

# Global English

## A Do-it-Yourself Guide

### Introduction

The future demands an ability to communicate at a globally acceptable standard of international English. As Singaporeans do business, travel and study on an increasingly international and multi-national stage, the ability to communicate in standard English becomes more important. It is, no doubt, for this reason, that the Ministry of Education in Singapore is raising the benchmark in Singapore schools to that of a globally acceptable standard of English. Global English is attainable but will require the weeding out of non-standard language that may be used by those whom English is not the first language. This guide is an aid to doing this. It targets the 'main offenders', the expressions and grammatical errors that can give people away as non-native speakers. The guide is based on years of research on the common vocabulary and grammar errors that occur in the use of the English language in Singapore.

This guide is for teachers and parents who want their children to have the standard of language needed for today's changing world. Other professionals, in international business and trade, or those seeking international English language competency scores or intending to study / travel abroad, will also find it useful.

Part one is in the form of multiple-choice questions, only one of the choices being in correct, standard English. Readers can try the questions then check the answer key and explanations. There is some repetition so that those errors that occur most frequently are given more coverage.

Part two provides a handy summary of the 'main give-aways' of the use of non-standard English in Singapore. Pronunciation is not covered – for this, you will have to wait for the next guide!

Be encouraged; it is easier to weed out incorrect language than to learn correct forms from scratch.

We now present your 'Going Global' English language guide.

With compliments from Lorna Whiston Schools, Singapore.

# PART ONE

**Which is correct?**

# CHAPTER ONE



## QUESTION 1

- a. This is the bus stop where we get down.
- b. This is the bus stop where we get off.

## QUESTION 2

- a. That's one of the Media Corp star.
- b. That's one of the Media Corp stars.



## QUESTION 3

- a. I have ever done this type of work.
- b. I have never done this type of work.

## QUESTION 4

- a. Can you tell us what your computer skills are?
- b. Can you tell us what are your computer skills?



## QUESTION 5

- a. Please fill out the form.
- b. Please fill up the form.

# CHAPTER ONE



## QUESTION 6

- a. He sold his car.
- b. He sold away his car.



## QUESTION 7

- a. Could you please on the fan?
- b. Could you please switch on the fan?



## QUESTION 8

- a. That impatient man jumped the queue.
- b. That impatient man cut queue.

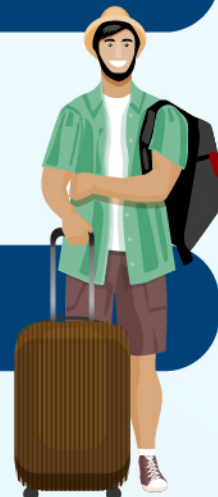
## QUESTION 9

- a. I get to work by walking.
- b. I walk to work.



## QUESTION 10

- a. Take my luggage to the car.
- b. Take my luggages to the car.



**CHAPTER ONE**  
(answers and explanations)

Answer Key: 1b, 2b, 3b, 4a, 5a, 6a, 7b, 8a, 9b, 10a

**1b. This is the bus stop where we get off.**

‘Down’ is the wrong preposition. We get on and off a bus.

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**2b. That’s one of the Media Corps stars.**

There are a number of stars, so plural form is required.

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**3b. I have never done this type of work.**

‘Ever’ is unnecessary in affirmative statements  
(but it is ok to say: Have you ever? ... or I have never....)

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**4a. Can you tell us what your computer skills are?**

After ‘can you tell us’, use statement form ie ‘your skills are’, not question form, ‘are your skills’.  
You can say, ‘What are your skills?’ but not ‘Can you tell us what are your skills?’  
The technical term for this is ‘imbedded question’, that is, where a group of words  
(in this case: can you tell us) introduces a question.

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**5a. Please fill out the form.**

‘Fill up’ is commonly used in Singapore, but it is a misuse of the phrasal verb ‘fill out’ meaning ‘to complete’ so wrong preposition. You can fill up your glass, or your petrol tank, though.

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**6a. He sold his car.**

The word ‘away’ is superfluous.

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**7b. Could you please switch on the fan?**

Although ‘on the fan / light / machine’ etc is very common in Singapore it is not correct,  
as the verb is missing eg. switch, turn

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**8a. That impatient man jumped the queue.**

‘Cut queue’ is a Singlish form. The correct idiom is ‘jump the queue’.  
(Admittedly, a man jumping a queue seems odd!)

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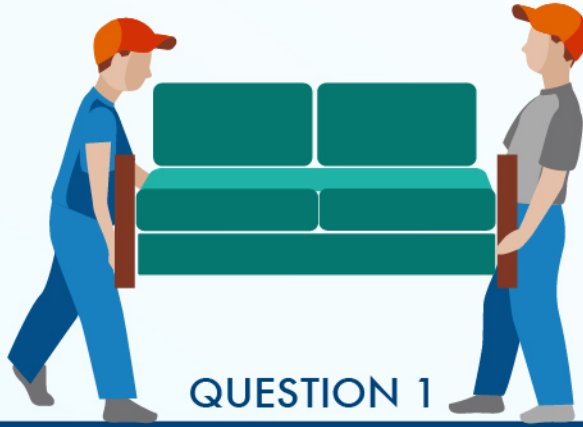
**9b. I walk to work.**

We go ‘by bus’, ‘by car’, or ‘by plane’ but not ‘by walking.’

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**10a. Luggage is an uncountable noun and therefore no ‘s’ is used.**

# CHAPTER TWO



## QUESTION 1

- a. The furniture was delivered.
- b. The furnitures were delivered.

## QUESTION 2

- a. Till recently, IPADs may be regarded as expensive.
- b. Till recently, IPADs may have been regarded as expensive.



## QUESTION 3

- a. Stay together, to avoid getting lost in the park.
- b. Stay together, to prevent getting lost in the park.

## QUESTION 4

- a. Where do you stay?
- b. Where do you live?



## QUESTION 5

- a. My fridge is not working.
- b. My fridge is spoiled.

# CHAPTER TWO



## QUESTION 6

- a. We walked and then we sat on the bus.
- b. We walked and then we rode on the bus.



## QUESTION 7

- a. When I got out of the taxi, I slipped on the ground.
- b. When I got out of the taxi, I slipped on the floor.

## QUESTION 8

- a. This covers what you are required to know.
- b. This covers what are you required to know.

## QUESTION 9

- a. It is late. I feel like going home.
- b. It is late. I feels like going home.

## QUESTION 10

- a. Excuse me, how do I get to the office tower?
- b. Excuse me, how to get to the office tower?



## CHAPTER TWO

(answers and explanations)

Answer Key: 1a, 2b, 3a, 4b, 5a, 6b, 7a, 8a, 9a, 10a

### 1a. The furniture was delivered.

'furniture' has no plural form. It is termed 'uncountable'.

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### 2b. Until recently, IPADS may have been regarded as expensive.

When we connect the past to the present (the price of IPADS before, versus the price of IPADS now) we need to use the present perfect tense. That just means using has / have and the correct verb participle, for example, I have lived in Singapore for 13 years. (lived is the participle.)

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### 3a. Stay together, to avoid getting lost in the park.

We prevent someone /something from.... Eg. We have put up fences to prevent stray dogs from entering.

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### 4b. Where do you live?

Vocabulary error: stay in a hotel, stay with a friend etc. Oddly enough, stay is used more for temporary accommodation situations, even though it sounds more permanent.

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### 5a. My fridge is not working.

We don't refer to machinery as 'spoiled'. We can say it is not working, or damaged or faulty.

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### 6b. We walked, then we rode on the bus.

We ride on a bus, not sit on a bus. 'Sit' on a bus literally means you are on the roof of the bus!

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### 7a. When I got out of the taxi, I slipped on the ground.

The ground is outside and the floor is inside.

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### 8a. This covers what you are required to know.

It is not a question so use the statement form, you are - not, are you.

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### 9a. It is late. I feel like going home.

The verb has to agree with the subject I. Only he, she and it need 's' on the end of the present tense verb.

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### 10a. Excuse me, how do I get to the office tower?

The verb ('get') needs a subject, in this case 'I'.

# CHAPTER THREE



## QUESTION 1

- a. I have a cold.
- b. I am having a cold.

## QUESTION 2

- a. I owe him a lot of money but I have paid up now.
- b. I owed him a lot of money but I have paid up now.

## QUESTION 3

- a. Last time, I owed him a lot of money.
- b. Previously I owed him a lot of money.



## QUESTION 4



- a. She like studying English.
- b. She likes studying English.



## QUESTION 5

- a. You live here, is it?
- b. You live here, do you?

# CHAPTER THREE



## QUESTION 6

- a. After hearing all this, he felt depressed.
- b. After hearing all these, he felt depressed.

## QUESTION 7

- a. We soak dirty plates so that they would be easier to clean.
- b. We soak dirty plates so that they will be easier to clean.



## QUESTION 8

- a. I like to learn about the many different wildlife in Singapore.
- b. I like to learn about the different wildlife in Singapore.

## QUESTION 9

- a. The concepts of the design are difficult to describe.
- b. The concepts of the design is difficult to describe.

## QUESTION 10

- a. That network of computer experts is a great resource for you to tap onto.
- b. That network of computer experts is a great resource for you to tap into.

**CHAPTER THREE**  
(answers and explanations)

Answer Key: 1a, 2b, 3b, 4b, 5b, 6a, 7b, 8b, 9a, 10b

**1a. I have a cold.**

We also say: have a headache, have the flu, have a pain.

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**2b. I owed him a lot of money but I have paid up now.**

Past tense form 'owed' is required.

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**3b. Previously I owed him a lot of money.**

'Last time' is a Singlish expression. In English we use 'last time' to refer to the final time  
eg. that was the last time I saw him.

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**4b. She likes studying English.**

Agreement error. He, she and it need 's' on the end of their present tense verbs.

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**5b. You live here, do you?**

The question tag at the end needs to match the subject and verb ie. you live matches do you live,  
so the question tags becomes 'do you'.

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**6a. After hearing all this, he felt depressed.**

After hearing all these stories, for example, but not just 'all these'.

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**7b. We soak dirty plates so that they will be easier to clean (or, are easier to clean.)**

Future tense form 'will' is required, not 'would'.  
Using 'would' instead of 'will' is a common Singlish error.

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**8b. I like to learn about the different wildlife in Singapore.**

Many different animals, but not many different wildlife.  
'Animals' is a countable noun. 'Wildlife' is not.

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**9a. The concepts of the design are difficult to describe.**

The verb should agree with concepts not design, so 'are' not 'is'.

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**10b. That network of computer experts is a great resource for you to tap into.**

The correct preposition here is 'into'.