

COMMON MISTAKES IN ENGLISH WITH EXERCISES

By

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Errors, like ~~sprawl~~ ^{sprawled} upon the surface flow;
He who would ~~search~~ ^{seek} for pearls must dive below.

JOHN DRYDEN

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PREFACE TO THE REVISED EDITION

Common Mistakes in English, which was first published ten years ago, has now been thoroughly revised and considerably enlarged. In this new edition two hundred additional sections have been included, and the Exercises, apart from being trebled in number, have been rearranged in what I believe will be found a much more convenient order.

I wish to express my thanks to Mr. W. M. Crichton, Senior English Master of Gordon Memorial College, Khartoum, for reading my typescript and making many practical suggestions. My thanks are also due to my brother, Mr. George Fitikides, who, despite his distant residence, took the keenest interest in my work and supplied me with much useful material through the post.

T. J. F.

1946

NOTE TO THE REVISED EDITION

The continued popularity of the book has necessitated a further reprint, and this has given the opportunity for a few improvements to be made here and there, but no changes of importance have been introduced.

T. J. F.

PREFACE

THIS book has been designed to meet the requirements of students whose mother tongue is not English. Its main purpose is to help to correct the common mistakes to which foreign learners of English are liable.

The method adopted throughout this work is uniform. All the errors dealt with are singled out, for they have to be recognized before they can be corrected ; then correct forms are substituted for incorrect ones ; finally, simple explanations are given wherever necessary to justify particular usages. Exercises are set at the end to ensure that the principles may become firmly fixed in the students' minds.

It is not claimed that this manual is exhaustive. Nevertheless, the difficulties tackled are real, and the examples are representative of the mistakes commonly made by foreign students of English, being the result of observations made over a long period of time.

The book may be used as an actual text-book, but the best results will be achieved if it is used as an aid to composition. The teacher, by referring the student to the appropriate section in this manual, can show him the nature of the mistake and enable him to correct it.

Much care has been given to the preparation of the Index, which it is hoped will make the book a useful work of reference.

My acknowledgments are due to Mr. W. H. G. Popplestone, who has read my manuscript and made many valuable suggestions.

T.J.F.

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CHAPTER I

MISUSED FORMS

USING A WRONG PREPOSITION

Mistakes are often made by using a wrong preposition after certain words. The following list includes the words which most often give trouble :

1. Accuse of, not for.

Don't say: He accused the man for stealing.

Say: He **accused** the man **of** stealing.

NOTE.—But “charge” takes “with”: as, “The man was charged with murder.”

2. Accustomed to, not with.

Don't say: I am accustomed with hot weather.

Say: I am **accustomed to** hot weather.

NOTE.—Also “used to”: as, “He is used to the heat.”

3. Afraid of, not from.

Don't say: The girl is afraid from the dog.

Say: The girl is **afraid of** the dog.

4. Aim at, not on or against.

Don't say: He aimed on (or against) the bird.

Say: He **aimed at** the bird.

NOTE.—The preposition at is often used to denote direction: as, “throw at,” “shout at,” “fire at,” “shoot at.” But “shoot” (without the at) means to kill: as, “He shot a bird” (= he hit and killed it).

5. Angry with, not against.

Don't say: The teacher was angry against him.

Say: The teacher was angry with him.

NOTE 1.—We get angry "with" a person, but "at" a thing: as, "He was angry at the weather" (not: "with the weather.").

NOTE 2.—Also "annoyed with," "vexed with," "indignant with" a person, but "at" a thing.

6. Arrive at, not to.

Don't say: They arrived to the school late.

Say: They arrived at the school late.

NOTE.—"Arrive in" is used of countries and large cities: as, "Mr. Smith has arrived in London (New York, India, etc.)"

7. Ashamed of, not from.

Don't say: He is now ashamed from his conduct.

Say: He is now ashamed of his conduct.

NOTE.—It is not proper to use "ashamed of" in the meaning of "shy." Thus, instead of "I am ashamed of my teacher," you should say, "I am shy of my teacher."

8. Believe in, not to.

Don't say: Christians believe to Jesus Christ.

Say: Christians believe in Jesus Christ.

NOTE.—"To believe in" means to have faith in; while "to believe" (without the in) means to regard as true: as, "I quite believe what he says."

9. Boast of, not for.

Don't say: He often boasted for his riches.

Say: He often boasted of his riches

10. Careful of, not for.

Don't say: He is very careful for his health.

Say: He is very careful of his health.

NOTE.—Also "take care of": as, "He takes care of his money."

11. Come or go by train, etc., not with the train, etc.

Don't say: He came with the train yesterday.

Say: He came by train yesterday.

NOTE.—We say: "by train," "by tram," "by boat," "by aeroplane"; also "by land," "by sea," "by air"; "by bus," "in a bus" or "on a bus"; "by motor-car" or "in a motor-car," "by taxi" or "in a taxi"; "in a cab," "in a carriage"; "on horseback," "on a donkey," "on a bicycle"; "on foot."

12. Complain of, not for.

Don't say: Many people complain for the heat.

Say: Many people **complain of** the heat.

13. Composed of, not from.

Don't say: Our class is composed from ten boys.

Say: Our class is **composed of** ten boys.

NOTE.—"Consist of" has the same meaning as "composed of," but "consist of" is active. Thus, we should say, "Our class **consists** (not is consisted) of ten boys."

14. Congratulate on, not for.

Don't say: I congratulate you for your success.

Say: I **congratulate you on** your success.

15. Cure of, not from.

Don't say: The man was cured from his illness.

Say: The man was **cured of** his illness.

NOTE.—Also "heal of": as, "He was **healed of** his disease."

16. Depend on or upon, not from.

Don't say: It depends from himself.

Say: It **depends on** (or **upon**) himself.

NOTE.—Also "rely on" or "upon": as, "I cannot **rely on** (or **upon**) him."

17. **Deprive of, not from.**

Don't say: He was deprived from his freedom.

Say: He was **deprived of** his freedom.

18. **Die of an illness, not from an illness.**

Don't say: Many people have died from malaria.

Say: Many people have **died of** malaria.

NOTE.—Men “die of illness,” “of hunger,” “of thirst,” “of” or “from wounds”; “from overwork”; “by violence,” “by the sword,” “by pestilence”; “in battle,” “in poverty”; “for their country,” “for a cause”; “through neglect”; “on the scaffold”; “at the stake.”

19. **Different from, not than.**

Don't say: My book is different than yours.

Say: My book is **different from** yours.

20. **Divide into parts, not in parts.**

Don't say: I divided the cake in four parts.

Say: I **divided the cake into** four parts.

NOTE.—But a thing may be divided “in half” or “in two”: as, “He divided the apple in half (or in two).”

21. **Dressed in, not with.**

Don't say: The woman was dressed with black.

Say: The woman was **dressed in** black.

NOTE.—Also “clothed in”: as, “He was clothed in fine linen.”

22. **Fail in, not from.**

Don't say: He failed from arithmetic last year.

Say: He **failed in** arithmetic last year.

23. **Full of, not with or from.**

Don't say: The jar was full with (or from) oil.

Say: The jar was **full of** oil.

NOTE.—But “fill” takes “with”: as, “He filled the glass with water.”

24. Get rid of, not from.

Don't say: I shall be glad to get rid from him.

Say: I shall be glad to get rid of him.

25. Glad of, not from or with.

Don't say: He is glad from (or with) the news.

Say: He is glad of the news.

NOTE.—But a person is “glad at” a result: as, “He is glad at having received a good mark.”

26. Good at, not in.

Don't say: My brother is good in mathematics.

Say: My brother is good at mathematics.

NOTE 1.—Also “bad at,” “clever at,” “quick at,” “slow at,” etc. But “weak in”: as, “He is weak in grammar.”

NOTE 2.—“He is good in class” means that his conduct is good.

27. Guilty of, not for.

Don't say: He was found guilty for murder.

Say: He was found guilty of murder.

28. Insist on, not to.

Don't say: He always insisted to his opinion.

Say: He always insisted on his opinion.

NOTE.—But “persist” takes “in”: as, “He persisted in his foolish ideas.”

29. Interested in, not for.

Don't say: She is not interested for music.

Say: She is not interested in music.

NOTE.—Also “take an interest in”: as, “He seems to take a great interest in games.”

30. Jealous of, not from.

Don't say: She is jealous from her sister.

Say: She is jealous of her sister.

31. Leave for a place, not to a place.

Don't say: They are leaving to England soon.

Say: They are leaving for England soon.

32. Live on, not from.

Don't say: He lives from his brother's money.

Say: He lives on his brother's money.

NOTE.—Also “feed on”: as, “Some birds feed on insects.”

33. Look at, not to.

Don't say: Look to this beautiful picture.

Say: Look at this beautiful picture.

NOTE.—Also “gaze at,” “stare at,” etc. But: “look after” (= take care of); “look for” (= try to find); “look over” (= examine); “look into” (= examine closely); “look upon” (= consider); “look down upon” (= have a low opinion of); “look up to” (= respect); “look out for” (= expect); “look forward to” (= expect with pleasure); “look to” (= be careful of or rely on).

34. Married to, not with.

Don't say: She was married with a rich man.

Say: She was married to a rich man.

NOTE.—Also “engaged to”: as, “Miss Jones was engaged to Mr. Smith.”

35. Pass by a place, not from a place.

Don't say: I shall pass from the post office.

Say: I shall pass by the post office.

36. Pleased with, not from.

Don't say: The teacher is pleased from me.

Say: The teacher is pleased with me.

NOTE.—But we may say “pleased at” or “pleased with” if an abstract noun or a clause follows: as, “They were pleased at (or with) what he said”; “They were pleased at (or with) his evilness.”

37. Prefer to, not from.

Don't say: I prefer English from geography.

Say: I prefer English to geography.

NOTE.—Also “preferable to”: as, “English is preferable to geography.”

38. Proud of, not for.

Don't say: He is very proud for his promotion.

Say: He is very proud of his promotion.

NOTE.—But we take “pride in” a person or thing: as, “He takes great pride in his work.”

39. Repent of, not from.

Don't say: He repented from his wrongdoing.

Say: He repented of his wrongdoing.

NOTE.—But “repentance” takes “for”: as, “He feels repentance for his sin.”

40. Satisfied with, not from.

Don't say: Are you satisfied from your marks?

Say: Are you satisfied with your marks?

NOTE.—Also “contented with,” “delighted with”; “dis-satisfied with,” “displeased with,” “disgusted with.”

41. Sit at a desk, etc., not on a desk, etc.

Don't say: The teacher often sits on his desk.

Say: The teacher often sits at his desk.

NOTE.—Also “sit at a table.” But: “on a chair,” “on a bench,” “on a sofa,” etc.; “in an arm-chair,” “in a tree” or “up a tree.” “A bird sometimes perches (= sits) on a tree.”

42. Spend on, not for.

Don't say: I spend a lot of time for it.

Say: I spend a lot of time on it.

43. Succeed in, not at.

Don't say: He succeeded at the examination.

Say: He succeeded in the examination.

(*Better:* He passed the examination.)

NOTE.—But a person “succeeds” to a property, a title, or an office: as, “King George VI succeeded to the throne in 1937.”

44. Superior to, not from or than.

Don't say: This is superior from (or than) that.

Say: This is superior to that.

NOTE.—Also “inferior to,” “junior to,” “senior to,” “prior to.”

45. Sure of, not for.

Don't say: I am quite sure for his honesty.

Say: I am quite sure of his honesty.

NOTE.—Also “certain of”: as, “I am quite certain of it”

46. Surprised at, not for.

Don't say: I was surprised for his failure.

Say: I was surprised at his failure.

NOTE.—Also “astonished at,” “amazed at,” “alarmed at,” “puzzled at,” “shocked at.”

47. Take by, not from.

Don't say: He took his brother from the hand.

Say: He took his brother by the hand.

NOTE.—Also “hold by,” “catch by,” “seize by,” “snatch by,” “grasp by.”

48. Tired of, not from.

Don't say: The boys are tired from boiled eggs.

Say: The boys are tired of boiled eggs.

NOTE.—“Tired with” means with no energy or strength left: as, “I am tired with walking; I want to rest.” So also “weary of” and “weary with.”

49. Translate into, not to.

Don't say: Translate this passage to English.

Say: Translate this passage into English.

50. Write in ink, not with ink.

Don't say: Sir, shall we write with ink?

Say: Sir, shall we write in ink?

NOTE.—To "write in ink," "in pencil," or "in chalk" means the marks that a pen, a pencil, or a piece of chalk makes. If, however, the instrument is meant by which the writing is done, we use "with" instead of "in": as, "I write with (a pen, a pencil, or a piece of chalk)."

(See Exercises on page 134.)

MISUSE OF THE INFINITIVE

The gerund and not the infinitive should be used

(a) After prepositions or preposition phrases:

51. Without, etc. + gerund.

Don't say: Do your work without to speak.

Say: Do your work without speaking.

52. Instead of, etc. + gerund.

Don't say: He went away instead to wait.

Say: He went away instead of waiting.

(b) After words which regularly take a preposition

53. Fond of + gerund.

Don't say: She is always fond to talk.

Say: She is always fond of talking.

54. Insist on + gerund.

Don't say: He insisted to go to London.

Say: He insisted on going to London.

55. Object to + gerund.

Don't say: I object to be treated like this.

Say: I object to **being** treated like this.

56. Prevent from + gerund.

Don't say: The rain prevented me to go.

Say: The rain prevented me from **going**.

57. Succeed in + gerund.

Don't say: He succeeded to gain the prize.

Say: He succeeded in **gaining** the prize.

58. Think of + gerund.

Don't say: I often think to go to England.

Say: I often think of **going** to England.

59. Tired of + gerund.

Don't say: The servant grew tired to wait.

Say: The servant grew tired of **waiting**.

60. Used to + gerund.

Don't say: She is used to get up early.

Say: She is used to **getting** up early.

(c) After certain verbs:

61. Avoid + gerund.

Don't say: You can't avoid to make mistakes.

Say: You can't avoid **making** mistakes.

NOTE.—Also "can't help" (= avoid): as, "I can't help laughing."

62. Enjoy + gerund.

Don't say: I enjoy to play a game of football.

Say: I enjoy **playing** a game of football.

NOTE.—Verbs meaning "to like" or "to dislike" may be followed either by the infinitive or the gerund: as, "He likes reading English books," or "He likes to read English books."

63. **Finish + gerund.**

Don't say: Have you not finished to speak?

Say: Have you not **finished speaking**?

NOTE.—Verbs meaning “to begin” are followed either by the gerund or the infinitive: as, “She began to speak,” or “She began speaking.”

64. **Go on (continue) + gerund.**

Don't say: The music went on to play all day.

Say: The music went on **playing** all day.

NOTE.—Also “keep on”: as, “She kept on playing the piano.”

65. **Mind (object to) + gerund.**

Don't say: Would you mind to open the door?

Say: Would you **mind opening** the door?

66. **Remember + gerund.**

Don't say: I do not remember to have seen him.

Say: I do not **remember seeing** him;

or: I do not **remember having** seen him.

67. **Stop + gerund.**

Don't say: The wind has almost stopped to blow.

Say: The wind has almost **stopped blowing**.

NOTE.—Also “give up” (= stop): as, “He gave up smoking.”

(d) After certain adjectives:

68. **Busy + gerund.**

Don't say: He was busy to prepare his lessons.

Say: He was **busy preparing** his lessons.

69. **Worth + gerund.**

Don't say: Is to-day's film worth to see?

Say: Is to-day's film **worth seeing**?

(e) After certain phrases:

70. **It is no use + gerund.**

Don't say: It's no use to cry like a baby.

Say: It's no use **crying** like a baby.

71. **It is no good + gerund.**

Don't say: It's no good to get angry at once.

Say: It's no good **getting** angry at once.

72. **There is no harm in + gerund.**

Don't say: There's no harm to visit him now.

Say: There's no harm in **visiting** him now.

73. **Have the pleasure of + gerund.**

Don't say: I had the pleasure to meet him.

Say: I had the pleasure of **meeting** him.

NOTE.—Also “take .pleasure in”: as, “He takes great pleasure in helping the poor.”

(See Exercises on page 130.)

THE USE OF A WRONG TENSE

74. Using the past tense after “**did**” instead of the infinitive without “to.”

(a) To ask questions:

Don't say: Did you went to church yesterday?

Say: Did you **go** to church yesterday?

(b) To make negations:

Don't say: I did not went to church yesterday.

Say: I **did** not **go** to church yesterday.

After the auxiliary “**did**” the present infinitive without “to” must be used, and not the past tense of the indicative.

NOTE.—The answer to a question beginning with “**Did**” is always in the past tense: as, “Did you see the picture?”—“Yes, I **saw** the picture”; or “Yes, I **did**.”