

Communication Skills

Vocabulary and Grammar for Professional Workplace Communication

1. Parts of Speech

Parts of speech are the basic grammatical categories into which words are classified, according to their function within a sentence. A sound understanding of the parts of speech forms the foundation for correct sentence construction and clear, effective communication, both in everyday and professional writing. The eight main parts of speech in English are summarised below:

Part of Speech	Function	Example
Noun	Names a person, place, thing, or idea	Engineer, Kolkata, machine, honesty
Pronoun	Replaces a noun to avoid repetition	He, she, it, they, this, who
Verb	Expresses an action or state of being	Run, design, is, become
Adjective	Describes or modifies a noun or pronoun	Strong, efficient, blue, ten
Adverb	Modifies a verb, adjective, or another adverb, often describing how, when, where, or to what extent	Quickly, very, yesterday, here
Preposition	Shows the relationship between a noun/pronoun and other words in a sentence	In, on, under, between, with
Conjunction	Connects words, phrases, or clauses	And, but, or, because, although
Interjection	Expresses sudden emotion or exclamation	Oh!, Wow!, Alas!, Hurray!

Correctly identifying and using the appropriate part of speech for each word in a sentence is essential for constructing grammatically accurate and meaningful sentences, particularly in professional and technical writing, where clarity and precision are of great importance.

2. Tenses

Tense is the grammatical feature of a verb that indicates the time at which an action or state occurs — past, present, or future — and, further, whether the action is simple, continuous (ongoing), perfect (completed), or perfect continuous (ongoing up to a point of completion). English has twelve main tense forms, arising from the combination of three

time periods (past, present, future) with four aspects (simple, continuous, perfect, perfect continuous), summarised below:

Tense	Structure (example with 'work')	Example Sentence
Simple Present	Subject + base verb (+s/es)	The technician checks the meter every morning.
Present Continuous	Subject + is/am/are + verb-ing	The technician is checking the meter right now.
Present Perfect	Subject + has/have + past participle	The technician has checked the meter already.
Present Perfect Continuous	Subject + has/have been + verb-ing	The technician has been checking the meter since 9 a.m.
Simple Past	Subject + past form of verb	The technician checked the meter yesterday.
Past Continuous	Subject + was/were + verb-ing	The technician was checking the meter when the power failed.
Past Perfect	Subject + had + past participle	The technician had checked the meter before the supervisor arrived.
Past Perfect Continuous	Subject + had been + verb-ing	The technician had been checking the meter for an hour before it was fixed.
Simple Future	Subject + will/shall + base verb	The technician will check the meter tomorrow.
Future Continuous	Subject + will be + verb-ing	The technician will be checking the meter at 10 a.m. tomorrow.
Future Perfect	Subject + will have + past participle	The technician will have checked the meter by noon.
Future Perfect Continuous	Subject + will have been + verb-ing	By next year, the technician will have been checking meters for a decade.

Correct and consistent use of tense is particularly important in professional workplace communication, such as in reports (which often use past tense to describe completed work, and present tense to state general facts or ongoing conditions), instructions and procedures (which often use simple present tense), and future plans or proposals (which use future tense).

3. Active and Passive Voice

Voice refers to the grammatical form of a verb that indicates whether the subject of a sentence performs the action (active voice) or receives the action (passive voice). Both forms are grammatically correct and widely used, but each is suited to different communication purposes, as summarised below:

Aspect	Active Voice	Passive Voice
Focus	Emphasises the subject performing the action	Emphasises the object receiving the action, or the action itself
Structure	Subject + Verb + Object	Object (as new subject) + form of 'to be' + past participle + (by + agent, optional)
Example	The engineer designed the bridge.	The bridge was designed by the engineer.
Typical Use	Direct, concise, commonly preferred in most general and technical writing	Used when the doer of the action is unknown, unimportant, or when the focus should be on the action/result, as often in scientific and technical reports

In professional workplace communication, active voice is generally preferred for its directness, clarity, and conciseness, particularly in instructions, emails, and general reports, since it clearly identifies who is responsible for an action. However, passive voice is often appropriately used in technical and scientific writing, such as describing an experimental procedure (“The sample was heated to 100°C”) or a process (“The report was submitted on time”), where the focus is more naturally placed on the action or outcome, rather than on the specific person performing it.

4. Remedial Grammar and Exercises

Remedial grammar refers to focused practice aimed at identifying and correcting commonly occurring grammatical errors, in order to strengthen a learner's overall command of accurate, professional written and spoken English. Some of the most frequently encountered grammatical errors, along with corrected examples, are given below.

4.1 Subject-Verb Agreement

A common rule of English grammar is that a singular subject must take a singular verb, and a plural subject must take a plural verb.

- Incorrect: The list of items are on the table.

- Correct: The list of items is on the table. (The subject is the singular noun 'list', not the plural noun 'items'.)
- Incorrect: Each of the students have submitted their assignment.
- Correct: Each of the students has submitted their assignment. ('Each' is treated as singular.)

4.2 Correct Use of Articles (a, an, the)

- Incorrect: She is engineer at a well-known company.
- Correct: She is an engineer at a well-known company. ('An' is used before a word beginning with a vowel sound.)
- Incorrect: I saw an European delegate at the conference.
- Correct: I saw a European delegate at the conference. ('European' begins with a consonant sound, /j/, so 'a' is used, not 'an'.)

4.3 Correct Use of Prepositions

- Incorrect: He is good in mathematics.
- Correct: He is good at mathematics.
- Incorrect: The report was submitted in Monday.
- Correct: The report was submitted on Monday.

4.4 Practice Exercise: Error Correction

Identify and correct the grammatical error in each of the following sentences:

1. The team of engineers are working on the new design.
2. She don't have the updated file.
3. Neither of the two proposals were accepted.
4. He is working in this company since 2019.
5. The data was collect by the survey team.

Answer Key: 1. 'are' should be 'is' (subject is the singular 'team'). 2. 'don't' should be 'doesn't' (subject 'she' is third-person singular). 3. 'were' should be 'was' ('neither' is treated as singular). 4. 'is working... since' should be 'has been working... since' (present perfect continuous is required with 'since'). 5. 'was collect' should be 'was collected' (correct past participle form is needed for the passive voice).

5. Professional Workplace Communication

Correct grammar, appropriate vocabulary, and clear sentence construction are essential components of effective professional workplace communication, whether in spoken conversation, meetings, emails, reports, or other written correspondence. Poor grammar or unclear language can lead to misunderstandings, reduce the clarity and credibility of a message, and create an unprofessional impression, regardless of the technical competence of the person communicating.

Some general guidelines for maintaining strong grammatical and linguistic standards in professional workplace communication include:

- Using complete, grammatically correct sentences, avoiding sentence fragments or run-on sentences, particularly in written communication such as emails and reports.
- Maintaining consistent tense throughout a piece of writing, unless a genuine shift in time frame is intended.
- Choosing active voice for most instructions and general communication, reserving passive voice for situations where the focus should be on the action or result rather than the performer.
- Proofreading written communication carefully before sending, to catch and correct grammatical errors, spelling mistakes, and unclear phrasing.
- Building and maintaining a strong professional vocabulary, appropriate to one's field, to communicate technical and general ideas precisely and confidently.
- Being mindful of tone and formality, adjusting vocabulary and sentence structure appropriately depending on the audience and the nature of the communication (for example, a formal report versus an informal team chat message).

Developing strong, accurate command of grammar and vocabulary, alongside the practical communication skills discussed elsewhere in this subject, equips a professional to communicate confidently, clearly, and credibly in any workplace setting.

6. Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs)

Answer the following questions by selecting the most appropriate option.

1. Which part of speech names a person, place, thing, or idea?

- A) Verb
- B) Noun
- C) Adverb

D) Preposition

2. Which part of speech is used to replace a noun to avoid repetition?

- A) Pronoun
- B) Adjective
- C) Conjunction
- D) Interjection

3. In the sentence 'She quickly repaired the machine,' the word 'quickly' is a/an:

- A) Noun
- B) Adjective
- C) Adverb
- D) Conjunction

4. In the sentence 'The tool is on the table,' the word 'on' is a/an:

- A) Preposition
- B) Conjunction
- C) Interjection
- D) Pronoun

5. Which of the following is an example of a conjunction?

- A) Quickly
- B) Because
- C) Beautiful
- D) Machine

6. The sentence 'The technician checks the meter every morning' is written in which tense?

- A) Simple past
- B) Simple present
- C) Present continuous
- D) Future perfect

7. The sentence 'The technician has been checking the meter since 9 a.m.' is written in which tense?

- A) Present perfect continuous
- B) Simple present
- C) Past perfect
- D) Future continuous

8. The sentence 'The technician had checked the meter before the supervisor arrived' is written in which tense?

- A) Simple past
- B) Past perfect
- C) Present perfect

D) Future perfect

9. In active voice, the sentence structure generally follows:

- A) Object + Verb + Subject
- B) Subject + Verb + Object
- C) Verb + Subject + Object
- D) Object only, with no subject

10. The passive voice of 'The engineer designed the bridge' is:

- A) The bridge designed the engineer.
- B) The bridge was designed by the engineer.
- C) The engineer was designing a bridge.
- D) The bridge is designing the engineer.

11. Passive voice is generally preferred in technical and scientific writing mainly because it:

- A) Always identifies the person performing the action
- B) Shifts the focus onto the action or result rather than the doer of the action
- C) Cannot be used to describe experiments or processes
- D) Requires more grammatical detail than active voice

12. Subject-verb agreement means that:

- A) The subject and verb must always be in the past tense
- B) A singular subject takes a singular verb, and a plural subject takes a plural verb
- C) The subject and object must be identical
- D) Verbs never change form

13. In professional workplace communication, grammatical accuracy is important mainly because:

- A) It has no effect on how a message is received
- B) Errors can create confusion, reduce clarity, and affect the credibility of the sender
- C) Grammar rules do not apply to workplace writing
- D) It only matters in personal, informal writing

14. Which of the following sentences is grammatically correct?

- A) The team of engineers are reviewing the design.
- B) The team of engineers is reviewing the design.
- C) The team of engineers were reviewing the design (with singular intent).
- D) The team of engineers reviewing is the design.

15. Remedial grammar exercises are primarily intended to:

- A) Introduce entirely new vocabulary unrelated to grammar
- B) Help learners identify and correct common grammatical errors
- C) Replace the need for reading comprehension practice
- D) Focus only on punctuation, ignoring sentence structure

Answer Key

1. B) Noun | 2. A) Pronoun | 3. C) Adverb | 4. A) Preposition | 5. B) Because | 6. B) Simple present | 7. A) Present perfect continuous | 8. B) Past perfect | 9. B) Subject + Verb + Object | 10. B) The bridge was designed by the engineer. | 11. B) Shifts the focus onto the action or result rather than the doer of the action | 12. B) A singular subject takes a singular verb, and a plural subject takes a plural verb | 13. B) Errors can create confusion, reduce clarity, and affect the credibility of the sender | 14. B) The team of engineers is reviewing the design. | 15. B) Help learners identify and correct common grammatical errors

7. Broad / Long Answer and Practice Questions

1. Identify the part of speech of each underlined word in the sentence: 'The (young) engineer (carefully) inspected the (machine) (before) the shift began.'
2. Explain the eight parts of speech, giving one original example sentence for each.
3. Explain the difference between simple present, present continuous, and present perfect tense, giving one example sentence for each.
4. Rewrite the following sentences in the tense indicated in brackets: (a) 'She completes the report.' (Present Perfect) (b) 'He checks the wiring.' (Past Continuous) (c) 'They submit the proposal.' (Future Perfect).
5. Explain the difference between active and passive voice, and convert the following sentences into passive voice: (a) 'The technician repaired the motor.' (b) 'The company will launch a new product next month.'
6. Convert the following passive sentences into active voice: (a) 'The report was written by the intern.' (b) 'The machine is being serviced by the technician.'
7. Identify and correct the grammatical errors in the following sentences: (a) 'Each of the workers have completed the training.' (b) 'She is working here since three years.' (c) 'The equipment were delivered yesterday.'
8. Explain why active voice is generally preferred for instructions and everyday professional communication, while passive voice is often used in scientific and technical writing.
9. Explain the importance of correct grammar and appropriate vocabulary in professional workplace communication, giving two examples of how poor grammar could create a negative impression.

10. Write a short paragraph (five to six sentences) describing your daily study or work routine, using at least three different tenses correctly, and underline (or highlight) each tense used.

Poly Notes Hub