

SENTENCE CORRECTION

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13.2 SENTENCE CORRECTION

The very name of this section – i.e., Sentence Correction – makes it quite clear what it consists of. In its simplest form, you have to correct the error in a given sentence. The most common form of Sentence Correction question is the 'Highlighted Phrases' type, which follows the basic pattern. Another type is where no question sentence is given, only the options, one of which is the correct sentence.

13.2.1 Types of Format:

First Format

In the 'Highlighted Phrases' type of Sentence Correction question, a part or whole of a given sentence is highlighted. It may or may not have an error in it. The error can be of any kind – a grammatical error, a spelling mistake, incorrect syntax, an idiomatic error, etc. You have to identify the error (if present) and choose one of the four options which seem to be the most suitable correction. If there is no error, then choose the original sentence (which will be among the options).

Example:

I was taken aback to see a policeman marching my grocer down the street this afternoon.

1. I was taken aback to see a policeman marching my grocer
2. I was taken back to see a policeman marching my grocer
3. I was taken aback to see a policeman marched my
4. I was taken to back to see a policeman marching my grocer

Ans: **(1)**

Explanation:

'Taken aback' refers to when you're startled by something. When you're reminded of something from your past, you're taken back to that time, which is not the case here. So [2] and [4] are out. One should not shift from one tense to another if the time frame for each action or state is the same, so [3] is out. Hence, [1].

Second Format

The other format of this type of question is slightly different: instead of giving a sentence and repeating part or whole of it in the options, only the options are given, but they are clearly different versions of the same sentence. You have to choose which sentence is the most correct way of expressing that idea.

Example:

1. I drank all the water from the cistern when nobody was looking.
 2. I drunk all the water from the cistern when nobody was looking.
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3. I've drunk all the water from the cistern when nobody was looking.
4. I've drunk all the water from the cistern. When nobody was looking.

Ans: **(1)**

Explanation:

Many common verbs in English change form when their past tense is preceded by an auxiliary ("helping") verb: 'I have drunk' or 'I drank'. So [2] and [3] are out. [4] has two sentence fragments. Hence,[1].

13.2.2 Strategies for Sentence Correction:

1. The first step is to read all the options carefully. When tackling Sentence Correction questions – especially when the sentence is a long and complex one. The differences between each option may be very subtle, so you have to be alert. If, in fact, you come across an option that is **glaringly different** from the others, you can safely eliminate it, as it is not likely to be the correct option.

2. The most common and important kind of errors that you will find in Sentence Correction questions are **Grammatical errors**. These cover a vast area – e.g., incorrect tenses (as in the last example), incorrect pronouns, an adjective used instead of an adverb, etc.

3. Similar kinds of errors are **Syntax errors**. Syntax refers to the order in which words are placed in a sentence in order to convey the correct meaning. So, "a big, swarthy man" is correct syntax, but "a swarthy, big man" is not.

4. Another thing to look out for is **unnecessary verbosity**.

5. Also keep an eye open for **Spelling and punctuation errors**. These can be easily overlooked if you are not being careful.

This is a list of few types of errors that you will encounter in the sentence correction question. With a little practice, you can develop your own strategies. And once you get the hang of it, you will realise that Sentence Correction can be very easy – provided you have both good English language skills and keen powers of observation.

Exercise for practice

Improve the sentence by choosing the best alternative for the capitalised part of the sentence

1. The 'Three Musketeers' **HAVE BEEN WRITTEN** by Dumas.

- | | |
|----------------------|-----------------------|
| (a) are written | (b) are being written |
| (c) has been written | (d) no improvement |

2. **Having had** in the Foreign service for a long time, Mr. Verma has met many prominent personalities.

- | | |
|-----------------|--------------------|
| (a) having | (b) he has been |
| (c) having been | (d) no improvement |
-

3. Mr. Kumar is planning to settle in Chandigarh as soon as he **will retire** in June next year.

- (a) retires (b) is retired
(c) would retire (d) no improvement

4. What **DOES AGONISE ME MOST** is not this criticism, but the trivial reason behind it.

- (a) I most agonized (b) most agonizing me
(c) agonizes me most (d) no improvement

5. The enthusiastic voters **WERE QUEUING UP** outside the polling station since morning.

- (a) queued up (b) had queued
(c) had been queuing up (d) no improvement

6. The engagement ceremony **TOOK PLACE** in this very hotel lest Sunday.

- (a) was took place (b) did take place
(c) was taken place (d) no improvement

ANSWERS: -

1. (c) 2. (c) 3. (a) 4. (c) 5. (c) 6. (d)
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