressing this. The candidate's version produces a clause postmodifying *restaurant*, which results in an absurd tautology: of course restaurants are for having lunch in.' It is not grammatically impossible, however, and with ingenuity one might

imagine a context for the candidate's sentence, e.g. 'The restaurant on the corner is excellent for drinking in, whereas the one on the hill is good for eating – for having lunch, dinner, and so on' – but even here, the more natural tendency would be to nominalise, e.g. 'it's good for lunches'.

The other correction is unnecessary. The examiner's preposition emphasises the action of going inside; the candidate's does not single this out.

9. She had given him a letter of introduction *for* the Sappleton family so that he should not be too *alone*. . . . *to* . . . *lonely*.

The candidate's preposition is possible, but ambiguous. *For* could mean that the letter is 'for the Sappleton family to have' (i.e. to read), but it could also mean that it is the Sappleton family that need to be introduced (i.e. it is *their* letter of introduction to someone else). The second sense is unlikely, given the subsequent context, and the first is better expressed in the examiner's version, where *to* = 'addressed to'. The change to *lonely* is also an improvement. *Alone* has less emotional overtones than *lonely*, which suggests more of the feeling, as opposed to simply the fact of isolation. The potential contrast in meaning can be brought out by considering the possibilities that one may be alone, but not feeling lonely, or lonely even though in company.

10. There *are still existing* men of that kind. . . . *still exist* . . .

In its general sense, *exist* is a 'stative' verb, which does not have a continuous form. The examiner is correct.

11. Please, take the money, you need it *worse* than I do. . . . *more* . . .

The examiner is correct. Perhaps the candidate is half-remembering such locutions as 'for better or worse' or 'take a turn for the worse', where a poorer personal state is being expressed. An additional point, of course, is that the candidate's version ought to be punctuated as two sentences.

12. In war everyone has to act *like he*. . . . *like him*. (*as he did*.)

After prepositions, pronouns go into the objective case, where this is available. The examiner's version is correct, therefore. Of his two alternatives, the version with *as* is more appropriate for a formal utterance, as this one seems to be. (The verb form is old, too: if a general recommendation is intended, *ought to act* or *should act* would be used. *Has to* implies a situation in which choice is excluded, which seems unlikely here.)

DAVID CRYSTAL