**Grammar: Post-Class Activities**

In these post-class activities you will gain further practice applying some of the most important grammar-based concepts to improve pieces of writing, before demonstrating your ability in these concepts by writing two/three paragraphs to showcase your skills.

**Controlling Shifts in Tense**

You should remember the importance of establishing a primary tense in any piece of writing and then trying to make sure you do not shift to other tenses more frequently than you need to. However, there are occasions when you need to shift to other tenses when there is a change in time frame from one element of a sentence to another. In most cases you should revert to writing in the same tense that you are using as the primary one in your piece of writing as soon as you have dealt with the necessary change in time frame.

**Question 1 (8 marks)**

Read the five sentences below and first decide whether the shift in tense in each is necessary or not (1 mark each). In all cases, assume the primary tense has already been established, and that it is indicated by the first verb, which appears in blue.

Then, for the sentences that feature unnecessary shifts in tense, provide a re-written version that reverts to the primary tense indicated by the blue verb (1 mark each).

A: Our instructors indicated the solutions before the students question their graded homework.

B: Before they absorbed the information, many had decided they were treated unfairly.

C: The Physics Society (PS) is voting in a new chairperson because the former representative proved to be unreliable.

D: The last incumbent wanted to establish a new working group but the majority of members feel differently.

E: Someone from the PS needs to liaise with the affected students and instructors soon as both groups will want to conclude the matter as soon as possible, with an upcoming investigation on the cards.

**The Definite and Indefinite Articles**

Remember from the in-class activities that you should use the definite article ***the*** to refer to something when you are referring to something specific (or ***definite***). In contrast, you should use the indefinite articles ***a*** or ***an*** to refer to something non-specific (or ***indefinite***). Also recall that you should not use an article at all if its omission from a sentence makes no difference to the meaning.

Also remember the handy hint that you should speak a word before deciding whether to use ***a*** or ***an*** when an indefinite article is required. It is the sound – not the letter – that is important, with consonant sounds requiring ***a*** and vowel sounds requiring ***an***. This is why you should refer to ***“a hippo”*** in your writing, but if this hippo was particularly honourable, you should refer to him as ***“an honourable hippo.”***

**Question 2 (4 marks)**

Read the four sentences below, in which the definite/indefinite articles are highlighted in red. For each sentence, you must state whether the use is appropriate, and briefly justify why/why not (1 mark each).

A: My friend worked for the NASA for just over four years.

B: He wanted to board the space shuttle while it was on the ground and inactive.

C: He now works as an astrophysicist at a university in Ireland.

D: He has, however, applied to fly to Mars as part of an historic mission that aims to take people there by 2025.

**Putting It All Together**

**Question 3 (8 marks)**

To conclude this set of post-class activities, you will need to demonstrate your skills applying the basic rules of grammar you have learned to a short piece of your own writing. You will need to pay attention to: (1) the tense you use, shifting it only when necessary; (2) making sure your subjects and verbs agree; (3) writing in parallel form, and (4) using the definite and indefinite articles appropriately.

To do this, you must write a short piece on any topic of science that you are interested in. This does not need to be long (200 words is fine) as long as you do the following:

1. Choose a primary tense and state this before you begin your writing
2. Include at least one sentence that incorporates a necessary shift in tense
3. Include at least one list of examples to indicate your skills in writing in parallel form