

# Common Grammatical Errors

TO: All Staff

**MEMO**

FROM: Johnathan Lui, Acting CEO

SUBJECT: Annual Salary Rise

Hong Kong has recently experienced an economic downturn which **have**<sup>1</sup> seen many companies having to lay off staff and cut salaries. AsiaWide Bank has so far managed **avoiding**<sup>2</sup> such drastic cost-cutting **measure**<sup>3</sup>.

**Although**<sup>4</sup>, the bank does have to adopt policies ensuring long term profitability, which is important to all of us as it help to secure our jobs. Therefore, it has been decided that there **would**<sup>5</sup> be no salary increase this year. It is hoped that by spending sensibly now we **might**<sup>6</sup> avoid having to lay off staff and cut salaries in the future.

It is up to us as AWB employees to work in a way which keeps the bank **profitably**<sup>7</sup> and **returning**<sup>8</sup> value to our shareholders. The Bank is also looking for other ways to cut spending in order to keep the Bank stable, but we can only do **it**<sup>9</sup> by working together.

I trust we can **rely**<sup>10</sup> your dedication and hard work to lead the Bank into the next millennium.

**THIS MEMO** from a local bank contains 10 common grammatical errors. All ten errors are identified and explanations are provided. When you've read the explanations, read the 10 sentences below and try to find the same 10 errors. You'll find the answers to the exercise on page 24.

- 1 **Incorrect Agreement**  
The verb '*have*' must agree with the object noun of the main clause '*downturn*'. As the noun is singular, the verb must also be singular – **downturn which has...**
- 2 **Incorrect Structure (verb + gerund)**  
Some verbs are always followed by an infinitive, and other verbs are followed by a gerund. And, some verbs can be followed by either an infinitive or a gerund. The verb '*manage*' is always followed by an infinitive – **managed to avoid...**
- 3 **Incorrect Noun Ending**  
In the previous sentence, the writer mentioned two cost cutting measures: *laying off staff* and *cutting salaries*. Since the noun '*measure*' refers to the ones mentioned, it should be plural – **cost-cutting measures....**
- 4 **Incorrect Connective/Sentence Structure**  
The connective '*although*' is a conjunction connective, i.e. it joins two separate sentences together. The writer should use the connective '*however*' to show contrast (+/-) between ideas in two separate sentences – **However, the bank...**
- 5 **Incorrect Modal (will vs would)**  
If the writer had used reported speech (*It was decided that there would be no...*) it would have been correct to use '*would*'. In normal speech, however, we use '*will*' instead of '*would*' to show we are 100% certain about something. In this case, the writer is certain about 'no salary increase this year' – **will be no salary....**
- 6 **Incorrect Modal Verb**  
The use of '*might*' creates an uncertain statement. The writer, however, wants to be more certain. He wants to show that the company has the ability to do something. The modal verb '*can*' is used to show ability – **can avoid having....**
- 7 **Incorrect Part of Speech**  
Here, the writer is giving more information about the noun '*bank*', not the verb '*keep*'. The adjectival form '*profitable*' is used to describe nouns – **the bank profitable....**
- 8 **Non-Parallel Form**  
The writer wants to achieve two outcomes: '*keep the bank profitable*' and '*return value to our shareholders*'. To show that these actions are equally important, they should be in the same form – **which keeps..... and returns value....**
- 9 **Incorrect Pronoun**  
The pronoun '*it*' refers back to a singular noun. The pronoun '*this*' refers back to a singular situation or event – **do this by working.**
- 10 **Missing Preposition (phrasal verb)**  
The verb '*rely*' is always followed by the preposition '*on*'. It is a phrasal verb – **rely on your dedication...**

Correct these Errors

- X 1 I would like you to talk to Mr Wang and <sup>offer<sup>s</sup></sup> offering him a better discount.
- X 2 As soon as we have received your completed application form, we would process it.
- X 3 I hope to arranging a meeting with Paul Smith while I'm on business in London.
- X 4 Don't worry! I'll have it finished by Monday. You can rely me.
- X 5 There are a number of employees who has been consistently coming late to work.
- X 6 We will possible hire some extra sales staff over the next few weeks.
- X 7 It has been noted that certain staff are leaving work early. On no account can it be tolerated!
- X 8 I think we can lower our prices by 20%. Although, we can't give the same credit terms.
- X 9 We may do the work, but it will take much longer than we had expected.
- X 10 How many employee have subscribed to The Language Key in your company?