

Loksewa Notes: English Grammar Essentials for the Language Paper

The language paper rewards people who know a small number of rules very well. Instead of reading a whole grammar book, master the areas below, because they produce a large share of the questions: choose the correct word, correct the error, change the voice, change the speech.

Nepali language grammar (varna, sandhi, samas, shabda, vakya) is tested too in the Nepali part of many papers. Use your textbook and past papers for it; this note covers English.

1. Tenses at a glance

Tense	Pattern	Example
Simple present	V1 (s/es with he, she, it)	She teaches maths.
Present continuous	is/am/are + V-ing	She is teaching now.
Present perfect	has/have + V3	She has taught for ten years.
Simple past	V2	She taught yesterday.
Past continuous	was/were + V-ing	She was teaching when I came.
Past perfect	had + V3	She had left before I arrived.
Simple future	will + V1	She will teach tomorrow.

Clue words: *yesterday, ago, last* signal simple past; *since, for, already, just, yet* usually signal present perfect; *now, at the moment* signal the continuous.

2. Subject-verb agreement

- A singular subject takes a singular verb: *The list of items is long.* (The subject is "list", not "items".)
- Two subjects joined by *and* take a plural verb: *Ram and Sita are here.*
- With *either...or, neither...nor*, the verb agrees with the nearer subject: *Neither the teacher nor the students were late.*
- *Each, every, everyone, nobody, news, mathematics* take a singular verb.
- *Police, people, cattle* take a plural verb.

3. Articles

- **a** before a consonant *sound*: a book, a university (it begins with a "yu" sound).
- **an** before a vowel *sound*: an apple, an hour (the h is silent).
- **the** for something specific or unique: the sun, the Himalayas, the President.
- No article with general plural or uncountable nouns: *Honesty is important*.

4. Common prepositions

- **Time**: at 5 pm, on Monday, in June, in 2020, since 2010, for five years.
- **Place**: at the gate, on the table, in Kathmandu.
- **Fixed pairs**: depend on, good at, afraid of, interested in, married to, different from, wait for, look after.

5. Active and passive voice

- Move the object to the front, use the right form of *be*, then the V3, then *by* + the old subject.
- *The committee approved the plan.* becomes *The plan was approved by the committee.*
- *The staff are cleaning the hall.* becomes *The hall is being cleaned by the staff.*
- Keep the tense the same in the passive: only the form of *be* changes.

6. Reported speech

- When the reporting verb is in the past, move the tense one step back: present becomes past, past becomes past perfect, will becomes would.
- Change pronouns and time words: today becomes that day, tomorrow becomes the next day, now becomes then, this becomes that.
- *He said, "I am tired."* becomes *He said that he was tired.*
- *She said, "Where do you live?"* becomes *She asked where I lived.* Questions lose the question word order and the question mark.

7. Spotting errors quickly

1. Check the verb against its subject first.
2. Check the tense against the time word.
3. Check articles and prepositions.
4. Check that pairs match: *not only...but also*, *either...or*, *so...that*.

Practice questions

1. Choose the correct form: "The news (is / are) true."
2. Fill in the article: "He is ___ honest man."
3. Change to passive: "The Commission publishes the result."
4. Report: He said, "I will call you tomorrow."

Answers: 1) is. 2) an. 3) The result is published by the Commission. 4) He said that he would call me the next day.

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