

英文改錯詳解

修訂本

COMMON ERRORS

IN

ENGLISH COMPOSITION

REVISED EDITION

BY

WU WEI-TSENG, B.A.

AND

CH'AI CHING-HSIN, B.A.

REVISED BY

CH'EN CH'I

北平文化學社印行

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王永平

1956年9月20日

于加立

# COMMON ERRORS IN ENGLISH COMPOSITION

## Revised Edition

### CHAPTER I. NOUNS.

#### § 1. Number.

**Rule I.** A material or an abstract noun has no plural number.

(1) Erroneous: We go to school to acquire some *knowledges*.

Corrected: We go to school to acquire some *knowledge*.

(2) Erroneous: After our school *works* are done, we often play tennis in the playground.

Corrected: After our school *work* is done, we often play tennis in the playground.

(3) Erroneous: A great deal of *golds* are found in this place

Corrected: A great deal of *gold* is found in this place.

**Note I.** When a material or an abstract noun is put into the plural number, it is said to be used as a common noun.

(1) Material noun: *Wood* is a kind of fuel.

Common noun: They rambled a long time in the *woods*.

(2) Abstract noun: *Justice* is a noble quality.

Common noun: There are four *justices* present.

**Rule II.** The plural of letters, figures, words regarded as objects, and other signs is formed by adding's to the singular.

(1) You make your *n's* and your *u's* too much alike.

- (2) Mind your *p*'s and *q*'s.
- (3) Cross out all *3*'s and *4*'s.
- (4) Be careful about your *+*'s and *×*'s.
- (5) You have omitted all the *and*'s.
- (6) You write all your *John*'s with small *j*'s.

**Rule III.** As to the plural of proper names with the titles "Mr.", "Mrs.", "Miss" and "Master", usage is as follows :

1. The plural of "Mr." is "Messrs." With this title the name itself remains in the singular. Thus, singular *Mr. Smith*; plural *Messrs. Smith* or *the Messrs. Smith*.

2. The title "Mrs." cannot be put into the plural. Hence the name itself receives the plural form. Thus, singular *Mrs. Smith*; plural *the Mrs. Smiths*.

3. In the case of "Miss", sometimes the title is put in the plural, sometimes the name. Thus, singular *Miss Smith*; plural *the Misses Smith* or *the Miss Smiths*.

4. The plural of "Master" is "Masters." The name remains in the singular. Thus, singular *Master Smith*; plural *the Masters Smith*.

(1) Erroneous: *The Mr. Chaos* were very fine young men.

Corrected: *The Messrs. (or Messrs) Chao* were very fine young men.

(2) Erroneous: *The Misses Changs* are sincere admirers of Mrs. Wang.

Corrected: *The Misses Chang (or the Miss Changs)* are sincere admirers of Mrs. Wang.

(3) Erroneous: *The Master Blacksons* continued to exercise their memories.

Corrected: *The Masters Blackson* continued to exercise their memories.

**Rule IV.** Some nouns have the same form in both numbers; as *deer*, *sheep*, *score*, *Chinese*, *Japanese*, etc.

- (1) Erroneous: The *sheeps* were browsing quietly on the low hills.  
Corrected: The *sheep* were browsing quietly on the low hills.
- (2) Erroneous: There are many droves of *deers*.  
Corrected: There are many droves of *deer*.

Rule V. Some nouns are plural in form, but singular in sense ; as, *measles*, *ethics*, *mathematics*, *physics*, etc.

- (1) Erroneous: The *measles are* a disease of children.  
Corrected: The *measles is* a disease of children.
- (2) Erroneous: *Mathematics give* me much trouble.  
Corrected: *Mathematics gives* me much trouble.

Rule VI. Some nouns are singular in form, but plural in sense ; as, *people*, *cattle*, *vermin*, *swine*, etc.

- (1) Erroneous: A large number of *peoples* are complaining of the new tax.  
Corrected: A large number of *people* are complaining of the new tax.
- (2) Erroneous: These *cattles* are mine.  
Corrected: These *cattle* are mine.

Note 1. When "people" is used in the sense of "nation" the plural is "peoples".

Rule VII. Some nouns are used in the plural number only ; as, *spectacles*, *shoes*, *scissors*, *tongs*, *compasses*, *trousers*, *billiards*, etc.

- (1) Erroneous: The tailor told me that my *trouser* was ready to be sent.  
Corrected: The tailor told me that my *trousers* were ready to be sent.
- (2) Erroneous: Take the *tong* and put it near the coal bucket.



Corrected: Take the *longs* and put them near the coal bucket.

**Rule VIII.** A noun used as an adjective is always in the singular form, even if it is preceded by a numeral adjective; as, a *five-dollar* note, a *three-foot* rule, an *eight-day* clock, a *six-year-old* horse, etc.

(1) Erroneous: He gave me a *five-dollars* note.

Corrected: He gave me a *five-dollar* note.

(2) Erroneous: I bring a *three-feet* rule.

Corrected: I bring a *three-foot* rule.

**Rule IX.** A Chinese word used in a plural sense should retain the singular form; as, *three-li*, *sixteen liang*, etc.

(1) Erroneous: I can walk three *lis*.

Corrected: I can walk three *li*.

(2) Erroneous: In China *sinteen liangs* make one chin.

Corrected: In China *sixteen liang* make one chin.

## § 2. The Possessive Case.

**Rule I.** When two possessives are in apposition with each other, the *'s* is added to the last noun.

(1) Erroneous: I met the *Principal's* Mr. Wang son in the street.

Corrected: I met the Principal Mr. *Wang's* son in the street.

(2) Erroneous: I received my *'eachers's* Mr. Chang's letter.

Corrected: I received my teacher Mr. *Chang's* letter.

**Rule II.** When two or more names joined by "and" are in the possessive case, the *'s* added to each shows separate possession, and the *'s* added to the last only shows joint possession.

(1) Erroneous: You can find almost every thing in Messrs. *Smith's* and *Jone's* grocery store.

Corrected: You can find almost everything in Messrs. *Smith* and *Jone's* grocery store.

(2) Erroneous: Both my *uncle* and my *brother's* horses are sold in the market.

Corrected: Both my *uncle's* and my *brother's* horses are sold in the market.

Rule III. The possessive case is properly used only with names of living beings. With names of things without life the preposition "of" must be used. But the possessive may be used with the following kinds of nouns.

- (A) Nouns denoting time: a *moment's* pause, a *day's* journey, a *week's* holiday, a *month's* leave, etc.
- (B) Nouns denoting distance: a *boat's* length, a *stone's* throw, etc.
- (C) Nouns denoting value: ten *cents'* worth, one *dollar's* worth, etc.
- (D) Nouns denoting weight: a *feather's* weight, a *pound's* weight, two *tons'* weight, etc.
- (E) Nouns denoting certain dignified objects: the *court's* degree, the *sun's* rays, the *moon's* reflection, *Nature's* work, *Heaven's* will, etc.

The possessive is also used in a few familiar phrases, in which it has been retained for the sake of shortness; as, at his *wil's* end, for *mercy's* sake, to his *heart's* content, etc.

(1) Erroneous: The trip *of a day* makes me tired.

Corrected: A *day's* trip makes me tired.

(2) Erroneous: Look at this *letter's* signature.

Corrected: Look at the signature *of this letter*.

(3) Erroneous: Let us pick up the *garden's* fruit.

Corrected: Let us pick up the fruit *of the garden*.



## § 3. Gender.

Inanimate objects or qualities are often spoken of as if they were living beings of the male or female sex.

Things remarkable for strength, greatness, superiority, etc. are regarded as males; as the Sun, Thunder, Wind, Ocean, Death, War, etc. are regarded as males; and things supposed to possess beauty, grace, inferiority, etc. are regarded as females; as the Moon, the Earth, Peace, Virtue, Mercy, etc.

- (1) Erroneous: Winter comes with all *her* imposing train.  
 Corrected: Winter comes with all *his* imposing train.
- (2) Erroneous: Hope smiled and waved *his* golden hair.  
 Corrected: Hope smiled and waved *her* golden hair.
- (3) Erroneous: The moon looked in as *it* passed by.  
 Corrected: The moon looked in as *she* passed by.

## EXERCISE I

## I. Correct the following sentences : —

1. Ill news run apace.
2. Many golds were dug out from the mine.
3. The book's cover is yellow in color.
4. I like a six-years-old horse.
5. The deers' horns are long and branched.
6. This house is built of woods and bricks.
7. The room's door has been newly opened.
8. A number of young peoples were in the sitting room.
9. Carefully cancel all the 3s and 5s.
10. The scissor is so dull that I cannot use it.
11. My brother walked fifty hs last Saturday.
12. Mathematic is an important science.
13. There are too many ands and buts in your composition.
14. I saw three sheeps feeding in the pasture.
15. The vermins are a constant annoyance to the farmer.

16. I want a copy of Reed's and Kellogg's "Higher Lessons in English."
17. Cows are fond of grasses as men of milks.
18. We learnt many news from him.
19. I have got much knowledges since I came to school.
20. The sfreetis crowded with many peoples.

## CHAPTER II. PRONOUNS.

### § I. General Rules.

Rule I. When nouns or pronouns in different persons are connected by "and", politeness requires that the second person should be mentioned first ; the third, next ; and the first person, last.

- (1) Erroneous : *I, Henry and you* have been chosen.  
Corrected : *You, Henry and I* have been chosen.
- (2) Erroneous : The candy is for *him* and *you*.  
Corrected : The candy is for *you* and *him*.

Rule II. A pronoun used as the subject of a verb is in the nominative case.

- (1) Erroneous : John and *me* may go out.  
Corrected : John and *I* may go out.
- (2) Erroneous : He is the man *whom* I think wrote the letter.  
Corrected : He is the man *who* I think wrote the letter.
- (3) Erroneous : He knows better how to write a letter than *her*.  
Corrected : He knows better how to write a letter than *she*.

Rule III. A pronoun used as the subjective complement is in the nominative case.

- (1) Erroneous : It was *him* who killed the merchant.  
Corrected : It was *he* who killed the merchant.
- (2) Erroneous : If I were *him*, I should try to do better.  
Corrected : If I were *he*, I should try to do better.

**Rule IV.** A pronoun in the absolute construction is in the nominative case.

- (1) Erroneous: Off we started, *him* remaining behind.  
Corrected: Off we started, *he* remaining behind.
- (2) Erroneous: *Her* being absent, nothing could be done.  
Corrected: *She* being absent, nothing could be done.

**Rule V.** A pronoun used as the object of a transitive verb is in the objective case.

- (1) Erroneous: My father took John and *I* to the theater.  
Corrected: My father took John and *me* to the theater.
- (2) Erroneous: We met Mr. Wilson, *who* we thought to be a very delightful gentleman.  
Corrected: We met Mr. Wilson, *whom* we thought to be a very delightful gentleman.

**Rule VI.** A pronoun used as the object of a preposition is in the objective case.

- (1) Erroneous: Between you and *I*, I don't believe a word of it.  
Corrected: Between you and *me*, I don't believe a word of it.
- (2) Erroneous: To *whosoever* much is given, much is required.  
Corrected: To *whomsoever* much is given, much is required.

**Rule VII.** The verb "to be" takes the same case of the pronoun after it as before it.

- (1) Erroneous: Do you suppose that I am *him*?  
Corrected: Do you suppose that I am *he*?
- (2) Erroneous: Do you suppose me to be *he*?  
Corrected: Do you suppose me to be *him*?

**Rule VIII.** The possessive case of a pronoun should be used before the verbal noun.

- (1) Erroneous: We do not expect *you* coming for some time yet.

Corrected: We do not expect *your* coming for some time yet.

- (2) Erroneous: The student's progress will depend largely upon *him* being diligent in his studies.

Corrected: The student's progress will depend largely upon *his* being diligent in his studies

**Rule IX.** Never use an apostrophe with the possessive pronouns, "its", "yours", "theirs", "ours", and "hers".

- (1) Erroneous: This book is *your's*.

Corrected: This book is *yours*.

- (2) Erroneous: There is a slight difference between *her's* and his.

Corrected: There is a slight difference between *hers* and his.

**Rule X.** A relative pronoun in the objective case is often left out, but a relative pronoun in the nominative or possessive case should not be omitted.

- (1) Erroneous: Look at the bird sings on the tree.

Corrected: Look at the bird *which* sings on the tree.

- (2) Erroneous: Thomas is the name of the man horse has been stolen.

Corrected: Thomas is the name of the man *whose* horse has been stolen.

**Rule XI.** The reference of a pronoun to its antecedent should always be definite.

Uncertain: Tom told John that *his* answer was wrong.

Right: Tom said, "John, *your* answer is wrong."

Right: Tom said, "John, *my* answer is wrong."

Rule XII. A pronoun should have as its antecedent a definitely expressed noun or pronoun that designates a particular person, animal, or thing.

- (1) Erroneous: We accused him, but he denied it.  
 Corrected: We accused him of the *theft*, but he denied it.
- (2) Erroneous: We went clam-digging but got only a peck of *them*.  
 Corrected: We went clam-digging but got only a peck of *clams*.

Rule XIII. Except in such impersonal expressions as "it rains", "it is warm", "it seems," etc., avoid the use of the pronoun "it" without a definite antecedent.

- (1) Crude: In the paper *it* says we shall have rain to-day.  
 Right: The paper says we shall have rain to-day.

Rule XIV. Pronouns should agree with their antecedents in person, gender, and number.

- (1) Erroneous: It is I who *is* to blame.  
 Corrected: It is I who *am* to blame.
- (2) Erroneous: It was you, not your brother, who *was* caught.  
 Corrected: It was you, not your brother, who *were* caught.
- (3) Erroneous: The wolf seeks *her* prey. (Cf. § 3.)  
 Corrected: The wolf seeks *his* prey.
- (4) Erroneous: Each of the pupils of Girls Normal School brought *his* book.  
 Corrected: Each of the pupils of Girls Normal School brought *her* book.
- (5) Erroneous: If anybody makes that statement, *they* are misinformed.  
 Corrected: If anybody makes that statement, *he* is misinformed.



- (6) Erroneous: Let everybody try *their* best.  
 Corrected: Let everybody try *his* best.

**Rule XV.** Do not use the relative pronoun "which" to refer to an entire clause or sentence. If "which" is used, give it a single word as an antecedent.

- (1) Erroneous: Our team lost the game, *which* was a great surprise to us.  
 Corrected: Our team lost the game—a *result* *which* was a great surprise to us.  
 Better: We were greatly surprised that our team lost the game.

**Rule XVI.** Supply all pronouns that are needed.

- (1) Erroneous: I rang at his door; a maid opened.  
 Corrected: I rang at his door; *a* maid opened *it*.  
 (2) Erroneous: His horse is better than any other man in town.  
 Corrected: His horse is better than *that of* any other man in town.  
 (3) Erroneous: There was a consultation between those who favoured and opposed the project.  
 Corrected: There was a consultation between those who favoured and *those who* opposed the project.  
 (4) Erroneous: At that time there were only a few people knew how to do this.  
 Corrected: At that time there were only a few people *who* knew how to do this.

**Rule XVII.** Do not use a pronoun which is unnecessary.

- (1) Erroneous: A man who is diligent and not afraid of hard work *he* will certainly succeed.  
 Corrected: A man who is diligent and not afraid of hard work will certainly succeed.

- (2) Erroneous: If any body who disobeys this rule *he* will be punished.

Corrected: If anybody disobeys this rule he will be punished.

- (3) Erroneous: The leaves which have fallen on the ground *they* will be swept away by the servant.

Corrected: The leaves which have fallen on the ground will be swept away by the servant.

## § 2. Remarks on

### The Use of Certain Pronouns.

Rule I. Each, one, either, neither.—These are singular pronouns, and therefore any pronoun which refers to any one of them must also be in the singular number.

- (1) Erroneous: Each of the men came forward in *their* turn.

Corrected: Each of the men came forward in *his* turn.

- (2) Erroneous: I think one ought to help *their* friends.

Corrected: I think one ought to help *one's* friends.

- (3) Erroneous: If either of these boys wins a prize *they* will be fortunate.

Corrected: If either of these boys wins a prize *he* will be fortunate.

- (4) Erroneous: Neither of the men gets the post *they* wanted.

Corrected: Neither of the men gets the post *he* wanted.

Rule II. Either, Neither.—These are properly used to refer to one of two persons or things, and must not be used with reference to one of more than two.

- (1) Erroneous: *Either* of those *three* men would fill the post well.

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Corrected: *Any one* of those *three* men would fill the post well,

- (2) Erroneous: *Neither* of these *five* students answered my question.

Corrected: *None* of these *five* students answered my question.

**Rule III. One.**—This pronoun is often used in the sense of any person or every person. Whenever “one” is used as the subject to a verb it must be followed by “one’s” and not by “his”.

- (1) Erroneous: One must take care of *his* health.

Corrected: One must take care of *one’s* health.

- (2) Erroneous: One should keep *his* own promise.

Corrected: One should keep *one’s* own promise.

**Rule IV. One, it.**—“One” as an indefinite pronoun is often used instead of some noun preceded by “a” while “it” is used for some noun preceded by “the”

- (1) Erroneous: I need a dictionary, but I have no money to buy *it*.

Corrected: I need a dictionary, but I have no money to buy *one*.

- (2) Erroneous: Do you want the book? No, I do not want *one*.

Corrected: No, I do not want *it*.

**Rule V. As, that.**—After “such” and “as”, the word “as” is always used. But after “the same”, it is not less common to use “that”. The use of “that” or “as” after “the same” is guided by the following rules:—

- (1) When a verb is expressed after it, we generally use “that”; (2) When the verb is understood, we always use “as”.