

## Tours

The following provide an indication of tour content and cost. Itineraries will vary with the different agencies as will the rates. For bookings, contact your travel agent, hotel or refer to the list of travel agents listed in "Associate Members of the STPB." Please note prices given are subject to change.

Tour	Duration	Itinerary	Rates	
			Per person by coach	Per car (max. 4 passengers)
City Tour (daily)	3 to 3½ hours	Elizabeth Walk, Merlion Park, Supreme Court, City Hall, Singapore River, Chinatown, Sri-Mariamman Hindu Temple, Mount Faber, "Instant Asia", Cultural Show, Tiger Balm Gardens, Queensdown Housing Estate, Orchid Pavilion at Botanic Gardens, House of Jade. Some tours include the Singapore Handicraft Centre.	\$15 - 18	\$45 - 105
East Coast Tour	3 to 3½ hours (daily)	Merdeka Bridge (Chinese Junka), National Stadium, East Coast Park, villages, fishing ponds, rubber and coconut plantations, Crocodile Farm, Song Lim Temple & Garden, Temple of 1000 Lights.	\$12 - 18	\$45 - 105
Changi & East Coast Tour (by arrangement)	3 to 6 hours	Back factory, Changi Prison (Chapel and roof garden), Selarang Barracks, Changi Murals, Changi Village, East Coast Park, Singapore Handicraft Centre.	\$12 - 26	\$45 - 105
City & East Coast Tour (by arrangement)	6 to 7 hours	A combination of the City Tour & East Coast Tour with lunch included.	\$24 - 35	\$85 - 170
Jurong Tour (daily)	3 to 5 hours	Jurong Bird Park, Japanese Garden, Jurong Town. (Tour of Chinese Garden: optional, extra charge)	\$12 - 26	\$45 - 105
Flora & Fauna Tour (by arrangement)	3 to 5 hours	Mandai Orchid Garden & Zoological Gardens	\$12 - 26	\$45 - 105
			Admission fee for camera: 50 cents (still) \$2 (cine - Bird Park only)	
			Admission fee for camera (Zoo only): 50 cents (still), \$2 (cine)	

*Guidelines (Pete)*

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## Free Composition and Remedial Work

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Bright and McGregor (1970:130) express a commonly held attitude towards free composition.

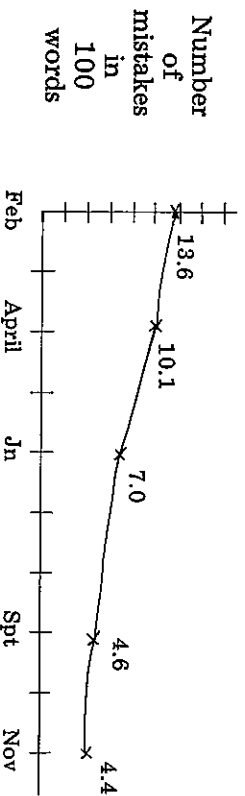
The pupil does not learn from his mistakes. If he did, the more mistakes he made, the more he would learn. Common experience, however, proves that the pupil who makes the most mistakes is the one who has learnt and will learn least. In theory no mistake should ever appear in writing, though it must be admitted that this ideal is unattainable in practice.

This article, however, presents evidence that mistakes can be starting points for learning and that in fact the learners who make most mistakes in writing can be expected to make most improvement. A procedure for handling free writing is described along with some useful grammatical rules of thumb.

### Improvement in free composition

A record was kept of the writing performance of a group of learners in the English department in a government teachers training college in Indonesia (Nation 1972). Each week the twenty-eight learners were told to write as much as they could in forty minutes.

The procedure followed in the classes is described in the next section. The graph shows the decrease in the average number of mistakes per hundred words. Similar results have been achieved with learners in other countries.



At the beginning of the year, every seven words contained a mistake. By the end of the year the rate was one mistake in

every twenty-two words. The average number of words written in each composition remained the same during the year at 340 words in 40 minutes.

The following table shows the average improvement made by the learners in relation to their score on the first composition they wrote.

Initial Score	n	Average Improvement
Number of mistakes in 100 words		No. of mistakes in 100 words
1 — 5	2	2.3
6 — 10	5	5.9
11 — 15	11	7.2
16 — 20	7	12.5
21 — 25	2	16.6
26 — 30	1	25.8

As predicted by Lado (1949) learners with the largest amount of mistakes at the beginning make the greatest improvement.

It is clear from the data given above that it is possible for learners to make rapid and very marked progress in controlling grammar and spelling in writing. Learners can expect to halve the number of mistakes they make after only ten pieces of writing. However, as the graph shows, improvement becomes much slower as the learners start making less than five mistakes per hundred words. It is not difficult to see the reason for this. Many of the mistakes that learners make when they begin composition writing involve points of grammar that they already know about, for example, subject-verb agreement, pronoun agreement, and the use of articles and words like *each*, and *some*, with countable and uncountable nouns. Moreover these mistakes occur very frequently. It is not unusual for a quarter of a learner's mistakes to involve countable and uncountable nouns. Once learners have the knowledge and motivation to get rid of this limited class of highly frequent errors, the number of mistakes per hundred words drops significantly. Improvement after this stage however is much slower because each type of mistake does not involve frequently occurring items.

Experience has shown the information on the graph to be typical of most intermediate-to-advanced learners. If most of the learners make more than about fifteen mistakes per hundred words it is better to do some form of guided composition like blackboard composition, group composition, or dicto-comp. If most of the learners are making less than five mistakes per hundred words, the graph will not be such a strong motivator because im-

provement will be slow and irregular, so it is better to shift attention to organization and style.

#### The procedure

For the composition class to run smoothly, there are certain steps to follow.

1. First the learners write their compositions. They should concentrate on producing a reasonable quantity of material rather than being over-concerned with the quality of the writing (Briere 1966).

2. After writing they count the number of words that they have written. The counting is done in the following way. They count up to fifty and make a stroke after the fiftieth word. . . . and he never saw/anything like . . .

They continue counting and make a stroke after each group of fifty words. If learners count groups larger than fifty, errors in counting are likely to occur. The total number of words is written at the end of the composition, e.g. 265 words. The teacher can easily check the accuracy of the counting by seeing if the distance between the strokes is roughly the same.

3. Then the writing is given to the teacher to mark. The marking is usually done out of class time. The marking is not correction. Using the marking system given below the teacher shows the learners where they have made mistakes (the signs in the text) and what types of mistakes they are (the signs in the margin). Learners should leave a reasonable margin on their writing to provide space for the marking signs.

4. The teacher counts the total number of mistakes and writes this figure above the total number of words. If the same mistake occurs twice it is counted as two mistakes.

5. The teacher calculates the number of mistakes per hundred words. This is the learner's 'mark' for the piece of writing. The calculation is done in this way.

$$\frac{\text{total mistakes} \times 100}{\text{total words}} = \text{mistakes per hundred words}$$

For example if a learner writes 265 words and makes 14 mistakes, the number of mistakes per hundred words is 5.2.

$$\frac{14 \times 100}{265} = 5.2$$

It is worth calculating to one decimal place particularly when the number of errors per hundred words is low. The calculation can be done by a calculator, slide rule, or learner.

6. The learners' work is returned to them and they correct their mistakes. They do not rewrite. This would involve the teacher in an unnecessary piece of remarking. They correct the mistakes on the piece of writing itself, preferably correcting in a different colour. Missing inflections are added to words in the text and misspelled words are written correctly directly above the mistake. All corrections are made as near as possible to the mistake. This is done to make rechecking easy for the teacher.

7. The learners come to the teacher one by one to have their corrections checked. Usually they are capable of correcting approximately three-quarters of their mistakes themselves. Where a learner is not able to correct a mistake the teacher gives suitable help and explanation. Mistakes that are common to many members of the class can be treated with the class as a whole. While the teacher is checking a learner's corrections the rest of the class carry on with the next piece of writing. However before starting a new piece they should correct any previous work that has been marked so that they can have it checked as soon as the teacher is free.

8. The learner's score (mistakes per hundred words) is entered on the graph. The vertical axis of the graph can go from 0 to 5, 0 to 10, or 0 to 20 depending on the performance of each learner. If the number of mistakes per hundred words is decreasing the teacher can give praise. If the mistakes do not decrease the learners can use the classification of mistakes (A mistakes vs. S mistakes etc.) to recognize where they need to be more careful.

#### Important features of the procedure

The procedure described above for practising free composition is successful for several reasons.

1. Quantity of writing is stressed. This emphasis is not to the exclusion of quality but is based on the assumption that
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plenty of practice in writing is one of the requirements for improvement. Concern for improvement in grammatical accuracy should not result in decreased output.

2. The graph plays an important role as a motivator for improvement. As a result of converting the number of mistakes into mistakes per hundred words, the learner can compare present performance with past performance and see the progress made. The teacher can also set a goal (say, 4 mistakes per hundred words) that has meaning for the learner and that the learner is capable of achieving. In a way the graph is also a form of punishment for careless work. If learners are not careful about mistakes, their line on the graph rises. It is not unusual for a learner to feel the need to apologize to the teacher when this occurs!
  3. Each learner gets personal attention. When the teacher checks each learner's correction (Step 7), there is opportunity for the teacher to find out exactly where the learner has difficulty, and there is opportunity for the learner to seek clarification on troublesome points. The teacher can also use this time to monitor the strategies that each learner uses to correct a particular error. Because the learner is receiving personal attention, any help given will be more meaningful because there is less opportunity for attention to wander and because the help is directed towards mistakes that have actually occurred.
  4. The procedure encourages self-correction. The marking system is used not to correct the learner's mistakes but to indicate where the mistakes are and what type they are. The learner's task is to do the correction. The signs in the margin of the piece of writing indicate what the learner has to be most careful about in the next piece of writing. It is worthwhile being serious about this self-correction. At the English Language Institute we have a set of "minimum requirements" for written work (see Appendix). If two of these mistakes occur in any of the learners' written work whether it is work for the composition class, an assignment on the content of the course, or a test, the marking stops and the work is returned to the learner for rechecking and self-correction before the marking is continued (George 1972: 79).
- The class can be divided into small groups and the whole group takes responsibility for checking before written work is handed in. There needs to be strong motivation for knowledge about the language to become applied to use of the language.
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**Self-correction**

Learners need certain knowledge and strategies in order to check their own work. The marking system provides the learners with clues. They must learn how to make the best use of them. Let us look at the graph and marking system and some of the more useful self-correction strategies. Each learner should have a copy of the graph and marking system.

The number  
of errors  
per 100 words


**The composition topic and date**

**The marking system**

The sign at the side of the page	The meaning of the sign	The sign in the piece of writing
S	Spelling	m̂k̂tle
P	Punctuation	Is it trueo
T	Tense	Yesterday I <u>go</u> .
V	Verb	It <u>h</u> easy
W	Wrong Word	I remembered him to do it.
Ns	Verb group Concord	(will finished) (had go)
	Leave out	I entered (of) school.
	Not a sentence because there is no subject	In my city/are many people.
Wo	Word order	I go there never.
A	Article	I have book.

G	Grammar (right word, wrong grammar)	I was success.
J	Joining words (conjunctions)	Although he wanted it, <u>but</u> he didn't get it.

Wrong word mistakes (W) are corrected by replacing the underlined word with a different word. Grammar mistakes (G) are similar except that the right lexical item has been chosen but either its grammatical form or the grammar of its sentence context is unsuitable. It is often necessary for the marker to make an arbitrary decision about which category to assign the mistake to.

The learners can be taught a system for correcting verb group mistakes. This system will allow them to make verb groups that are formally correct. The learners need to memorize the table and the rules. The following table lists most of the items that make up the first parts of English verb groups. Below the table are rules which govern how the parts of a verb group are combined.

5	4	3	2	1
can	have	is	is	stem
could	have	am	am	stem + ed
will	had	are	are	stem + ing
would	having	was	was	
shall		were	were	
should		been	been	
may		be	be	
might			being	
must				

### Rules

Items from position 5 are followed by the stem form of the verb.

Items from position 4 are followed by the stem + ed form of the verb.

Items from position 3 are followed by the stem + ing form of the verb.

Items from position 2 are followed by the stem + ed form of the verb.

*Can go* is a correct English verb group because *can* is from position 5, 5 is followed by the stem, and *go* is the stem. *Should have understood* is a correct English verb group because *should* which is from position 5 is followed by the stem *have*. *Have* which is from position 4 is followed by the stem + ed form understood. *Have been going* is a correct verb group. *Have* which is from position 4 is followed by *been* which is the stem + ed of *be*.



*Been* which is from position 3 is followed by *going* which is the stem + *ing*. The numbers for the verb group are 431. All the above verb groups are correct because they follow the rules under the table.

Article (A) mistakes involve more than just *a* and *the* (A) mistakes involve the use of countable and uncountable nouns. The three largest classes of English nouns are proper nouns, countable nouns, and uncountable nouns. Each class of nouns has a different grammar. Countable nouns can be singular or plural. Uncountable nouns act mainly like singular nouns but can occur without any item like *a*, *the* or *his* in front of them. When writing, it is possible to check if nouns have been used correctly by looking at each noun and going through the following steps.

1. Is the noun countable or uncountable? (If you can say one *x*, two *x* s, three *x* s, then the noun is countable. If not, it is uncountable.)
2. If the noun is countable, is it singular or plural? If you are checking your own writing, you can ask yourself, "Do I mean one or more than one?"  
If the noun is uncountable, it must not be plural, and it must not have *a*, *one*, *each*, or *every* in front of it.

3. If the noun is singular, does it have *a*, *the*, or a similar word (e.g. *his*, *John's*, *each*, *every*, *one*, *this*) in front of it? If it does not, you are wrong and must add a suitable word like *a* and *the*.

If the noun is plural, you must not have *a*, *each*, *every*, *this*, *that*, or *one* in front of it.

Here are the steps in the form of a diagram. The learners should memorize the steps. Whenever they see *A* on their work they should locate the noun and go through the steps.



2. S / P → no *a*, *each*, *every*, *this*, *that*, *one*

3. must have *a*, *the*, or a similar word in front of it

Note that several useful rules can be made from this diagram. Here are the most important ones.

\* A singular countable noun must have *a*, *the* or a similar word in front of it.

\* An uncountable noun cannot be plural.

There are other rules which can be made from the steps. Notice that uncountable nouns do not always need *the* or a similar word in front of them.

Mistakes with joining words (J) involve conjunctions, relative pronouns, and finite verbs. Finite verbs may also be involved in other types of mistakes so learners need to know what a finite verb is and need to know how to make use of this knowledge. English has two kinds of verb forms, finite and non-finite. A finite verb changes its form when we change the time from past to present or from present to past. In the sentence *This caused widespread alarm* we know that *caused* is finite because it changes to *causes* when we change to the present, *This causes widespread alarm*. Here are some more examples.

Past	Present
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<i>I was waiting for him.</i>	<i>I am waiting for him.</i>
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So *am* and *was* are finite because they change, but *waiting* is non-finite.

<i>I spoke to the people concerned.</i>	<i>I speak to the concerned.</i>
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So *spoke* and *speak* are finite, *concerned* is non-finite.

<i>This concerned you.</i>	<i>This concerns you.</i>	So <i>concern</i> and <i>concerned</i> are finite.
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Notice that a verb may be finite in one context but non-finite in another. It all depends on its position and function in a particular sentence.

*Can, could, will, would, shall, should, may, might, must* are always finite.

Here are the finite and non-finite forms of the verbs *be, give, mend, put, can*.

<i>Be</i>	<i>Give</i>	<i>Mend</i>	<i>Put</i>	<i>Can</i>
finite				
am	) give	mend	put	) can
are	)			)
is	gives	mends	puts	)
was	) gave	mended	put	) could
were	)			)

non-	be	give	mend	)	
finite	been	given	mended	)	put
	being	giving	mending	puting	—

We can make some rules about finite and non-finite verbs. There are some exceptions to the rules but they are generally true.

1. Every sentence (except a command) must contain a finite verb. (V mistakes)
2. If a sentence contains two finite verbs, it must contain one joining word. If it contains three finite verbs, it must contain two joining words and so on. (J mistakes)
3. In some positions in a sentence only non-finite verbs can occur. (G mistakes)
4. Present tense finite verbs must agree with their subject. (Concord mistakes) Non-finite verbs do not agree with their subject.

At advanced levels, free composition may be viewed as a kind of remedial work. Any remedial work requires a fresh approach to the language features that learners have not been successful with. Repetition of the approach that has previously been unsuccessful with that particular group of learners will have more negative than positive effects. Free composition in conjunction with self-checking is a way of coming at old problems from a new angle. Remedial work also requires realistic goals. Learners must feel that they can succeed. Charting their improvement on their own graphs provides encouragement and an opportunity to monitor their progress.

#### References

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- Bright, J.A. and McGregor, G.P. 1970. *Teaching English as a second language*. London: Longman.
- George, H.V. 1972. *Common errors in language learning*. Rowley, Mass.: Newbury House.
- Lado, R. 1949. The relation of entrance level to rate of progress in aural comprehension. *Language Learning* 2: 4. 105—122.

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## Appendix

### ELI Minimum Requirements:

Students' official work should be free from mistakes of the following kinds (I, II, III, IV, V apply to spoken as well as written English):

- I *Faulty concord* (1) of person (confusion of *he* and *she, his and her*)
- (2) of number (*Things which interferes... A teacher what ... Tell the pupil to put their .... pupil who are ...*)
- (3) of sentence subjects (*Public can't ... if he ...*)
- II Omission of 'be' in sentences with the SVA pattern. (*He very rich.*)
- III *Faulty Simple Present and Simple Past statement and questions (does not allowing, am go, are you go? did you asked?)*
- IV *Faulty concord of tense — irrational alternation of tense forms (When the students are ready you taught the next step.)*
- V *Faulty construction of noun groups*
- (1) Failure to use *a* or *the* or *his* or *a* similar word before a singular countable noun (*He put book on chair.*)
- (2) Use of *a* before an uncountable noun (*It is a good work.*)
- (3) Use of *a* or *the* before a capital letter noun (*The Mary left from the Wellington Airport.*)
- VI *Incorrect or omitted punctuation in respect of*
- (1) fullstops and question marks
- (2) the possessive apostrophe (*the pupils effort, it's environment*)

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*Incorrect or omitted punctuation in respect of*

- (1) failure to distinguish (in size or shape) between small and capital letters.
- (2) failure to use a capital letter to begin the first word of a sentence, and to begin the name of a person, town or country.

*VII Faulty spelling*

- (1) *their/there*
- (2) failure to double p t b d m n l (to preserve a preceding short vowel sound) when *-able*, *-ed*, *-ing*, are added, or mistaken doubling (*begining*, *the dining room*)
- (3) non-application (in common examples) of the "rule", for representation of /i:/ namely: *i* before *e* except after *c*: exception *seize* (*ceiling*, *recieve*)

## A Criterion-Based Composition Grading System

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Composition writing is the backbone of most college English courses. However, while the goals of writing have been reasonably well defined for native speaker composition courses, the goals of foreign student courses are not as clearly defined. As a result, foreign student papers are difficult to grade — primarily because of the lack of well defined criteria. A particular problem in ESL is that the emphasis in writing courses frequently leans heavily on syntactic and mechanical correctness, while little attention is given to the over-all structure and organizational pattern of the essay. However, local grammatical errors take longer to eradicate than is possible in a typical college level English program. More important, they are less serious — in terms of the paper's overall communicativity — than is the writer's failure to organize, focus, and support his ideas. We feel, then, that the emphasis in grading ESL student compositions should be placed on their communicativity; and local correctness, while it is certainly important, should be given relatively less weight.

A Criterion-Based Composition Grading System we have developed attempts to identify the elements of a highly communicative composition and to define each element in such a way as to make it possible to quantify the student's performance in that area. This system grew out of our dissatisfaction with other types of composition grading systems.

### Other Composition Grading Systems

The grading system we are most familiar with is the scale developed by the Testing and Certification Division of the University of Michigan's English Language Institute for evaluating Michigan Test Compositions by non-native writers. Basically, this system approaches the grading of compositions holistically by giving the grader one-paragraph descriptions of compositions at six levels. Each description focuses primarily on two factors: first, on how native-like the English is (which, considering the quality of most native-speaker freshman English essays, is a criterion of dubious value at best); and, second, on the number of sentence structure and mechanical errors. However, the scale does not evaluate the organization of the paper. Nor does the

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