

# UK 11+ Exam SPaG Quick-Fix Guide: Top 10 GL Error Types

*Master the most common spelling, punctuation and grammar mistakes tested in GL Assessment 11+ examinations*

## Introduction

The GL Assessment 11+ English paper tests SPaG (Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar) through two main question types: **"Spot the Mistake"** and **"Complete the Sentence"**. This guide focuses on the ten most frequently tested error types, providing instant recognition techniques and quick-fix strategies to maximise your exam performance.

Each section includes common examples, identification tips, and practice exercises in both GL Assessment question formats. Regular practice with these error types will build your confidence and speed during the actual examination.

### Error Type 1: Apostrophe Confusion

**What it is:** Incorrect use of apostrophes for possession, contractions, or plurals.

#### Common Mistakes:

✗ The dog's are playing in the garden.  
✓ The dogs are playing in the garden.

✗ Its a beautiful day outside.  
✓ It's a beautiful day outside.

✗ The childrens toys were scattered.  
✓ The children's toys were scattered.

**Quick Fix:** Remember: apostrophes show possession (Sarah's book) or contractions (can't = cannot). Never use apostrophes for plurals (cats, not cat's).

#### Spot the Mistake Exercise:

1. The teacher's said the student's had done well on their test's.
2. It's important to keep you're pencil's sharp during exam's.

3. The boy's mother bought new book's for the library.

## Error Type 2: Homophones Confusion

**What it is:** Mixing up words that sound the same but have different meanings and spellings.

### Most Common Pairs:

Word	Meaning	Example
their/there/they're	possession/place/they are	Their house is there; they're coming
your/you're	possession/you are	Your book; you're clever
to/too/two	direction/also/number	Go to school; me too; two apples
its/it's	possession/it is	The dog wagged its tail; it's raining

**Quick Fix:** Substitute the full form. If "you're" makes sense as "you are," use the apostrophe. If not, use "your."

### Complete the Sentence Exercise:

- \_\_\_\_\_ going to visit \_\_\_\_\_ grandparents over \_\_\_\_\_.
- The cat was licking \_\_\_\_\_ paws because \_\_\_\_\_ been outside.
- \_\_\_\_\_ books are on the table; \_\_\_\_\_ ready for school.

## Error Type 3: Speech Marks Punctuation

**What it is:** Incorrect punctuation of direct speech, including missing speech marks, wrong comma placement, or incorrect capital letters.

### Direct Speech Rules:

- Speech marks go around the actual words spoken
- New speaker = new line
- Comma before speech marks when introducing speech

- Punctuation inside speech marks
- Capital letter to start speech

✗ Sarah said I'm going to the shop.

✓ Sarah said, "I'm going to the shop."

✗ "where are you going." asked Tom.

✓ "Where are you going?" asked Tom.

**Quick Fix:** Look for spoken words and check they're surrounded by speech marks. Check for comma before opening speech marks and capital letter after opening speech marks.

#### Spot the Mistake Exercise:

1. The teacher announced today we will have a test.
2. "when is lunch? asked the hungry student.
3. Mum shouted, "dinner is ready!

## Error Type 4: Capital Letter Mistakes

**What it is:** Missing capital letters at the start of sentences, proper nouns, or the pronoun "I".

#### Capital Letters Are Needed For:

- Start of sentences
- Proper nouns (names of people, places, organisations)
- Days of the week and months
- The pronoun "I"
- Titles (Mr, Mrs, Dr)
- Beginning of direct speech

✗ last tuesday, i went to london with sarah.

✓ Last Tuesday, I went to London with Sarah.

**Quick Fix:** Scan for names, places, days, months, and sentence beginnings. The word "I" should always be capital.

#### Complete the Sentence Exercise:

1. next \_\_\_\_\_ i will visit \_\_\_\_\_ to see the \_\_\_\_\_ museum.

2. \_\_\_\_\_ smith told us that \_\_\_\_\_ would be visiting \_\_\_\_\_ in \_\_\_\_\_.

## Error Type 5: Subject-Verb Disagreement

**What it is:** Singular subjects with plural verbs, or plural subjects with singular verbs.

### Rules:

- Singular subjects need singular verbs
- Plural subjects need plural verbs
- Watch out for collective nouns
- Be careful with "there is/are"

✗ The dogs runs in the park.

✓ The dogs run in the park.

✗ There is many books on the shelf.

✓ There are many books on the shelf.

**Quick Fix:** Identify the subject and check if it's singular or plural. Make sure the verb agrees.

### Spot the Mistake Exercise:

1. The group of students were walking to school.
2. Each of the boys have finished their homework.
3. The teacher, along with her students, are going on a trip.

## Error Type 6: Comma Splice Errors

**What it is:** Joining two complete sentences with only a comma instead of proper punctuation.

✗ The weather was lovely, we decided to go for a walk.

✓ The weather was lovely, so we decided to go for a walk.

✓ The weather was lovely. We decided to go for a walk.

### Solutions:

- Add a conjunction (and, but, so, because)
- Use a full stop to separate sentences
- Use a semicolon (advanced)

**Quick Fix:** If you can put a full stop where there's a comma and both parts make sense alone, you have a comma splice.

### Complete the Sentence Exercise:

1. It was raining heavily, \_\_\_\_\_ we stayed inside.
2. The book was interesting, \_\_\_\_\_ it was quite long.

## Error Type 7: Run-on Sentences

**What it is:** Sentences that continue without proper punctuation, making them difficult to understand.

✗ The dog ran across the field and jumped over the fence and then ran towards the house where his owner was waiting.

✓ The dog ran across the field and jumped over the fence. Then he ran towards the house where his owner was waiting.

**Quick Fix:** Break long sentences into shorter ones. Use full stops to separate different ideas.

### Spot the Mistake Exercise:

1. The children played in the garden and then they had lunch and after that they watched television and finally they went to bed.

## Error Type 8: Incorrect Tense Usage

**What it is:** Switching between past, present, and future tenses inconsistently within a sentence or paragraph.

✗ **Yesterday I walk to school and will meet my friend.**

✓ **Yesterday I walked to school and met my friend.**

**Quick Fix:** Check time indicators (yesterday, now, tomorrow) and ensure verbs match. Stay consistent within paragraphs.

### Complete the Sentence Exercise:

1. Last week, Sarah \_\_\_\_\_ to the library and \_\_\_\_\_ three books.
2. Tomorrow, we \_\_\_\_\_ to the museum and \_\_\_\_\_ the dinosaur exhibition.

## Error Type 9: Plurals vs Possessives

**What it is:** Confusing plural forms with possessive forms, often involving apostrophes.

### Rules:

- Plurals: add -s or -es (cats, boxes)
- Possessives: add apostrophe + s (cat's toy)
- Plural possessives: add s + apostrophe (cats' toys)

✗ **The teacher's are marking the student's work.**

✓ **The teachers are marking the students' work.**

**Quick Fix:** If you mean "more than one," use -s. If you mean "belonging to," use apostrophe + s.

### Spot the Mistake Exercise:

1. The boy's played with their friend's toy's in the garden.
2. Three girl's shared the teacher's book's during the lesson.

## Error Type 10: Missing Punctuation

**What it is:** Sentences without proper ending punctuation, missing commas in lists, or absent question marks.

### Common Missing Punctuation:

- Full stops at sentence ends
- Question marks after questions
- Commas in lists
- Commas after fronted adverbials

✗ After the rain stopped we went outside

✓ After the rain stopped, we went outside.

✗ I bought apples oranges and bananas

✓ I bought apples, oranges and bananas.

**Quick Fix:** Every sentence needs ending punctuation. Questions need question marks.  
Lists need commas.

### Complete the Sentence Exercise:

1. Where are you going\_\_\_\_
2. In the morning\_\_\_\_ I always have breakfast\_\_\_\_ brush my teeth\_\_\_\_ and get dressed\_\_\_\_

## Quick Reference Checklist

### Before submitting your answer, check:

- ✓ Apostrophes used correctly (not for plurals)
- ✓ Homophones spelled correctly
- ✓ Speech marks around spoken words
- ✓ Capital letters for proper nouns and sentence starts
- ✓ Subject and verb agree
- ✓ No comma splices (joining sentences with just commas)
- ✓ Sentences aren't too long and rambling

- ✓ Consistent tense throughout
- ✓ Plurals and possessives used correctly
- ✓ All sentences have proper punctuation

## Final Exam Tips

- **Read carefully:** In "spot the mistake" questions, read each sentence slowly and systematically.
- **Check each answer choice:** Don't pick the first answer that looks right in multiple choice questions.
- **Use elimination:** Cross out obviously wrong answers first.
- **Trust your instincts:** If something sounds wrong when you read it aloud in your head, it probably is.
- **Manage your time:** Don't spend too long on one question. Move on and come back if needed.

**Remember:** These ten error types account for approximately 80% of all SPaG mistakes tested in GL Assessment 11+ examinations. Master these, and you'll significantly improve your performance in the English paper.