

# PRACTICAL ENGLISH USAGE

*Michael Swan • Complete Multi-Volume Master Diagnostic Compendium*

**UNABRIDGED ANALYTICAL BLUEPRINT**

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## A–Z REFERENCE OVERVIEW MAP

This comprehensive reference matrix systematically itemizes grammar, usage, and syntactic parameters across detailed structural blocks, mirroring the exact functional methodology of Michael Swan’s definitive guide.

<b>Section A</b>	Determiners, Advanced Articles, Adjective Hierarchies, and Nominal Modification (Entries 1–15)
<b>Section B</b>	Tense, Aspectual Splicing, Future Timelines, and Perfective Domain Constraints (Entries 16–35)
<b>Section C</b>	Relative Clauses, Wh-Movement, Pronoun Doubling, and Preposition Placement (Entries 36–55)
<b>Section D</b>	Modality, Epistemic vs. Deontic Systems, and Subjunctive Matrix Clauses (Entries 56–75)
<b>Section E</b>	Lexical Confusion Matrices, Suffix Splicing, and Structural Pitfalls (Entries 76–100)

## SECTION A: DETERMINERS, ARTICLES, AND ADJECTIVES

### 1. any: non-assertive constraints in positive environments

A frequent area of confusion is using *any* in basic positive declarative sentences when a specific quantity is intended. *Any* implies unlimited choice or "no matter which." For a definite but unspecified group or quantity, *some* is mandatory.

- ✗ *"I have any custom configuration profiles configured inside the environment host."*
- ✓ **"I have some custom configuration profiles configured inside the environment host."**
- ✓ **"You can run any custom profile; the scheduler treats them identically."**

**Core Distinction:** Use *some* when asserting existence; use *any* when choice is entirely unrestricted or free.

### 2. articles: functional zero-article rules for primary institutions

When terms like *school*, *hospital*, *prison*, *university*, or *work* are used to focus on the primary institutional purpose or activity, they drop the definite article. Introducing the article shifts the meaning to a specific physical asset or geographic structure.

- ✗ *"The sysadmin went to the work at midnight to verify the storage arrays."*
- ✓ **"The sysadmin went to work at midnight to verify the storage arrays."**
- ✓ **"The contractor is visiting the work site tomorrow morning to check the power."**

### 3. adjectives: rigid multi-modifier sequencing order

When multiple descriptive adjectives modify a single head noun, English enforces a highly specific linear hierarchy: Opinion, Size, Age, Shape, Color, Origin, Material, Purpose. Breaking this natural chain yields awkward, ungrammatical phrasing.

✗ *"They allocated an enterprise metal brand-new storage enclosure for the cluster."*

✓ **"They allocated a brand-new enterprise metal storage enclosure for the cluster."**

### 4. all vs. whole: structural variations with singular count nouns

While both words denote completeness, they follow entirely different determiner placement rules. *All* is placed before additional determiners (like articles or possessives), whereas *whole* is placed after them.

✗ *"The all network architecture was completely redesigned after the breach."*

✓ **"The whole network architecture was completely redesigned after the breach."**

✓ **"All the network architecture was updated over the weekend."**

## SECTION B: TENSE, ASPECT, AND VERB PHRASE COMPLICATIONS

### 16. future time: will vs. be going to for immediate vs. planned events

*Will* is used for spontaneous decisions made at the precise moment of speaking, or for objective future facts. Conversely, *be going to* indicates a pre-existing plan, intention, or clear visible evidence in the present moment.

✗ *"The server room temperature is climbing rapidly; I am going to reboot it."*

✓ **"The server room temperature is climbing rapidly; I will reboot it right now."**

✓ **"We are going to migrate our virtual assets to the new cloud infrastructure next quarter."**

### 18. future time: mandatory present aspect in subordinate temporal clauses

In adverbial clauses of time introduced by conjunctions such as *when*, *as soon as*, *before*, *after*, or *until*, the future marker *will* cannot be used to denote future time. The simple present or present perfect is required instead.

✗ *"The diagnostic will run as soon as the compute node will complete its routine."*

✓ **"The diagnostic will run as soon as the compute node completes its routine."**

**Systemic Rule:** The future aspect is locked inside the main predicate clause; dependent conditional/temporal anchors default to present forms.

## 24. perfective aspect: past time boundaries and temporal exclusion

The present perfect tense bridges past actions with current significance and is explicitly incompatible with closed past-time specifiers (such as *yesterday*, *last year*, *at 3:00 PM*). If a precise, finished past point is named, the simple past must be applied.

- ✗ *"Our infrastructure team has deployed the updated hypervisor kernel yesterday afternoon."*
- ✓ **"Our infrastructure team deployed the updated hypervisor kernel yesterday afternoon."**

## 29. since: tense rules and aspectual changes in anchoring matrices

When *since* introduces a temporal boundary condition, the verb in the *since*-clause typically uses the simple past tense, while the main matrix verb uses the present perfect to map duration up to the present.

- ✗ *"Since we have changed the routing protocols, network telemetry is stable."*
- ✓ **"Since we changed the routing protocols, network telemetry has been stable."**

# SECTION C: RELATIVE STRUCTURES AND SYNTACTIC MOVEMENTS

## 36. relative clauses: non-defining vs. defining punctuation structural shifts

Defining relative clauses provide essential identification details and take no commas. Non-defining relative clauses offer non-essential, extra information, must be enclosed in commas, and can never use the pronoun *that*.

- ✗ *"The core storage array, that handles database requests, is experiencing latency."*
- ✓ **"The core storage array, which handles database requests, is experiencing latency."**
- ✓ **"The storage array that handles database requests is experiencing latency."**

## 41. relative pronouns: avoiding redundant shadow pronouns

Because a relative pronoun functions as the syntax representative for the object or subject within the relative clause, adding a matching personal pronoun creates an illegal structural duplication error.

- ✗ *"This is the configuration template file which the developer adjusted it last night."*
- ✓ **"This is the configuration template file which the developer adjusted last night."**

#### 48. prepositions: stranded vs. fronted registers in complex structures

Preposition stranding (placing the preposition at the end of a relative clause) is standard in everyday spoken English. In formal or technical documentation, fronting the preposition before *which* or *whom* is preferred, but requires removing informal pronouns like *that*.

- ✓ "The production host that we applied the software patch to is now fully stable." (Spoken/Standard)
- ✓ "The production host to which we applied the software patch is now fully stable." (Formal/Technical)

## SECTION D: MODALITY AND SUBJUNCTIVE MOOD MATRIX SYSTEMS

#### 56. must vs. have to: epistemic necessity and root authority

*Must* generally conveys internal necessity originating from the speaker's own judgment or authority. *Have to* represents external necessity driven by rules, regulations, or outside circumstances.

- ✗ "~~The system tells me I must change my credentials every 90 days.~~"
- ✓ "The system tells me I have to change my credentials every 90 days."
- ✓ "I must remember to log off before leaving the secure environment."

#### 62. should have: unfulfilled past events and retrospective evaluations

The modal configuration *should have* combined with a past participle is used to evaluate past actions. It states that an ideal action or expected event did not occur.

- ✗ "~~The engineers must have backed up the configuration, but they completely forgot.~~"
- ✓ "The engineers should have backed up the configuration, but they completely forgot."

#### 70. subjunctive: mandative structures and non-inflected bare infinitives

In formal or technical clauses following verbs of demand, urgency, or request (such as *insist*, *recommend*, *demand*, *imperative*), the subordinate clause verb must be a bare infinitive. It remains unaffected by person, number, or tense markers.

- ✗ "~~The senior engineer recommended that the administrator updates the server directly.~~"
- ✓ "The senior engineer recommended that the administrator update the server directly."

## SECTION E: LEXICAL CONFUSION MATRICES AND SYNTACTIC TRAPS

### 76. affect vs. effect: functional distinction between verb and nominal forms

*Affect* is primarily used as a verb meaning to influence or produce a change in something. *Effect* is predominantly used as a noun meaning the result or outcome of a change.

- ✗ *"The misconfigured routing table had a severe negative affect on network throughput."*
- ✓ **"The misconfigured routing table had a severe negative effect on network throughput."**
- ✓ **"High environmental temperatures directly affect hypervisor reliability."**

### 84. asymmetric verbs: borrow vs. lend orientation paths

These verbs describe the same transaction from opposite perspectives. *Borrow* means to take something from someone with the intention of returning it (movement toward the subject). *Lend* means to give something to someone temporarily (movement away from the subject).

- ✗ *"Could you please borrow me your testing console for this afternoon's deployment?"*
- ✓ **"Could you please lend me your testing console for this afternoon's deployment?"**
- ✓ **"I need to borrow a testing console from the staging lab."**

### 92. economic vs. economical: macro-scale settings vs. thriftiness

*Economic* relates directly to the field of economics, trade, or large-scale industry finances. *Economical* means thrifty, cost-effective, or minimizing waste.

- ✗ *"Upgrading to solid-state drives is a highly economic choice for server lifecycle budgets."*
- ✓ **"Upgrading to solid-state drives is a highly economical choice for server lifecycle budgets."**

### 100. lay vs. lie: transitive alignment versus intransitive positioning

*Lay* is a transitive verb requiring a direct grammatical object; it means to place something down carefully. *Lie* is an intransitive verb that cannot take a direct object; it means to rest or remain in a horizontal position. This distinction is often broken across past tense inflections.

- ✗ *"The backup backup media has been laying on the hot equipment rack since last Tuesday."*
- ✓ **"The backup backup media has been lying on the hot equipment rack since last Tuesday."**
- ✓ **"Please lay the backup media on the storage desk after the validation cycle completes."**

## How to Use This Appendix

This appendix adds practice exercises, phrase banks, study plans and reference notes aligned with the main guide. Work through one section per study session and review your notes weekly.

## Extended Study Material

The following sections were prepared by Mubashir Mehdi for LifeWithBooks to supplement this guide with additional explanations, examples and practice. Work through them after reading the main chapters.

## The Go-To Grammar Reference

Practical English Usage by Michael Swan, published by Oxford University Press, is one of the most widely used grammar and usage references in the English-teaching world. Now in its fourth edition, it covers over 600 points of grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation that cause difficulty for learners of English - and for their teachers.

## How the Book Is Organized

Entries are arranged alphabetically for quick reference. Each entry focuses on a specific problem area - from articles and tenses to easily confused words, spelling rules and punctuation. Entries are short, clearly written and packed with natural example sentences that show how the language actually works in practice.

A detailed table of contents and extensive cross-referencing system make it easy to find related topics. If you look up 'wish', for example, cross-references will lead you to related entries on 'if', 'would rather', subjunctive forms and hypothetical past tenses.

## Trusted by Teachers Worldwide

The book is used in teacher training programmes, university linguistics courses and translation departments around the world. It strikes a unique balance - linguistically accurate enough for professionals, yet clearly written enough for advanced learners to use independently.

Michael Swan's explanations avoid unnecessary jargon, focus on what learners actually need to know, and address the real mistakes that students make rather than invented textbook errors. The fourth edition has been thoroughly updated with new corpus-based examples and coverage of current usage trends.

## Preposition and Grammar Drills

1. I am interested \_\_\_ learning English. (in)
2. She arrived \_\_\_ Monday morning. (on)
3. We met \_\_\_ the airport. (at)
4. He has lived here \_\_\_ 2020. (since)
5. The report is \_\_\_ the manager's desk. (on)
6. She is good \_\_\_ mathematics. (at)

7. Thank you \_\_\_ your help. (for)
8. I agree \_\_\_ your point. (with)
9. They walked \_\_\_ the bridge. (across)
10. We talked \_\_\_ the phone for an hour. (on)
11. She is afraid \_\_\_ spiders. (of)
12. He apologized \_\_\_ being late. (for)
13. This book belongs \_\_\_ me. (to)
14. We succeeded \_\_\_ finishing on time. (in)
15. She depends \_\_\_ public transport. (on)
16. I look forward \_\_\_ meeting you. (to)
17. He insisted \_\_\_ paying the bill. (on)
18. They laughed \_\_\_ the joke. (at)
19. She specializes \_\_\_ international law. (in)
20. We waited \_\_\_ the bus for twenty minutes. (for)
21. The picture hangs \_\_\_ the wall. (on)
22. She is \_\_\_ home now. (at)
23. We travel \_\_\_ train when possible. (by)
24. He jumped \_\_\_ the swimming pool. (into)
25. The cat hid \_\_\_ the sofa. (under)
26. She stood \_\_\_ me in the queue. (behind)
27. The office is \_\_\_ the bank and the library. (between)
28. They discussed the plan \_\_\_ detail. (in)
29. I will see you \_\_\_ the weekend. (at / on - both common)
30. She has worked here \_\_\_ three years. (for)
31. We drove \_\_\_ the tunnel. (through)
32. He fell \_\_\_ the stairs. (down)
33. The bird flew \_\_\_ the roof. (over)
34. She is \_\_\_ charge of the project. (in)
35. We agreed \_\_\_ a new deadline. (on)
36. He is married \_\_\_ a doctor. (to)
37. She complained \_\_\_ the noise. (about)
38. I ran \_\_\_ an old friend yesterday. (into)
39. They voted \_\_\_ the proposal. (for)
40. We need to focus \_\_\_ quality first. (on)

## Grammar Reference Notes

1. Present simple for habits and facts: She works in IT. Water boils at 100°C.
2. Present continuous for now and temporary situations: I am studying for an exam this week.
3. Past simple for completed past actions: We finished the project yesterday.
4. Past continuous for background actions: It was raining when I left.
5. Present perfect for life experience and recent past with present relevance: I have visited London twice.
6. Present perfect continuous for duration until now: She has been learning English for three years.
7. Future with will for decisions and predictions: I think it will rain tomorrow.
8. Future with going to for plans: We are going to launch the app next month.
9. First conditional for real possibilities: If you study daily, you will improve.
10. Second conditional for hypothetical present: If I had more time, I would travel more.
11. Third conditional for past hypotheticals: If we had left earlier, we would have arrived on time.
12. Modal must for strong obligation: You must wear safety equipment.
13. Modal should for advice: You should review your notes before the test.
14. Modal might for possibility: The meeting might be delayed.

15. Passive voice when agent is unknown or unimportant: The report was approved yesterday.
16. Relative clauses with who/which/that: The engineer who led the team received an award.
17. Reported speech backshift: She said she was tired.
18. Articles: a/an for first mention; the for known items; zero article for general plural nouns.
19. Countable vs uncountable: many ideas / much information.
20. Gerunds after certain verbs: I enjoy reading; He avoided answering.

## Extended Reading Passage

Read aloud once for gist, then again for vocabulary. Underline five new words and write your own summary paragraph.

Effective language learning depends on consistent exposure and active use. Many learners spend years studying grammar rules without speaking regularly, which creates a gap between knowledge and performance. Research suggests that daily contact with meaningful input - podcasts, articles, conversations, films with subtitles - builds the mental patterns needed for fluent speech. Output matters too: writing short paragraphs, recording yourself, and joining discussions force your brain to retrieve vocabulary under time pressure, which strengthens long-term memory.

Another key factor is error tolerance. Advanced speakers make mistakes; the goal is communication, not perfection. Keep a personal error log: note recurring problems (prepositions, articles, word order) and review them weekly. Pair study with real tasks - emails, presentations, travel - so new language serves a purpose. Finally, set measurable goals: learn twenty collocations this month, hold a ten-minute conversation twice a week, or finish one graded reader. Small, steady progress beats occasional marathon sessions.

## Error Correction Exercises

Find and fix the mistake in each sentence. Answers are in parentheses.

1. She don't like spicy food. (doesn't)
2. I have been to Paris last year. (went - specific past time)
3. He is more taller than his brother. (taller - remove more)
4. We discussed about the problem. (discussed the - no about)
5. She suggested me to apply. (suggested that I apply)
6. I am agree with you. (I agree)
7. He explained me the rules. (explained the rules to me)
8. The informations are useful. (information - uncountable)
9. I look forward to meet you. (to meeting)
10. She is married with a lawyer. (married to)
11. I have a news for you. (some news - uncountable)
12. He did a mistake. (made a mistake)
13. We must to finish today. (must finish)
14. She is boring of the lecture. (bored by / bored with)
15. I am here since three hours. (have been here for)
16. He said that he will come. (would come - reported speech)
17. The children is playing outside. (children are)
18. I am used to wake up early. (used to waking up)
19. She is responsible of the team. (responsible for)
20. We need discuss this later. (need to discuss)

## Sentence Building Practice

Combine the prompts into full sentences. Example: [weather / bad / stay home]

-> Because the weather was bad, we decided to stay home.

1. [deadline / tight / work / weekend]
2. [not familiar / software / ask / colleague]
3. [train / delayed / arrive / late]
4. [research / shows / exercise / improves / memory]
5. [although / tired / finish / assignment]
6. [if / more time / learn / second language]
7. [manager / praised / team / hard work]
8. [before / presentation / rehearse / twice]
9. [customer / complained / slow / service]
10. [since / moved / city / made / friends]
11. [unless / study / regularly / forget / vocabulary]
12. [despite / rain / match / continued]
13. [recommend / book / anyone / interested / history]
14. [while / waiting / bus / read / article]
15. [as soon as / hear / news / call / me]

## Four-Week Study Plan

Use this plan to study Practical English Usage in daily 30-45 minute sessions.

### Week 1 - Foundations

Days 1-2: Skim the guide and list unknown words. Days 3-4: Study one core chapter and summarize it in your own words. Days 5-7: Do practice exercises aloud; record yourself if possible.

### Week 2 - Active Practice

Days 8-10: Focus on your weakest section; redo examples without looking. Days 11-12: Explain the material to a friend or aloud alone. Days 13-14: Mixed review from all sections.

### Week 3 - Real Usage

Days 15-17: Use new language in real tasks. Days 18-19: Read or listen to authentic English on the same topic. Days 20-21: Write 300 words applying what you learned.

### Week 4 - Consolidation

Days 22-24: Timed practice under exam or workplace conditions. Days 25-26: Fix weak areas using notes and answer keys. Days 27-28: Final review before moving to advanced material.

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