

## Recognizing Common Errors in Usage

The following exercise is intended to make you sensitive to the most common usage errors made by engineers and scientists in their writing. Explanations of these errors can be found in Appendix B of *The Craft of Scientific Writing*.

Circle the correct choice.

- 1) We produced a small (amount / number) of automobiles this year, even (fewer / less) than last year.
- 2) The serum, which was (composed / comprised) of two antigens, had serious side (affects / effects).
- 3) Every 250 years, Pluto completes (its / it's) orbit about the sun.
- 4) The talk centered (around / on) the (principal / principle) of virtual work.
- 5) This report discusses how the eruption (affected / effected) the surrounding terrain.
- 6) Reduced weight was the (principal / principle) reason for choosing aluminum.
- 7) All the bombings involved explosives (that / , which) contained the chemicals PETN and RDX.
- 8) All the bombings involved Semtex (that / , which) contains the chemicals PETN and RDX.
- 9) In the past three months, a new series of low-priced computers (has / have) been released.
- 10) When you receive my ( boss' / boss's ) memo, please respond quickly.
- 11) Following those descriptions, the criteria for assessing each system (are / is) given.
- 12) Our experiment had (3 / three) transducers.
- 13) The velocity was (3 / three) m/s.
- 14) (54 / Fifty-four) sets of data were taken in all.
- 15) Last year, Japan (lead / led) the world in automobile sales.
- 16) Over the past three weeks, our team made (continual / continuous) improvements to the design.
- 17) Thank you for the job offer. I am (anxious, eager) to begin work next month.
- 18) When a photon in that energy range strikes the atom, the atom (looses / loses) one of its outer electrons.
- 19) The airfield looked much (as / like) it did when the Hindenburg exploded almost fifty years ago.
- 20) (Hopefully, / It is hoped that) the antibodies will destroy the cancer cells.
- 21) We then sent the broken part to John Brooks, (who, whom) the laser group had recommended.
- 22) Neither the engineers (nor, or) the technicians were hurt in the blaze.
- 23) To treat a bite from the puff adder, select the anti-venom serum (, which counteracts the adder's poison. / that counteracts the adder's poison.)
- 24) During the past decade, our division has made (continuous, continual) improvements to the automobile's exhaust system.
- 25) Using geothermal energy does not pollute the environment (as, like) the burning of fossil fuels does.
- 26) The new material is (composed, comprised) of plastic and iodine.
- 27) From the den, the male wolf ventured much (farther, further) than the female.
- 28) John is (adverse, averse) to that type of solution.
- 29) The truss had spans of 210 feet and was (more than, over) 20 feet deep.
- 30) The values of the transfer coefficients were lowered (because of, due to) outgassing.
- 31) The (enormity, enormousness) of the solar receiver's tower surprised the visiting officials.
- 32) Compared (to, with) molten salt, liquid sodium is a much more dangerous heat transfer fluid.
- 33) The turbulence values of that report were different (from, than) the results of ours.
- 34) The new antidote made the patients feel (nauseated, nauseous).
- 35) Thank you for the job offer. I am (anxious, eager) to begin work next month.
- 36) The fourth design option was (rather unique, unique, very unique).
- 37) Chicken is (healthful, healthy) to eat.