



Must-Know Exam Techniques

For Primary 5 and 6 students

Grammar and Cloze Techniques: Spotting the Clues

From the team behind our grammar learning bot



GRAMMAR

Sentences always contain clues. Underline or circle these clues.

Some points to look out for.

- **Are the verbs joined by a conjunction?**

If they are, they are in the **same form**.

1. Dan **ate** a plate of fried rice **and** **drank** a glass of orange juice.

2. Jane **likes** horror films **but** Jon **dislikes** them.

Conjunctions: and, but

Verbs are in the same form (ate and drank, likes and dislikes)

- **Is the answer part of a 'to' infinitive or a bare infinitive?**

In a 'to' infinitive, the verb that comes **after 'to'** is in the **base or infinitive form**.

1. Sarah has **to dribble** the ball and **kick** it into the goal.

2. Teresa wants **to visit** the flower garden and **take** photographs of the beautiful flowers.

Remember: When two verbs are joined by a conjunction, they must be in the **same form**. (e.g. dribble and kick, visit and take)

A bare infinitive comes after:

- **modals**, (e.g. will, could, may)
- **verbs of perception** (e.g. heard, noticed)
- **the verb 'do'**
- other words like '**please**', '**let**', '**make**' or '**insist**'

1. **Let** Joshua **help** you wash the dishes.

2. The teacher **made** the student who was late **wait** outside the class until the lesson was over.

- **Is the answer the -ing form of a verb used as a noun (gerund)?**
Gerunds can come **after some verbs** like 'enjoy', 'like' and 'suggest'.

1. My grandmother **enjoys** **listening** to Chinese opera.
2. I **suggest** **watching** a movie tomorrow evening.

Gerunds can also come after certain prepositions like 'after', 'before', 'by' or 'on'.

1. **After** **making** the cake batter, I poured it into the cake tin.
2. **On** **hearing** the news of the plane crash, Ann collapsed in shock.

- **In a question tag, is the statement in the positive or negative form?**

1. Jack **hardly** goes to the park, **does** he?
2. **Nothing** is in that box, **is** there?

The question tag is in the positive form when the statement contains an adverb that has a negative meaning (hardly) and a pronoun that has a negative meaning (nothing).

Compare this with adverbs that have a positive meaning (e.g. often) and a pronoun that has a positive meaning (e.g. something).

1. Jack **often** goes to the park, **doesn't** he?
2. **Something** is in that box, **isn't** there?

- **Is the answer a modal?**

Modals can be used to show politeness, express a possibility, show obligation, etc.

1. **Should** you **need** **my help**, please let me know.
2. "After spoiling my toy, you **might** at least apologise," Jane told her brother **with annoyance**.

should: politely offering to do something

might: annoyed about someone not doing something

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- **What/Who is the subject of the sentence?**

Find out the subject of the sentence to decide on the form of the verb to use. Ask yourself questions about the sentence.

1. The **boy** who won three swimming medals **is** over there.
2. The **houses** which are along this street **belong** to a wealthy businessman.

In the first example, who is over there? The boy or the medals? It is the boy so the verb should be 'is' and not 'are'.

In the second example, what belongs to the businessman? The houses or this street? It is the houses so the verb should be 'belong' and not 'belongs'.

1. **Eating** toast and eggs **keeps** me full until lunch.
2. **Drawing** pictures of animals **is** difficult.

In the first example, what keeps the speaker full? Eating or just the toast and eggs? It is eating toast and eggs so the verb should be 'keeps' and not 'keep'.

In the second example, what is difficult? Drawing the animals or just the animals? It is drawing the animals so the verb should be 'is' and not 'are'.

One gerund is matched with the singular form of the verb. Two or more gerunds are matched with the plural form of the verb.

1. **Cycling** **is** a form of exercise.
2. **Cycling** and **dancing** **are** ways to keep fit.

The -ing form of the verb can be an adjective or a gerund. This affects the form of the verb you use.

1. Flying **insects** **scare** me.
2. **Flying** a plane **is** a heavy responsibility.

CLOZE PASSAGES

A. Read the passage once through first.

You might want to fill in the blanks that you are sure of. If it seems like you do not know most of the answers, do not panic. Read the passage carefully again to look for clues.

B. Know the part of speech that should be placed in the blank.

For example, a noun comes after a possessive noun (e.g. Tom's, father's) or possessive adjective (e.g. his, her, my).

John's **knowledge** of wild animals helped him to ace the quiz.

1. What word type is 'John's'? Possessive noun
2. What comes after a possessive noun? a noun
3. What are the different types of nouns? countable, uncountable, abstract

Everyone else had left the school so Tom was the **only student** left.

1. What word type is 'student'? noun
2. What word comes before a noun? adjective

The travel company **often** **organises** trips to popular destinations during the school holidays.

1. What word type is 'often'? adverb
2. What comes after an adverb? verb
3. Every sentence must have at least one verb. Check the entire sentence. There is no other verb in the sentence.

Here are the different parts of speech.

Nouns (names of people, places, animals or things, including abstract nouns such as education, bravery)

Verbs (e.g. dancing, reading, helping, has, is, are, am)

Adjectives (words that tell you more about a noun: happy, long, surprised)

Adverbs (words that tell you more about verbs or adjectives: happily, very)

Prepositions (words that tell time: *at* noon, position: *under* the table, how something is done: *with* determination)

Pronouns (words that take the place of nouns: he, she, these, everyone)

Conjunctions (words that join ideas: e.g. and, but, or, because)

Determiners (words that are placed before nouns: e.g. *a* boat, *the* animal, *these* elephants, *two* ostriches)

C. Look for clues.

Look for clues in the sentences before and after

Have these clues in mind: synonym, contrast, cause and effect, categorising

Synonyms:

When he was acquitted of the robbery, he was **free** to leave the police station. He was glad to finally reunite with his family who had been waiting for his **release**.

The family had managed to keep themselves safe despite the fire raging around them. They were **rescued** from the burning building when **fire fighters finally arrived**.

Contrast:

The hike seemed **easy** when it first started **but** as we walked, the trail became more **difficult**.

James felt **confident** before the performance. **However**, the moment he stepped on stage, his **nerves returned** and he forgot his lines.

Cause and effect:

Having **forgotten to add salt** to the food, it tasted rather **bland**.

Having **missed** the bus, she was **late** for school.

Categorising:

At the motor show, I saw **sports cars, sedans, station wagons and the latest trucks and buses**. All these **vehicles** were on display for a week.

Gathering the **flour, sugar, butter and eggs**, he read the recipe once again. He had all the **ingredients** so he just had to follow the instructions closely.

D. Being aware of certain commonly used words is useful for completing cloze passages.

i. Learn phrasal verbs.

After several failed attempts, anyone would feel discouraged. However, James was not. He refused to **give** up and continued practising late into the night.

I had searched everywhere for my book. I was relieved when it eventually **turned** up in the lost-and-found box.

ii. Be familiar with common collocations. These are words that are often used together.

Here are some examples.

1. give a good/bad impression
2. give someone a hand
3. make ends meet
4. make an attempt to
5. take pride in
6. take up space
7. bear a resemblance to

E. Write what comes to mind.

Write answers that you think are possible as you read the passage. If you can think of more than one answer, write all the possible answers down. When you read the passage again later, decide which answer is the most suitable.

A Final Word

Many errors in examinations happen not because students do not know the rules but because they do not know when and how to apply them. Being aware of small details often makes the difference between a correct answer and a lost mark.

The rules in this guide focus on common patterns that appear frequently in grammar questions and cloze passages. Once students learn to recognise these patterns, they become more confident learners and will be better able to avoid careless errors.

If your child needs more practice beyond reading explanations, we also have a separate grammar learning bot designed for guided practice and immediate feedback.

Learn more:

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For parents who are looking for more structured support, our full range of English resources builds on the same approach — clear explanations, focused examples, and careful attention to how grammar is tested.

Thank you for reading. We hope this guide has been useful in supporting your child's learning.