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# TiDbits on writing<sup>®</sup>

## TD Grammar Challenge<sup>TM</sup> Explained

### LETTER FROM TDCG

**T**aking the *TD Grammar Challenge<sup>TM</sup>* sure lived up to its name for many of our readers!

**D**idn't do as well as you'd hoped? Well, this quick guide will help you understand the "why" behind the answers to our 10-question grammar review. You can learn more about writing excellence in our popular *Dynamic Writing 1<sup>®</sup>* and *Dynamic Writing 2<sup>®</sup>* programs. Please visit our website at [www.tdgroupusa.com](http://www.tdgroupusa.com) if you'd like to bring us into your organization. And be sure to sign up for our e-mail series, *TiDbits on Writing<sup>®</sup>* — it's yours for the asking!

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All correct answers to our 10-Question Grammar Review are in blue.

1. a. Whom shall I say is speaking at the graduation?  
b. **Who shall I say is speaking at the graduation?**  
Here's the trick. Change the question to a statement: *I shall say [who or whom] is speaking.* Substitute a pronoun for who and whom: *I shall say [he or him] is speaking.* The correct answer is *I shall say he is speaking,* so choice (b) – **who** – is correct.
2. a. More importantly, the medicine got to the people who needed it.  
b. **More important, the medicine got to the people who needed it.**  
Just remember that "more important" is really shorthand for the phrase "*what is more important.*" (Because you would never say "*what is more importantly,*" don't fall into the trap of saying "*more importantly.*")
3. a. **A bunch of crayons sits on the table.**  
b. A bunch of crayons sit on the table.  
The subject of this sentence is the singular word "bunch." *Bunch* is a collective noun – meaning, a group of individuals functioning as one (like the word "team"). Because *bunch* is singular, it needs the singular verb – *sits*. Don't be fooled by the plural word "crayons." In this sentence, it is known as the *object of the preposition* because it comes after the word "of" (a preposition). Verbs do not agree with objects of the preposition; *they agree with subjects.*
4. a. **I object to your making those remarks.**  
b. I object to you making those remarks.  
"Making" is a gerund – a noun formed by adding *-ing* to a verb. Gerunds always require a possessive pronoun (*my, his, her, your, our, their*).

5. a. Neither Road Runner nor Wile E. Coyote enjoy a moment's rest!

**b. Neither Road Runner nor Wile E. Coyote enjoys a moment's rest!**

When using “*either . . . or*” and “*neither . . . nor*,” make sure the verb agrees with the subject that is closer to it. Wile E. Coyote is singular so use the singular form of the verb: *Wile E. Coyote enjoys*.

6. a. Each violinist will play their own composition.

**b. Each violinist will play his own composition.**

**c. Each violinist will play his or her own composition.**

The word “each” is singular and, therefore, the pronoun that refers to it later in the sentence must also be singular. In this case, both (b) and (c) – “his” and “his or her” – are correct. One way to avoid the cumbersome “his or her” structure is to make the subject, pronoun, and object plural: *The violinists will play their own compositions*.

7. **a. Please keep this information between you and me.**

b. Please keep this information between you and I.

“Between” is a preposition. (It’s a good idea to get a list of these so you recognize them!) Prepositions are always followed by objective pronouns: *me, you, him, her, us, them*.

8. **a. Abigail was different from the other girls.**

b. Abigail was different than the other girls.

The correct usage is “different *from*.” That’s all you need to know. (Do not confuse *different from* with other comparisons such as *larger than* and *older than*.)

9. a. Hopefully, the report will explain our findings.

**b. We hope the report will explain our findings.**

*Hopefully* is an adverb that means “in a hopeful way.” Because adverbs modify verbs, the only possible verb that *hopefully* could modify in this sentence is *will explain*. Sentence (a) reads as if we mean: *The report will explain in a hopeful way our findings*. But that makes no sense. That’s not what we mean. Our intention is to say: *We hope the report will explain our findings*. “*Hopefully*” does not mean the same thing as “*we hope*.”

10. a. There were less than 10 people at the meeting.

**b. There were fewer than 10 people at the meeting.**

Generally, *fewer* is used when the amount can actually be counted (fewer children, fewer houses) and *less* is used when the amount cannot (less sugar, less sand).