START IELTS

IELTS Writing First Aid Kit

Six quick checks for the grammar mistakes that cost marks

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Good vocabulary only helps your score if you use the right form of the word.

How to use this kit: choose one kit, read the Quick Rule, then correct the five sentences.

Check your answers on the next page. Then use the checklist on your own writing before you finish.

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🩹 IELTS WRITING FIRST AID KIT #1

Articles: a, an and the

Articles are small words, but they appear in almost every sentence – so mistakes add up quickly.

📌 Quick Rule

a / an	one of many, or something mentioned for the first time: *a car, an idea*
the	something specific, or already mentioned: *the car I bought*
no article	plural or uncountable nouns in general: *Young people... Advice is...*

✅ Before you finish, check:

- [ ] Have I put **a** or **an** before every singular countable noun?
- [ ] Have I avoided **a / an** with plural and uncountable nouns?
- [ ] Have I used **the** for something specific or already mentioned?
- [ ] Have I left out **the** when I am talking about things in general?

⚡ Quick Practice

Find and correct the article mistake in each sentence.

1. Parents should give their children a good advice about money.
2. Having car can make travelling to work easier.
3. I bought a new laptop last month. A laptop is mainly for my studies.
4. Air pollution is serious problem in many large cities.
5. The young people often use social media to communicate.

Articles: a, an and the

✔️ Answers

1. Parents should give their children **good advice** about money.
   Advice is uncountable, so it cannot have *a*.

2. Having **a car** can make travelling to work easier.
   Car is singular and countable, so it needs an article.

3. I bought a new laptop last month. **The laptop** is mainly for my studies.
   The laptop has already been mentioned, so it is specific.

4. Air pollution is **a serious problem** in many large cities.
   Problem is singular and countable.

5. **Young people** often use social media to communicate.
   This is young people in general, so no article.

My score: ____ / 5

🚑 Your 1-Minute Check

Read your writing again, but this time look only at **a**, **an** and **the**.

Don't try to check everything at once. Focus on one type of mistake and correct the errors you already know how to fix.

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🩹 IELTS WRITING FIRST AID KIT #2

Subject–Verb Agreement

When the subject and verb don't agree, the examiner notices immediately – even in an otherwise good sentence.

📌 Quick Rule

singular subject	singular verb: *The number of cars **has** risen.*
plural subject	plural verb: *Many students **find** it difficult.*
he / she / it	add **-s** in the Present Simple: *Transport **provides**...*

✅ Before you finish, check:

- ☐ Does every **singular** subject have a singular verb?
- ☐ Does every **plural** subject have a plural verb?
- ☐ Have I added **-s** after he / she / it in the Present Simple?
- ☐ Have I checked long sentences where the subject and verb are far apart?

⚡ Quick Practice

Find and correct the subject–verb agreement mistake in each sentence.

1. The number of people working from home have increased.
2. Many students finds it difficult to manage their time.
3. Public transport in large cities provide an alternative to driving.
4. One of the main problems are the cost of housing.
5. Governments around the world needs to reduce pollution.

Subject–Verb Agreement

✔️ Answers

1. The number of people working from home **has** increased.
   The subject is *the number* – singular.

2. Many students **find** it difficult to manage their time.
   Students is plural.

3. Public transport in large cities **provides** an alternative to driving.
   The subject is *public transport*, not *cities*.

4. One of the main problems **is** the cost of housing.
   The subject is *one* – singular.

5. Governments around the world **need** to reduce pollution.
   The subject is *governments*, not *the world*.

My score: ____ / 5

🚑 Your 1-Minute Check

Find the **subject** of each sentence, then check its verb.

Pay particular attention to longer sentences. The words between the subject and the verb make agreement mistakes surprisingly easy to miss.

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🩹 IELTS WRITING FIRST AID KIT #3

Verb Tenses

The right tense tells the examiner exactly when something happened. The wrong tense can change your meaning.

📌 Quick Rule

last year, in 2015	Past Simple: *The number **increased**.*
since, so far	Present Perfect: *The city **has built**...*
nowadays / in the future	Present Simple / **will**: *People **use**... People **will work**...*

✅ Before you finish, check:

- [ ] Have I used the correct tense for the time I am describing?
- [ ] Have I kept the same tense when the time has not changed?
- [ ] Have I checked every **irregular** past tense?
- [ ] In Task 1, does the data refer to the **past**, the **present** or the **future**?

⚡ Quick Practice

Find and correct the verb tense mistake in each sentence.

1. Last year, the number of visitors increases significantly.
2. Many people used smartphones every day nowadays.
3. Since 2010, the city built several new housing developments.
4. The chart shows that unemployment falls sharply between 2018 and 2020.
5. In the future, more people worked from home.

Verb Tenses

✔️ Answers

1. Last year, the number of visitors **increased** significantly.
   Last year is finished time – Past Simple.

2. Many people **use** smartphones every day nowadays.
   Nowadays means now – Present Simple.

3. Since 2010, the city **has built** several new housing developments.
   Since connects the past to now – Present Perfect.

4. The chart shows that unemployment **fell** sharply between 2018 and 2020.
   The data is in the past. *Shows* stays in the present – the chart shows it now.

5. In the future, more people **will work** from home.
   In the future – use *will*.

My score: _____ / 5

🚑 Your 1-Minute Check

Look for **time markers** such as *last year, nowadays, since, between 2018 and 2020* and *in the future*.

Then check that each verb matches its time marker.

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🩹 IELTS WRITING FIRST AID KIT #4

Singular and Plural Nouns

A missing -s is one of the most common mistakes in IELTS Writing – and one of the easiest to fix.

📌 Quick Rule

many, several, a number of	plural noun: *several* ***reasons***
irregular plurals	*person → people, child → children, man → men*
uncountable nouns	no -s: *information, advice, research, equipment*

✅ Before you finish, check:

- ☐ Have I added **-s / -es** where a plural is needed?
- ☐ Have I used a singular noun when I mean more than one?
- ☐ Have I checked irregular plurals such as *people, children* and *women*?
- ☐ Have I accidentally made an **uncountable** noun plural?

⚡ Quick Practice

Find and correct the noun mistake in each sentence.

1. Many young person choose to study abroad.
2. The government should provide more informations about healthy eating.
3. There are several important reason for this change.
4. Modern technology has brought many benefit to society.
5. Young childs are spending more time online.

Singular and Plural Nouns

✔️ Answers

1. Many young **people** choose to study abroad.
   The plural of *person* is *people*.

2. The government should provide more **information** about healthy eating.
   Information is uncountable – never *informations*.

3. There are several important **reasons** for this change.
   Several is followed by a plural noun.

4. Modern technology has brought many **benefits** to society.
   Many is followed by a plural noun.

5. Young **children** are spending more time online.
   The plural of *child* is *children*.

My score: ____ / 5

🚑 Your 1-Minute Check

Scan your writing for **nouns**.

Look carefully at the words after *many, several, a number of* and *more*. Then check common uncountable nouns such as *information, advice* and *research*.

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🩹 IELTS WRITING FIRST AID KIT #5

Sentence Control

Long sentences don't impress the examiner if they are broken. Clear, complete sentences do.

📌 Quick Rule

every sentence	needs a subject and a verb: *Many people **cannot** afford...*
two sentences	join them with **and, but, so, because** – or use a full stop
a comma	cannot join two complete sentences on its own

✅ Before you finish, check:

- [ ] Does every sentence have a **subject** and a **verb**?
- [ ] Have I joined two complete sentences correctly?
- [ ] Have I used a full stop where a sentence has become too long?
- [ ] Can I understand every long sentence the first time I read it?

⚡ Quick Practice

Find and correct the sentence problem in each example.

1. Because many people cannot afford to buy a house.
2. Public transport is cheaper it can also reduce pollution.
3. Although working from home has several advantages. It can sometimes be isolating.
4. Many people drive to work, this causes serious traffic problems.
5. Governments should improve public transport because this would reduce traffic it could also lower pollution levels.

Sentence Control

✔️ Answers

1. Many people **rent** because they cannot afford to buy a house.
   A *because* clause is not a full sentence. Add a main clause, or remove *because*.

2. Public transport is cheaper**, and** it can also reduce pollution.
   Two complete sentences need a linking word or a full stop.

3. Although working from home has several advantages**,** it can sometimes be isolating.
   An *although* clause cannot stand alone – join it to the main clause.

4. Many people drive to work**. This** causes serious traffic problems.
   A comma alone cannot join two sentences. *..., which causes...* is also correct.

5. Governments should improve public transport because this would reduce traffic**.** **It** could also lower pollution levels.
   Too many ideas in one sentence – split it with a full stop.

My score: ____ **/ 5**

🚑 Your 1-Minute Check

Look at your **longest** sentences first.

If you have to read a sentence twice to understand it, make it simpler. A clear sentence is better than a complicated sentence with errors.

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🩹 IELTS WRITING FIRST AID KIT #6

Word Forms

Good vocabulary only helps your score if you use the right form of the word.

📌 Quick Rule

noun	a thing or idea: *an **improvement**, the **environment***
adjective	describes a noun: *an **effective** solution*
adverb	describes a verb or adjective: *increased **rapidly**, **completely** changed*

✅ Before you finish, check:

- [ ] Do I need a **noun**, **verb**, **adjective** or **adverb** here?
- [ ] Have I used an **adjective** to describe a noun?
- [ ] Have I used an **adverb** to describe how something happens?
- [ ] Have I checked longer words whose forms are easy to confuse?

⚡ Quick Practice

Find and correct the word-form mistake in each sentence.

1. There has been a significant improve in public transport.
2. Governments need to find an effect solution to this problem.
3. The number of visitors increased rapid last year.
4. Many people are concerned about environment problems.
5. Technology has complete changed the way people communicate.

Word Forms

✔️ Answers

1. There has been a significant **improvement** in public transport.
   After *a significant*, you need a noun.

2. Governments need to find an **effective** solution to this problem.
   An adjective describes the noun *solution*.

3. The number of visitors increased **rapidly** last year.
   An adverb describes how it increased.

4. Many people are concerned about **environmental** problems.
   An adjective describes the noun *problems*.

5. Technology has **completely** changed the way people communicate.
   An adverb describes the verb *changed*.

My score: ____ / 5

🚑 Your 1-Minute Check

Look closely at the words around **nouns** and **verbs**.

Ask yourself: Do I need a noun, verb, adjective or adverb here? A sophisticated word doesn't help if you use the wrong form.

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