

# THE HINDU CLUB

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## THE 100 GOLDEN RULES OF ENGLISH GRAMMAR

Sovereign Error Detection & Sentence Improvement Compendium for SSC CGL, Banking & CDS

- Rigorous Subject-Verb Agreement, Pronoun Antecedents & Inversion Blueprints
- Transitive Reflexive Verbs vs Non-Reflexive Verbs Matrix (Aman Sir Synthesis)
- Mandatory Relative Pronoun 'That' Triggers & 'Out of Class' Parallelism
- Hypothetical & Unreal Conditionals (Zero, 1st, 2nd, 3rd Conditionals)
- 30 Exam-Level Spotting the Error Drills with Precise Grammatical Diagnostics

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## SECTION 1: PRONOUN MASTERY & ANTECEDENT RULES

Pronoun-related errors account for over 35% of all spotting-the-error and sentence improvement questions in competitive examinations. Candidates frequently confuse possessive forms, reflexive requirements, and relative pronouns.

### RULE 1: Possessive Adjectives vs. Possessive Pronouns

Possessive Adjectives (*My, Our, Your, His, Her, Its, Their*) MUST always qualify a following noun. Possessive Pronouns (*Mine, Ours, Yours, His, Hers, Theirs*) stand independently and NEVER take an apostrophe.

**Incorrect:** I have decided that I will not work at yours company anymore.

**Correct:** I have decided that I will not work at **your** company anymore.

**Incorrect:** Their is the best proposal submitted to the ministry.

**Correct:** **Theirs** is the best proposal submitted to the ministry.

### RULE 2: Mandatory Reflexive Pronouns with Specific Transitive Verbs

When the following verbs are used transitively and do not have a direct object, they MUST take a reflexive pronoun (*myself, ourselves, yourself, himself, herself, itself, themselves*):

**Key Verbs:** *avail, adapt, adjust, absent, acquit, exert, apply, hurt, prostrate, submit, resign, reconcile, introduce, enjoy, amuse, pride.*

**Incorrect:** He introduced to the Secretary as the new Section Officer.

**Correct:** He introduced **himself** to the Secretary as the new Section Officer.

**Incorrect:** You must avail of this opportunity immediately.

**Correct:** You must avail **yourself** of this opportunity immediately.

### RULE 3: Verbs That NEVER Take a Reflexive Pronoun

The following verbs describe inherent state or natural actions and NEVER take reflexive pronouns in standard English: *keep, stop, turn, qualify, bathe, move, hide, rest.*

**Incorrect:** He hid himself behind the curtain when the inspector entered.

**Correct:** He **hid** behind the curtain when the inspector entered.

**Incorrect:** You must keep yourself away from miscreants.

**Correct:** You must **keep** away from miscreants.

### RULE 4: Out-of-Class Comparison & the 'That of / Those of' Principle

Comparisons must be strictly homogeneous (comparing identical attributes). When comparing qualities or possessions, use **that of** for singular nouns and **those of** for plural nouns to avoid false comparisons.

**Incorrect:** The climate of Shimla is cooler than Delhi.

**Correct:** The climate of Shimla is cooler than **that of** Delhi. (Comparing climate to climate).

**Incorrect:** The roads of New Delhi are wider than Lucknow.

**Correct:** The roads of New Delhi are wider than **those of** Lucknow.

### RULE 5: Mandatory Use of Relative Pronoun 'That' Instead of 'Who' or 'Which'

Use 'that' instead of 'who' or 'which' in the following mandatory environments:

1. After superlative adjectives (*the best, the tallest, the most important*).
2. After limiting words: *all, the same, the only, none, nothing, little, few, any*.
3. When referring to both a human and an animal/non-living object simultaneously.

**Incorrect:** This is the same candidate who submitted the forged certificate.

**Correct:** This is the same candidate **that** submitted the forged certificate.

**Incorrect:** The boy and his dog who entered the sanctum were stopped.

**Correct:** The boy and his dog **that** entered the sanctum were stopped.

### RULE 6: Quantifiers, Fractions & Percentages with 'Of'

When expressions such as *All of, Some of, Most of, A lot of, Plenty of, 20% of, One-third of, Two-fifths of* are followed by a noun:

- If followed by an Uncountable Noun -> The verb is **SINGULAR**.
- If followed by a Plural Countable Noun -> The verb is **PLURAL**.

**Incorrect:** Some of the candidates was absent during the morning shift.  
**Correct:** Some of the candidates **were** absent during the morning shift.  
**Incorrect:** Two-thirds of the administrative budget have been exhausted.  
**Correct:** Two-thirds of the administrative budget **has** been exhausted.

### RULE 7: Parenthetical Connectors Do NOT Alter Subject Number

When two subjects are joined by parenthetical expressions—such as *as well as*, *along with*, *together with*, *in addition to*, *accompanied by*, *with*, *rather than*, *like*, *unlike*—the verb agrees strictly with the **FIRST SUBJECT**.

**Incorrect:** The Cabinet Minister, along with his personal secretaries, have arrived.  
**Correct:** The Cabinet Minister, along with his personal secretaries, **has** arrived.  
**Incorrect:** My colleagues as well as I are responsible for this oversight.  
**Correct:** My colleagues as well as I **are** responsible for this oversight.

### RULE 8: Correlative Conjunctions & the Proximity Principle

When subjects are joined by *either...or*, *neither...nor*, *not only...but also*, *or*, the verb agrees strictly with the **NEAREST (second) SUBJECT**.

**Incorrect:** Neither the supervisor nor the workers was present at the site.  
**Correct:** Neither the supervisor nor the workers **were** present at the site.  
**Incorrect:** Not only the students but also the professor are attending the symposium.  
**Correct:** Not only the students but also the professor **is** attending the symposium.

### RULE 9: 'A Number of' vs. 'The Number of'

- **A number of** + Plural Noun denotes 'many' and takes a **PLURAL VERB**.
- **The number of** + Plural Noun denotes a specific count and takes a **SINGULAR VERB**.

**Incorrect:** A number of applicants has qualified for the typing test.  
**Correct:** A number of applicants **have** qualified for the typing test.  
**Incorrect:** The number of vacancies in the central audit department are 450.  
**Correct:** The number of vacancies in the central audit department **is** 450.

### RULE 10: Inversion After Initial Restrictive or Negative Adverbs

When restrictive or negative adverbs (*Hardly*, *Scarcely*, *Barely*, *Seldom*, *Little*, *Never*, *No sooner*) appear at the beginning of a clause, partial inversion is mandatory: **Adverb + Auxiliary Verb + Subject + Main Verb**.

**Incorrect:** Hardly the officer had initiated the inquiry when fresh evidence emerged.  
**Correct:** Hardly **had the officer initiated** the inquiry when fresh evidence emerged.  
**Incorrect:** No sooner the bell rang, then the aspirants entered the hall.  
**Correct:** No sooner **did the bell ring than** the aspirants entered the hall. (*No sooner* correlates with *than*).

### RULE 11: Hypothetical Conditionals & the Subjunctive 'Were'

In imaginary or hypothetical present situations (Type-2 Conditionals), the past subjunctive **were** is used for ALL subjects, regardless of whether the subject is singular (I, He, She, It) or plural.

**Incorrect:** If I was the District Magistrate, I would order an immediate curfew.  
**Correct:** If I **were** the District Magistrate, I would order an immediate curfew.  
**Incorrect:** If he was a bird, he would fly across borders.  
**Correct:** If he **were** a bird, he would fly across borders.

### RULE 12: Past Unrealized Conditionals (Type-3)

When describing a condition in the past that did not occur: **If + Past Perfect (had + V3), Subject + would have + V3**.

**Incorrect:** If he worked diligently, he would have cleared the cut-off score.  
**Correct:** If he **had worked** diligently, he **would have cleared** the cut-off score.  
**Incorrect:** If you had alerted me, I would inform the nodal agency.  
**Correct:** If you had alerted me, I **would have informed** the nodal agency.

## SECTION 2: SPOT-THE-ERROR DIAGNOSTIC SPEED DRILLS

1. Neither the managing director (a) / nor the board members (b) / was convinced by the audit explanation. (c) / No error (d)
  - **Diagnostic:** Error in (c): Replace 'was' with 'were'. Under the proximity principle for 'neither...nor', the verb agrees with the plural subject 'the board members'.
2. He pride himself (a) / on being the only candidate (b) / who has cleared the interview on the first attempt. (c) / No error (d)
  - **Diagnostic:** Error in (a): Replace 'pride' with 'prides himself'. In (c), use 'that has cleared' because 'the only' requires the relative pronoun 'that'.
3. The population of Tokyo (a) / is substantially greater (b) / than any other city in Japan. (c) / No error (d)
  - **Diagnostic:** Error in (c): Replace with 'than that of any other city in Japan'. The population of Tokyo must be compared to the population (that of) another city.
4. Scarcely had the session started (a) / than the opposition members (b) / staged a walkout from the assembly. (c) / No error (d)
  - **Diagnostic:** Error in (b): Replace 'than' with 'when'. 'Scarcely/Hardly' correlates with 'when', whereas 'No sooner' correlates with 'than'.
5. One of the primary reasons (a) / why he failed to qualify (b) / were his complete lack of typing speed practice. (c) / No error (d)
  - **Diagnostic:** Error in (c): Replace 'were' with 'was'. The true subject is singular ('One of...'), not 'reasons'.