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PRIMARY 6 · ENGLISH · GRAMMAR

Grammar

Theory and worked examples

What you need to know for the PSLE

In the PSLE, Paper 2 Booklet A begins with 10 grammar MCQs (Questions 1 to 10, 1 mark each). Each question is one sentence with one blank and four options. You shade your answer on the Optical Answer Sheet.
Grammar is also tested in Grammar Cloze, Editing and Synthesis, so these rules earn marks in Booklet B too.
The items that schools set most often are question tags, subject-verb agreement, relative pronouns, quantifiers, conditionals, verb forms after certain verbs, connectors and prepositions. This chapter teaches each of them.

> KEY IDEA
> **Every grammar MCQ has a clue in the sentence. If you cannot find the clue, read the sentence again from the beginning.**
> **Timing: Grammar MCQ, about 1 minute each; Grammar Cloze, about 8 minutes.**

- Step 1: Read the WHOLE sentence before you look at the options.
- Step 2: Find the clues: the true subject, the time words (yesterday, since, by the time) and the joining words.
- Step 3: Cross out distractor phrases such as 'as well as his friends'.
- Step 4: Try each option in the blank and say the sentence in your head. Choose the one that is correct by RULE, not the one that just sounds familiar.

Practice paper section	What you do	Marks
A: Grammar MCQ, Set 1	Choose the correct option (1, 2, 3 or 4).	20 × 1
B: Grammar MCQ, Set 2	More MCQs, including the patterns in 'Other patterns schools test'.	20 × 1
C: Correct form of the word	Change the word in brackets so that it fits the sentence.	10 × 1
D: Sentence correction	One word in CAPITALS is wrong. Write the correct word.	10 × 1
E: Mixed review	Write ONE word that completes each sentence. Every rule in the chapter can appear.	8 × 1

Subject-verb agreement: find the true subject

The verb must agree with its subject. A singular subject takes a singular verb (is, was, has, plays). A plural subject takes a plural verb (are, were, have, play).
The hard part is finding the TRUE subject. Long subjects and attached phrases are put there to trick you.

Pattern	Rule	Example
as well as / together with / along with / with / in addition to	Ignore the attached phrase. Agree with the first subject.	My aunt, together with her three children, IS flying to Perth.
Noun + of-phrase	The noun BEFORE 'of' is the subject.	The box of crayons IS on the shelf. The keys to the storeroom ARE missing.
X and Y	Two subjects joined by 'and' are plural.	The cat and the dog ARE asleep.
One dish or idea	Treat it as one thing.	Rice and curry IS my favourite lunch.
There is / There are	Agree with the first noun after it.	There IS a pen and two rulers in my bag.

WORKED EXAMPLE

The leader of the scouts, along with two parent volunteers, _____ the campsite every evening.
(1) check (2) checks (3) are checking (4) have checked

1. Cross out the attached phrase 'along with two parent volunteers'.
2. The noun before 'of' is 'leader', so the subject is singular.
3. 'every evening' shows a habit, so we need the simple present.
4. (1) check and (3) are checking are plural. (4) have checked is plural and is the wrong tense for a habit.

(2) checks

TRY THIS T1 · answer in the Answer Key at the back

Choose: The basket of mangoes on the kitchen table (was / were) a gift from our neighbour.

Answer: _____

Subject-verb agreement: tricky subjects

Some subjects look plural but are singular, and some look singular but are plural. Learn these by heart.

Subject	Verb	Example
either ... or / neither ... nor	agrees with the NEARER subject	Neither my sister nor my cousins WERE at home. Either the twins or Farhan IS bringing the cake.
each / every / each of / either of / neither of / one of / none of	singular	Each of the classrooms HAS a fan. One of my uncles IS a pilot.
everyone / everybody / nobody / someone / anything	singular	Everybody IS ready for the photo.
everyone but X and Y / all except X	'everyone' is singular; 'all' + plural noun is plural	Everyone but Priyanka and Wei Ling WAS on time. All the girls except Wei Ling ARE in the choir.
collective nouns: team, class, family, committee, jury, crowd	singular when the group acts as one; plural when the members act separately or disagree	Our class IS going to the zoo. The jury WERE divided in their opinions.
uncountable nouns: furniture, luggage, news, information, equipment, money, advice	singular	The news WAS good. The equipment HAS been checked.
a gerund (-ing word) as subject	singular	Skipping IS good exercise.
the number of / a number of	'The number of' is singular. 'A number of' (= many) is plural.	The number of visitors HAS risen. A number of visitors HAVE complained.
one of the + plural noun + who/that	the verb after 'who' agrees with the plural noun	She is one of the girls who SING in the choir.
the elderly / the poor / police / people / cattle	plural	The police ARE here.

> QUICK REMINDER
> Tricky subjects: 'police' and 'people' never end in -s, yet they are plural, so do not be fooled by the missing -s. Example: The police have (NOT has) closed the road after the accident.

WORKED EXAMPLE

Neither the teacher nor her pupils _____ the answer to the riddle yesterday.
(1) knows (2) know (3) knew (4) has known

1. With 'neither ... nor', look at the subject NEARER the verb: 'her pupils' (plural).
2. 'yesterday' is a past time clue, so we need the simple past.
3. (1) knows and (2) know are present tense. (4) has known is singular and present perfect, which cannot go with 'yesterday'.

(3) knew

TRY THIS T2 · answer in the Answer Key at the back

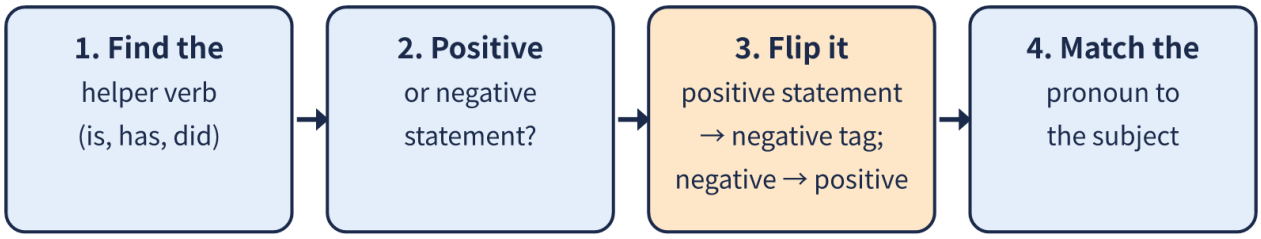
Choose the correct verb: Every one of the cupcakes (was / were) sold before noon.

Answer: _____

Question tags

A question tag is the short question at the end of a statement, such as 'isn't it?' or 'did they?'. It appears in almost every school's prelim paper.
The main rule: a positive statement takes a negative tag, and a negative statement takes a positive tag. Use the same helper verb as the statement. If there is no helper verb, use do, does or did.

Trap	Rule	Example
hardly, barely, rarely, seldom, scarcely, never, no one, nothing	These make the statement NEGATIVE, so the tag is POSITIVE.	Farhan rarely eats sweets, DOES HE? There is nothing left, IS THERE?
's	's = is or has. Look at the next word.	She's tired, ISN'T SHE? (is) She's tidied up, HASN'T SHE? (has + past participle)
'd	'd = had or would. 'd + past participle = had. 'd + base verb = would.	He'd eaten, HADN'T HE? He'd like tea, WOULDN'T HE?
I am	The tag is 'aren't I'.	I am late, AREN'T I?
Let's	The tag is 'shall we'.	Let's start now, SHALL WE?
Commands	The tag is 'will you'.	Pass me the salt, WILL YOU?
everyone, nobody, someone	Use 'they' in the tag.	Nobody called, DID THEY?
this / that, nothing, everything	Use 'it' in the tag.	That was fun, WASN'T IT?



The twins HAVE finished their lunch → positive → HAVEN'T + they

The twins have finished their lunch, haven't they?

WORKED EXAMPLE

The puppy has barely touched its food, _____?

(1) has it (2) hasn't it (3) does it (4) doesn't it

1. The helper verb is 'has', so the tag uses 'has'. (3) and (4) are wrong.
2. 'barely' makes the statement negative, so the tag is positive.
3. (2) hasn't it is negative, so it is the trap.

(1) has it

TRY THIS T3 · answer in the Answer Key at the back

Complete the tag: Let's walk to the hawker centre, _____?

Answer: _____

Tenses: perfect and continuous forms

Find the time clue. Two past actions? Label them '1st' and '2nd': the 1st takes 'had' + pp.

Tense	Form	Use and clue words	Example
Present perfect	has / have + pp (past participle)	began in the past, still true now (since, for, already, yet, just)	We HAVE LIVED here since 2020.
Past perfect	had + pp	the EARLIER of two past actions (by the time, before)	The rain HAD STOPPED when we left.
Present continuous	am / is / are + -ing	now, or a planned future (at the moment)	Mum IS COOKING dinner now.
Past continuous	was / were + -ing	in progress in the past, often interrupted (while)	I WAS READING when the lights went out.
Present perfect continuous	has / have been + -ing	since / for, up to now	The workers HAVE BEEN DIGGING since Monday.
Past perfect continuous	had been + -ing	for a length of time before a past event	They HAD BEEN WAITING for an hour.

CHAPTER 1

Practice Questions

Part 2: Grammar



In the practice questions

68 questions, 68 marks. Read each question carefully, then write your answers in the spaces given. The answers are on page 314.

- Section A: Grammar MCQ, Set 1: 20 questions, 20 marks
- Section B: Grammar MCQ, Set 2: 20 questions, 20 marks
- Section C: Correct Form of the Word: 10 questions, 10 marks
- Section D: Sentence Correction: 10 questions, 10 marks
- Section E: Mixed Review: 8 questions, 8 marks

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

PRIMARY 6 · ENGLISH · GRAMMAR

Grammar

Section A: Grammar MCQ, Set 1

For each question from 1 to 20, choose the correct answer and write its number (1, 2, 3 or 4) in the brackets provided. The questions get harder as you go; Questions 17 to 20 are Challenge questions. Grammar MCQ: about 1 minute each. (20 marks)

1 Wei Ling's new school bag is very similar _____ the one she lost. ( ) [1]

(1) to (2) with (3) from (4) as

2 The boy _____ bicycle was left at the void deck came back for it after dinner. ( ) [1]

(1) whose (2) who (3) whom (4) which

3 _____ the long queue at the hawker centre, Darren waited patiently for his chicken rice. ( ) [1]

(1) Although (2) However (3) Unless (4) Despite

4 Only _____ of the forty pupils in Priyanka's class forgot their consent forms, so Madam Siti was pleased. ( ) [1]

(1) a little (2) much (3) a few (4) little

5 Wei Ling is looking forward to _____ her cousins from Penang during the holidays. ( ) [1]

(1) meet (2) met (3) have met (4) meeting

6 Madam Siti is the teacher to _____ we handed our project proposal. ( ) [1]

(1) who (2) which (3) whom (4) whose

7 Mr Koh, as well as his two sons, _____ at the community centre every Saturday morning. ( ) [1]

(1) volunteer (2) volunteers (3) are volunteering (4) have volunteered

8 Neither the coach nor the players _____ expecting the heavy rain yesterday. ( ) [1]

(1) was (2) is (3) has been (4) were

9 Farhan seldom forgets to water the plants on the balcony, _____? ( ) [1]

(1) does he (2) doesn't he (3) is he (4) isn't he

10 The number of pupils who cycle to school _____ grown steadily over the past three years. ( ) [1]

(1) have (2) are (3) is (4) has

11 All the luggage _____ already been loaded onto the coach when Darren realised his water bottle was missing. ( ) [1]

(1) had (2) have (3) has (4) were

12 We heard the choir _____ the National Day song as we walked past the hall. ( ) [1]

(1) sings (2) sing (3) to sing (4) sang

13 Having _____ the dishes, Farhan sat down to finish his Science homework. ( ) [1]

(1) washing (2) washed (3) wash (4) washes

14 All library books _____ by Friday, or a fine of $0.50 a day will be charged. ( ) [1]

(1) must be returned (2) must return
(3) must be returning (4) must have returned

15 Darren wishes he _____ more carefully before the spelling test last Friday. ( ) [1]

(1) revises (2) had revised (3) has revised (4) revised

16 Everyone but Darren and Farhan _____ already handed in the consent form. ( ) [1]

① have ② has ③ are ④ were

17 (Challenge) She'd already left the hall by the time we arrived, _____? ( ) [1]

① wouldn't she ② didn't she ③ hadn't she ④ had she

18 (Challenge) You _____ bought so much bread. Grandma had already baked two loaves for us. ( ) [1]

① mustn't have ② couldn't have ③ needn't have ④ wouldn't have

19 (Challenge) _____ Darren known about the road closure, he would have taken a different route to school. ( ) [1]

① If ② Should ③ Were ④ Had

20 (Challenge) Priyanka _____ the clean tablecloth neatly on the table before the guests arrived. ( ) [1]

① lay ② lied ③ laid ④ layed

Section B: Grammar MCQ, Set 2

For each question from 21 to 40, choose the correct answer and write its number (1, 2, 3 or 4) in the brackets provided. This set also tests the patterns in 'Other patterns schools test'. Questions 37 to 40 are Challenge questions. Grammar MCQ: about 1 minute each. (20 marks)

21 Priya hopes to become _____ university lecturer one day. ( ) [1]

① an ② a ③ the ④ one

22 The colour of the new school uniforms _____ chosen by the pupils themselves last year. ( ) [1]

① were ② have been ③ was ④ are

23 The principal, along with the camp teachers, _____ waiting at the school gate when the bus arrived last night. ( ) [1]

① was ② were ③ are ④ have been