

# Learning from Common Mistakes

Intermediate



Guy Brook-Hart



*Get it right with the Cambridge  
Learner Corpus!*

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## Notes for the teacher

All of the exercises in this booklet are fully photocopiable for use in class. If your photocopier allows it, you might like to enlarge the pages by 100% for ease of use.

The 'Speaking extensions' at the end of some of the topics, are particularly good for classroom practice. For more extension activities to use in class, and to download a pdf of this booklet, visit [www.cambridge.org/elt/getitright](http://www.cambridge.org/elt/getitright)

## About the Author

The exercises in this trainer booklet were written by **Guy Brook-Hart**, author of *Complete First Certificate* and *Complete CAE* (Cambridge University Press 2008 and 2009), as well as *Business Benchmark Upper Intermediate* and *Advanced* (Cambridge University Press 2006 and 2007), and *Instant IELTS* (Cambridge University Press 2004). He teaches in Valencia, Spain.

## And, but, or or?

Intermediate learners often confuse *and*, *but* and *or*.

1. Complete the sentences below by writing *and*, *but* or *or* in each gap.

*Example:* The hotel staff were very friendly ...*and*... welcoming

1. My hotel room was clean ..... uncomfortable.
  2. I haven't been to China ..... Japan.
  3. I have been to Thailand, ..... I haven't been to the Philippines.
  4. When I visited India, I went to Mumbai, Delhi ... Bangalore.
  5. I don't know why Sayed hasn't come to class; he may be ill, ..... he may be too busy.
2. Each of the sentences in Exercise 1 is an example for one of the uses of *and*, *but* and *or* given below. Write the number of the sentence from Exercise 1 in the gap by each of the uses.

*Example:* Use *and* to join two similar adjectives together when they don't come before a noun. (Sentence ...*Example* ...)

1. Use *and* to join the final thing on a list to the rest of the list. (Sentence ...)
  2. Use *but* to join two ideas, opinions or facts which are different in a sentence. (Sentence ...)
  3. Use *but* to join two adjectives which seem to have different or opposite meanings. (Sentence ...)
  4. Use *or* to connect different possibilities, or the last thing in a list of possibilities. (Sentence ...)
  5. Use *or* after a negative verb to mean *not one thing and also not another*. (Sentence ...)
3. Each of the sentences below contains a mistake made by intermediate students in Cambridge exams. Find and correct the mistakes.

*or*

*Example:* Don't tell my father, mother ~~and~~ sister that I have written to you.

1. The beginning of the summer was very hot but sunny and I believed it would go on forever.
2. It was boring because there was nothing to see and do.
3. It wasn't a valuable or important book and it was my Dad's favourite.
4. The film is a thriller but it's very exciting.
5. There are lots of cheap restaurants or snack bars where you can have lunch.

## During, for or since?

Intermediate learners often confuse *during*, *for* and *since*.

1. Read sentences **a–c** and then match them to the extracts from the **Cambridge Learner's Dictionary, 1–3**. Complete the extracts by writing *during*, *for*, or *since* in each gap.

- a Dimitri has been playing tennis *for* two hours.
- b Pavla's telephone started ringing *during* the lesson.
- c Raoul has been studying here *since* the beginning of July.

- 1 Use ..... to say 'from a time in the past until now'.
  - 2 Use ..... to say how long something happens or continues.
  - 3 Use ..... to talk about a period of time when something happens.
2. Three of the sentences below contain mistakes made by intermediate students in Cambridge exams. Two sentences are correct (✓). Find and correct the mistakes.

*for*

*Example:* Vanessa has been abroad ~~during~~ a long time but now she's back.

- 1 Pierre was stopped by the police and now he can't drive his car during three months.
  - 2 During my cycling holiday it rained for two weeks but even so it was great.
  - 3 I haven't seen my friends since two years and I'm longing to see them again.
  - 4 Can I borrow your car? I'll only need it for a week.
  - 5 I've been studying here for last January.
3. Complete the questions and answers below by writing *during*, *for*, or *since* in each gap.

*Example:* "How long have you lived here?" – "...for... 7 years."

- 1 "How long have you known how to ride a bicycle?" – "..... I was 6 years old."
- 2 "What are you planning to do ..... your summer holidays?" – "I'm planning to travel round India."
- 3 "How long have you been learning English?" – "..... 2006."

### Speaking extension

Work with a partner. Ask and answer the questions in Exercise 3. Give answers which are true for you.

# Do I need *to* + verb or a verb + *-ing* after this verb?

Intermediate learners often confuse when to use *to* + verb (*forget to learn*) and when to use a verb + *-ing* (*recommend learning*) after a verb.

## 1. Circle the correct alternatives below.

*Example:* I hope (to hear) / *hearing* from you soon.

1. We spent the whole day *to prepare* / *preparing* for the party.
2. I'm looking forward *to meet* / *to meeting* you at the airport.

We use *to* + verb after some verbs but a verb + *-ing* after others. You have to learn which form follows each verb. Here are some verbs which intermediate learners often make mistakes with:

- **Use *to* + verb after:** *ask (somebody), decide, forget, help (somebody), hope, invite, learn, need, plan, wait, want, would like*
- **Use a verb + *-ing* after:** *enjoy, fancy, finish, look forward to\*, recommend, spend, suggest, think about/of\**

\* **Note:** verbs with prepositions (*to, of, about* etc.) are always followed by verb + *-ing*. (In Exercise 1, Question 2 (*I'm looking forward to meeting you at the airport*), *to* is part of the verb.)

## 2. Five of the sentences below contain mistakes made by intermediate students in Cambridge exams. Two sentences are correct (✓). Find and correct the mistakes.

*to ask*

*Example:* I forgot **asking** you about your family. How are they?

1. I suggest meeting you at seven o'clock in front of the theatre.
2. I'm thinking of to buy a new desk and lamp.
3. I've already decided to buy something new for my bedroom.
4. If you want to coming, please let me know as soon as you can.
5. Last week I invited her going to the cinema.
6. We really enjoyed to be together.
7. I would like to learn dancing.

## 3. Complete the sentences below by putting the verb in brackets into the correct form (*to* + verb or a verb + *-ing*) in each gap.

*Example:* What things do you help your family ...*to do*... (do) in the house?

1. What do you fancy ..... (do) next weekend?
2. How are you planning ..... (spend) your next holiday?
3. What programmes do you enjoy ..... (watch) on television?
4. What are you looking forward to ..... (do) in the future?

# Do or make?

Intermediate learners often confuse *do* and *make*.

1. Complete the sentences below by putting *do* or *make* into the correct form in each gap.

*Example:* When you've ...*done*... your homework, you can help me ...*make*... the tea.

1. I want to (a) ..... a lot of changes to the house to (b) ..... it more comfortable.
2. Samdi had to ..... a choice between studying English or going on holiday.
3. Karen has been ..... a lot of exercise recently.

We use the verb *do* with some nouns and *make* with others. You have to learn which verb is correct for each noun. Here are some nouns which intermediate learners often make mistakes with. Write them under the correct heading below:

*a cake*      *a change*      *a choice*      *a course*      *a decision*      *friends*  
*a job*      *a mistake*      *a plan*      *a reservation*      *a sandwich*      *sport*  
*a test*      *aerobics*      *an activity*      *an exam*      *an exercise*      *homework*  
*housework*      *the shopping*      *a sightseeing tour*      *work*

**Use with *do*:**

**Use with *make*:**

3. Five of the sentences below contain mistakes made by intermediate students in Cambridge exams. Two sentences are correct (✓). Find and correct the mistakes.

*made*

*Example:* I ~~did~~ many mistakes when I read the text.

1. I liked doing the course because we made a lot of fun activities.
2. In my country people make a lot of things to help poor people.
3. Without the Internet I can't do my homework.
4. Last week in class, my friends and I made some very difficult exercises.
5. We have some difficult choices to make.
6. We started by making some listening tests.
7. Olga went sightseeing and made some shopping.

4. Complete the questions below by putting *do* or *make* into the correct form in each gap.

*Example:* What job would you like to ...*do*... in the future?

1. Have you ..... any plans for your summer holidays?
2. Who ..... the shopping in your family?
3. What is the best way to ..... friends, do you think?
4. What do you do when you ..... a mistake speaking English?
5. What was the last exam you .....?

## Look, see, or watch?

Intermediate learners often confuse *look*, *see* and *watch*.

1. Each of the sentences 1–5 contains a mistake made by intermediate students in Cambridge exams. Read this extract from the **Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary** below. Then find and correct the mistakes (one sentence contains two mistakes).

### Common Learner Error *look, see or watch?*

**see** means to notice people and things with your eyes: *She saw a big spider and screamed. Jacqui saw the car drive up the road.*

**look** is used when you are trying to see something or someone: *I've looked everywhere, but can't find my keys. I looked at the map to find the road.*

**watch** means to look at something for a period of time, usually something which moves or changes: *He watched television all evening. I watched the football match with some friends.*

**Note:** While you are sitting in the cinema you *watch* a film, but before you go, you say you are going to *see* a film and afterwards you say you *have seen* the film.

### *see*

**Example:** I went to **watch** a film called *The Motorcycle Diaries* at my local cinema.

1. We sat on the sofa and saw a video of my friend's holiday in Italy.
  2. Then we got on a tour bus because we wanted to watch the city.
  3. I saw my finger and looked that I wasn't wearing my ring.
  4. I watched my watch to check the time.
  5. I couldn't find my wallet even though I saw everywhere.
2. Complete the questions below by putting *look*, *see* or *watch* into the correct form in each gap.

**Example:** How much time do you spend ...*watching*... television everyday?

1. What can you (a) ..... if you (b) ..... out of your bedroom window?
2. What is the best film you have ever .....?
3. Which sports do you most enjoy ..... on television?
4. Which places in the world would you most like to .....?
5. Do you mind if people ..... you while you are working?

### Speaking extension

Work with a partner. Ask and answer the questions in Exercise 2.

## When should I use *have*, *pass*, *spend* and *take* with time expressions?

Intermediate learners often confuse when to use *have*, *pass*, *spend* and *take* with time expressions.

### 1. Circle the correct alternatives below.

*Example:* We *passed* / (*spent*) the weekend painting the kitchen.

1. It *spent* / *took* me four hours to complete the job.
  2. We *had* / *spent* a great time at the fair.
  3. We played chess to *pass* / *spend* the time while we waited.
2. Complete these extracts from the **Cambridge Learner's Dictionary** by putting *have*, *pass*, *spend* or *take* into the correct form in each gap.

*Example:* (a) ...*Have*... is used with nouns (e.g. a wonderful time / a bad time) – to experience something: We're (b) ...*having*... a wonderful time here in Venice.

1. If you (a) ..... the time, you do something to stop yourself being bored during that period: *The visitors* (b) ..... *their days swimming and playing volleyball*.
  2. (a) ..... *time* – to use time doing something or being somewhere: I (b) ..... *a lot of time cleaning that room yesterday*.
  3. If something (a) ..... a particular time, that period is needed in order to complete it: *It* (b) ..... *us all day to drive home*.
3. Each of the sentences below contains a mistake made by intermediate students in Cambridge exams. Find and correct the mistakes.

*Example:* I hope you'll ~~spend~~ *have* a good time in my country.

1. I passed a relaxing evening with Paulo and Adriana.
  2. I spent ten minutes to find my mother. (Clue: start with *It* ...)
  3. It was a very good idea to go to Prague because we passed an excellent week there.
  4. We spent four hours to reach the mountains. (Clue: start with *It* ...)
  5. You should come to Brazil and pass your holidays here.
4. Complete the sentences below by putting *have*, *pass*, *spend* or *take* into the correct form in each gap.

*Example:* I ...*had*... a **wonderful time** swimming and surfing **on my last holiday** in Australia.

1. I ..... **last weekend** studying and going out with my friends.
2. It ..... **me** 25 minutes to get to school this morning.
3. **When I'm waiting for the doctor or waiting for a bus or train, I usually** ..... **the time** reading magazines.

# Are these nouns countable or uncountable?

Intermediate learners often confuse countable and uncountable nouns.

## 1. Circle the correct alternatives below.

*Example:* Aida has very long hair } a very long hair.

1. Najeeb has done several *works* / *jobs* in his life.
2. *There's lots of food in the fridge* / *There are lots of foods in the fridge* so help yourself.
3. Hank eats three large *meal* / *meals* a day.
4. I want to give you some *advice* / *advices*.
5. Odile enjoys playing *game* / *games*.

## 2. Read the rules 1–6 and then match them to the examples a–f. Then use the rules to check your answers to Exercise 1.

1. Most nouns have a singular and a plural form:
  2. However, some nouns only have a singular form. These nouns are called 'uncountable' nouns because you cannot count them. Here are some uncountable nouns which intermediate learners often make plural:
  3. Use *a* with countable nouns when they are singular:
  4. You can use *many*, *few*, *a lot of*, *some* and *any* when countable nouns are plural:
  5. Do not use *a* with uncountable nouns:
  6. You can use *much*, *little*, *a lot of*, *some* and *any* with uncountable nouns:
- a *a chair*  
b *advice, countryside, entertainment, food, fruit, furniture, hair, homework, information, music, popcorn, scenery, stuff, trouble, work, exercise, experience*  
c *The room had little furniture in it. Do you need any information?*  
d *He has brown hair (not a brown hair).*  
e *house – houses, man – men, child – children, chair – chairs*  
f *many years, some trees.*

## 3. Five of the sentences below contain mistakes made by intermediate students in Cambridge exams. Two sentences are correct (✓). Find and correct the mistakes.

*work (or jobs)*

*Example:* I have to leave early because I have a lot of **works** to do at home.

1. It's important to eat lots of fruits with your meals.
2. The hotel provides its guests with free entertainments.
3. We asked the tourist office to give us information about places to visit.
4. I enjoy listening to many different kinds of music.
5. The palace was full of expensive furnitures.
6. Pablo is always getting into troubles with his teachers.
7. Kostas gave us lots of advices about where to stay and what to do.

# Near, nearby, or next to?

Intermediate learners often confuse *near*, *nearby* and *next to*.

## 1. Circle the correct alternatives below.

*Example:* My girlfriend works in a *near* / *nearby* restaurant.

1. I walk to school because I live *near* / *nearby*.
2. Jasmine sat right *near* / *nearby* / *next to* me so she could see what I was writing.
3. The shopping centre is quite *near* / *nearby* / *next to* the city.

## 2. Read the rules 1–5 and then match them to the examples a–e.

*Near* and *nearby* both mean *not far away*. However

1. use *nearby* as an adjective before a noun:
2. use *nearby* as an adverb:
3. use *near* as a preposition:
4. say *nearer* and *nearest*, not *more/most nearby*.
5. Use *next to* when describing two people or things that are very close to each other:

- a *Dimitri heard the noise because he was working nearby.*
- b *I always sat next to my best friend at school.*
- c *Jan travels to work from a nearby village.*
- d *Tamara lives near the station.*
- e *Which is the nearest underground station? Can you come nearer?*

## 3. Each of the sentences below contains a mistake made by intermediate students in Cambridge exams. Find and correct the mistakes. In some sentences, more than one answer is possible.

*Example:* We are going to go to a **near** *nearby* island, which is called Egina.

1. The theatre is conveniently located nearby to the Bradford bus station.
2. The town has an excellent park nearby our hotel.
3. He lives next to my village, in Mirambel.

## 4. Complete the sentences below by writing *nearby*, *next to*, or the correct form of *near* in each gap. In some sentences, more than one answer is possible.

*Example:* Carla wanted to leave early, so she sat ...*near* OR *near to* OR *next to*... the door.

1. Is there a bank .....? I need to get some money out.
2. We live ..... some very noisy neighbours and we can hear everything they say.
3. I thought she was crying, but as I got ..... I realised she was laughing.
4. We live ..... the sea – we can drive there in less than ten minutes.

## Speaking extension

Work with a partner. Take turns to describe the area where you live using *near*, *nearby* and *next to*.

# How do I make nouns plural?

Intermediate learners often make mistakes when they make nouns plural.

1. Each of the sentences below contains a mistake. Find and correct the mistakes.

*Example:* My uncle and aunt have four ~~childrens~~ *children*: two boys and two girls.

1. We spent the time going to museums, visiting shops and at night going to partys and discos.
2. I bought some meat, two fishes, two small lettuces and a kilo of potatoes.
3. The guests arrived with their husbands, wives, boyfriends or girlfriends.

2. Complete the rules by writing one of the examples from the box below in each gap.

<i>book – books</i>	<i>branch – branches</i>	<i>child – children</i>	<i>clothes</i>	<i>disco – discos</i>
<i>dish – dishes</i>	<i>fish</i>	<i>foot – feet</i>	<i>half – halves</i>	<i>kiss – kisses</i>
<i>lady – ladies</i>	<i>man – men</i>	<i>person – people</i>	<i>photo – photos</i>	<i>roof – roofs</i>
<i>sheep</i>	<i>tomato – tomatoes</i>	<i>tooth – teeth</i>	<i>trousers</i>	<i>wife – wives</i>
<i>woman – women</i>				

- We make most nouns plural by adding –s to the singular form: (1) ....*book – books*. However  
-when the noun ends in *ch, o, s, or sh*, we add –es: (2) .....  
(Exceptions: (3) .....)
  - when the noun ends in *y*, the plural form ends in –ies: (4) .....
  - when the noun ends in *f* or *fe* the plural form is often (but not always) –ves: (5) ..... (Exception: (6) .....).
  - There are a few common nouns which have an irregular plural: (7) .....
  - For some (but not all) animals, the plural form is the same as the singular, especially: (8) .....
  - A few words are always plural: (9) .....
3. Seven of the sentences below contain mistakes made by intermediate students in Cambridge exams. Two sentences are correct (✓). Find and correct the mistakes.

*stories*

*Example:* He told us lots of ~~storsy~~ *stories* about Australia, which we really enjoyed.

1. I have to look after little childrens from five to ten years old.
2. I know you love beaches, so I think Greece would be a great place for you to have a holiday.
3. I met a lot of friendly peoples when I visited London.
4. I suppose you like old churches and castles.
5. I'll take some photoes of your town when I visit.
6. She put the clothes in the cupboard and the books on the shelves.

# When does a single letter change to a double letter?

Intermediate learners often make spelling mistakes when adding *-ed*, *-ing*, *-er* and other endings to words.

1. Eight of the words below contain spelling mistakes. Four of the words are correct (✓). Find and correct the mistakes.

Biger *bigger*    canceled    decided    hoter    nicest    occured  
opened    planing    prefered    travelled    unforgetable    writing

2. Complete the spelling rules by writing one of the words from the box below in each gap.

<i>admit – admitted</i>	<i>cancel – canceling</i>	<i>cancel – cancelling</i>	<i>develop – developing</i>
<i>fax – faxed</i>	<i>forget – forgetting</i>	<i>happen – happened</i>	<i>play – playing</i>
<i>run – runner</i>	<i>shop – shopping</i>	<i>show – showing</i>	<i>travel – traveler</i>
<i>travel – traveller</i>			

Double the final consonant

-when you add *-ed*, *-ing*, *-er*, and *-est* to one-syllable words which end in consonant-vowel-consonant: (1).....*run – runner*, *shop – shopping*..... (but final *w*, *x* and *y* are never doubled: (2) .....

-for verbs of two or more syllables which end in consonant-vowel-consonant and the final syllable is stressed: (3) ..... (but when the stress is not on the final syllable, do not double the final consonant: (4) .....

-In British English, for words which end in *l* after one vowel:

(5)..... In American English, the final *l* does not double:

(6).....

3. Read the email from Anna to Olga below. Then find and correct the eight spelling mistakes. The first mistake has been corrected for you.

Hi Olga

*writing*

I'm *writing* to thank you for meeting me and looking after me in Bratislava. I had a really great time and after travelling all the way from Warsaw it was wonderful to see you waiting for me when I arrived. I thought Bratislava was beautiful and now I'm hopping that you will visit me in Warsaw soon.

I'm glad I remembered to bring my camera (I'm always forgetting it) because I've got some really great photos, which I'm attaching. I think the one of us standing in front of the castle just before it opened is the best. I also really enjoyed the shopping and the restaurants and I'm sure I've got fater as a result of all that wonderful food!

Please start planing your visit to Warsaw soon – I'm really looking forward to seeing you!

Love, Anna

# Answer key

## And, but, or or?

- 1 but 2 or 3 but 4 and 5 or
- 1 4 2 3 3 1 4 5 5 2
- 1 hot but sunny hot and sunny 2 and or 3 and but 4 but and 5 or and

## During, for, or since?

- 1 since 2 for 3 during
- 1 during for 2 ✓ 3 since for 4 ✓ 5 for since
- 1 since 2 during 2 since

## Do I need to + verb or a verb + -ing after this verb?

- 1 preparing 2 meeting
- 1 ✓ 2 to-buy buying 3 ✓ 4 to-coming to come 5 going to go 6 to-be being 7 dancing to dance
- 1 doing 2 to spend 3 watching 4 doing

## Do or make?

- 1 (a) make (b) make 2 make 3 doing
- do: a job, sport, a test, aerobics, an activity, an exam, an exercise, homework, housework, the shopping, a sightseeing tour, work **make**: a cake, a change, a choice, a decision, friends, a mistake, a plan, a reservation, a sandwich
- 1 made did 2 make do 3 ✓ 4 made did 5 ✓ 6 making doing 7 made did
- 1 made 2 does 3 make 4 make 5 did

## Look, see, or watch?

- 1 saw watched 2 watch see 3 saw looked at looked saw 4 watched looked at 5 saw (had) looked
- 1 (a) see (b) look 2 seen 3 watching 4 see 5 watch

## When should I use have, pass, spend and take with time expressions?

- 1 took 2 had 3 pass
- 1 (a) pass (b) pass(ed) 2 (a) spend (b) spent 3 (a) takes (b) took
- 1 passed spent 2 I spent ten minutes to find my mother It took me ten minutes to find my mother 3 passed had OR spent 4 We spent four hours to reach the mountains It took us four hours to reach the mountains 5 pass spend
- 1 spent 2 took 3 pass

## Are these nouns countable or uncountable?

- 1 jobs 2 There's lots of food in the fridge 3 meals 4 advice 5 games
- 2 b 3 a 4 f 5 d 6 c
- 1 fruits fruit 2 entertainments entertainment 3 ✓ 4 ✓ 5 furnitures furniture 6 troubles trouble 7 advices advice

## Near, nearby, or next to?

- 1 nearby 2 next to 3 near
- 2 a 3 d 4 e 5 b
- 1 nearby near OR next to 2 nearby near OR next to 3 next-to-near
- 1 nearby 2 next to 3 nearer 4 near

## How do I make nouns plural?

- 1 partys parties 2 fishes fish / fishes 3 wifes wives
- (2) branch – branches, dish – dishes, kiss – kisses, tomato – tomatoes (3) disco – discos, photo – photos (4) lady – ladies (5) half – halves, wife – wives (6) roof – roofs (7) child – children, foot – feet, man – men, person – people, tooth – teeth, woman – women (8) fish, sheep (9) clothes, trousers
- 1 childrens children 2 beaches beaches 3 peoples people 4 ✓ 5 photoes photos 6 ✓

## When does a single letter change to a double letter?

- 1 canceled cancelled\* decided ✓ hotter hotter nicest ✓ occurred occurred opened opened planing planning preferred preferred travelled ✓ unforgettable unforgettable writing writing
- (2) faxed, playing, showing (3) admit – admitted, forget – forgetting (4) develop – developing, happen – happened (5) cancel – cancelling, travel – traveller (6) cancel – canceling, travel – traveler
- 1 meeting meeting, hopping hoping, forgetting forgetting, opened opened, shopping shopping, fater, fatter, planing planning

\* Please see final note on question 2.