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ENGLISH USAGE

Correct Usage

Word Usage

Here one has to find out the correct /incorrect usage of a particular given word out of the given four sentences.

Example 

Find incorrect usage:

Administer

1. The boy was administered the medicine by the doctor.
2. The way the event was administered was not proper.
3. His administer of the work wasn't fair enough.
4. Administer the task well or you will be doomed.

The option (3) talks about the 'administer' of the work not being good, which is a wrong usage. Answer: (3)

The question has often been received in two formats as under:

Format I: Here very simple words are used in various sentences and students are asked to identify the statement(s) where the word has not been used correctly. Students commit the cardinal error of looking for grammatical errors in the sentence, whereas what they are required to do is simply to identify the statement where the stem word is a misfit.

Format II: Here the types of words used are a little more difficult. Out of the illustrations provided, the students have to find out which illustration suits the best.

Let us have a look at the following few examples:

Format I:

1. **ADVANCE**
 - (1) Advance three paces.
 - (2) The discovery of antibiotics was a major medical advance.
 - (3) Property values are going to advance in the near future.
 - (4) She was planning for advance preparations to clear CAT this time.

“Advance” in option (1) and (2) is correct as it means to move forward or to progress.

“Advance” as in (3) is correct as it refers to increase in price .

The word “advance” in option (4) is superfluous in such sentences as “preparations” already refer to future. Hence, (4) is the answer.

2. **ENFORCE**

- (1) Have you any statistics that would enforce your argument?
- (2) The police are entrusted with the enforcement of law and order.
- (3) Such a strict rule is not easily enforceable.
- (4) The teacher enforced the children into obedience.

We can “enforce” a regulation or desirable behaviour as in (2) and (3), but we cannot enforce a person to do something or into doing something as in (4) (which is incorrect usage of enforce). “Enforce” in (1) is correct, which implies to give greater force or strength to an argument. Hence, (4) is the desired incorrect answer.

3. **DATA**

- (1) Feed the data into the computer.
- (2) Insufficient data were supplied for a reliable result.
- (3) The information captured is stored as a database and can be retrieved at any time.
- (4) The available data on acid rain in Northern Europe suggests that Britain is the chief culprit.

“Data” as we use means relevant facts and information, statistical material (used in plural form). In this regard options (1) and (2) are correct.

In (3), “database” refers to information prepared for or stored by a computer, hence is correct.

Option (4) highlights singular use of data (as indicated by “suggests” in the sentence, which should be suggest; alternatively ‘data’ can be replaced by “information” or “evidence”), which is incorrect usage of the word. Hence, (4) is the answer.

4. **RAGE**

- (1) The fierce battle raged for weeks
- (2) The long hike has given me a rage thirst.
- (3) Cholera is raging(v) out of control in the informal settlement
- (4) Many youngsters want whatever is the latest rage.

“Raged” in (1) means to continue violently, which depicts its correct usage.

(2) is the incorrect usage of “rage” grammatically as the correct usage would be to replace it with “raging” (intense, extreme).

In (3), cholera is spreading rapidly, which implies correct usage of raging in this sentence.

“Rage” in (4) means a temporary enthusiasm, craze or fad, which is correct. Hence, (2) is the answer.

5. **SCREAM**

(1) His bright purple shirt screams.

(2) Chickens have screamy necks.

(3) She’s an absolute scream, always cracking jokes.

(4) The car screamed along the highway at 140 km per hour.

“Screams” as used in (1) is correct as it means to be too conspicuous. Option (2) depicts incorrect usage of “scream” as “unattractively thin and bony” is not one of the meanings of screams.

“Scream” in (3) means a very funny person.

(4) – “Scream” means to move very fast, which depicts its correct usage.

Hence, (2) is the answer.

Format II:

1. **CARICATURE**

(1) Verbal description of people as hardworking bores.

(2) Sketch of the country’s premier in a newspaper with the nose protruding and a bulging out tummy to give humorous implications.

(3) A direct satire on the politicians.

(4) Somebody described as a stodgy fellow in a novel.

Sol. The word ‘caricature’ literally means an imitation or picture of a person, exaggerated for satirical effect. So option (2) best represents illustration of the word. (3) is only partially correct and cannot specifically be referred to as caricature, since a satire could take various forms and caricature could be of persons other than politicians.

2. **SWANSONG**

(1) An actor’s blockbuster movie before a long hibernation.

(2) A magnum opus by accomplished director, which can never be repeated.

(3) The piece de resistance in a show.

(4) The last stage show of a pop singer before her death.

Sol. 'Swan song' refers to the last act, final creative work of a person as before retirement or death. Option (1) is incorrect, as actor has been described as going in hibernation and not in retirement. Option (2) is incorrect again for the same reason, as the director does not stop making films. Option (3) uses the phrase 'piece de resistance', which literally means main item or event in a series. Only option (4) represents correctly usage of the word 'Swan Song'.

3. PLATONIC

- (1) A vagrant visiting bawdy houses quite often and hitting it off well with the hookers there.
- (2) A pimp's offering you the best catch in the region.
- (3) A friendly relationship mellowed over a period of time without physical intimacy.
- (4) The relationship between a doctor and a patient.

Sol. The term 'Platonic' is used to refer to something non physical. In the given sentences, though both option (3) and (4) represent non-sexual relationship, yet (3) is far better answer choice as it specifically defines the relationship being not physical.

4. ADULATION

- (1) A servant flattering his master.
- (2) A rodomontade bragging his exploits.
- (3) An applause given to the best performer in a show.
- (4) Sensual invitation of the lithe dancer in a dance show.

Sol. 'Adulation' means praise in a servile manner. Option (3) shall be incorrect for answer as it mentions that applause was given to the best performer, which is quite valid. This leaves only option (1): A servant flattering his master', as valid usage of the term 'Adulation'.

Match-Type 

The questions of this kind are very easy to attempt and generally increase the accuracy level to a high degree.

Let us see the following example.



SENIOR

1. older	(a) The senior partner in the firms signs the cheques
2. pensioners	(b) Prefects are chosen from among the senior pupils
3. with a higher rank	(c) He is my senior by 10 years.
4. older or advanced pupils	(d) Some cinemas and shops offer reduced prices to senior citizens.

1 2 3 4

1. c	
2. d	
3. b	
4. a	

1. c	
2. d	
3. a	
4. b	

1. c	
2. d	
3. b	
4. a	

1. b	
2. d	
3. a	
4. c	

Simply read the statements and match the meanings with them.

1. The statement (a), says –‘The senior partner in the firm signs all the cheques’.
2. Look at the left hand side column.
3. To sign a Cheque (an important work) you don’t need to ‘older’ or a ‘pensioner’ but a person of a higher rank. Even a pupil can’t sign a Cheque. So (3) will be matched with (a). Therefore, we are left only with options (2) & (4).
4. Now read the 2nd statement, ‘Projects are chosen from among the senior pupils’.

The only meaning which fits here is the 4th one. So (4) & (b) match.

Answer: (2)

One Word Substitution

The questions of this kind need a very good command of vocabulary.

Let us have a look at a couple of examples:

Example 

As the speaker wandered in his talk and did not keep to the subject, the audience grew impatient.

- (1) deviated (2) rambled
(3) swerved (4) equivocated

Deviate is to turn aside to only a slight degree; Ramble is to talk aimlessly without connection of ideas; Swerve to turn aside sharply or suddenly; and equivocate is to mislead. It is clear from the sentence that the speaker was talking aimlessly without connecting to his subject only to prolong his speech, so the best suited term from those given above is rambled as the speaker is just speaking.

Example 

His theatrical manner made even his sincere statements sound unconvincing.

- (1) play-acting (2) dramatics (3) histrionics (4) actions

What we need here is a specific term which can denote the affected or artificial manner of the person. Option (1) is incorrect since it is used to refer to dramatic manner in context of actors and plays. Option (2) Dramatics is a term commonly used to refer to dramatic effect. It can be kept on hold. Option (3), histrionics, is specifically used to refer to artificial or affected manner, and is most suited as answer in the present case. This marks it as correct answer.

**Usage of
Homonyms
Heteronyms
and confusing
words**



Another variation of vocabulary based questions could be homonym/heteronym usage. A homonym could be defined as a word with the same pronunciation as another but with a different meaning. (Ex.: bore and boar); a homophone. A heteronym, on the other hand, is a word with the same spelling as another or others, but with different meaning and pronunciation (Ex.: tear , a drop of water from the eye, and tear , to rip. There are some other confusing pairs of words. Such words have occasionally presented a dilemma to the student who is not confident about his word usage. It is important, therefore, to be conversant with the most common homonyms and heteronyms.

Example

1. The Prime Minister has given his assent / ascent / accent to the proposal.
2. The change has been effected / affected from the first day of the New Year.
3. I really don't expect to crack the CAT this year as my performance has been awesome / awful .
4. My friend helped bail / bale me out of trouble.
5. India and certain other Afro-Asian countries have formed a bloc / **block to bloc / block** the amendment.

The differences among some of the terms are pretty apparent. However, it is suggested that the students go through a comprehensive list of confusing words to be surer of their answer.