

Recognizing and Improving Non-Standard English

Name: _____

Date: _____

Score: _____ / 10



Quick Review

Non-standard English is fine in casual speech or dialogue, but formal writing (essays, reports, tests) requires STANDARD English. Common non-standard forms to flag and fix: 'we was/you was' → 'we were/you were'; 'he don't' → 'he doesn't'; 'I seen' → 'I saw' or 'I have seen'; 'could of/should of' → 'could have/should have'; double negatives ('don't know nothing') → single negative ('don't know anything'); 'me and him went' → 'he and I went'.

PRACTICE

Choose the correct answer for each question.

- Which sentence is written in STANDARD English?
 - We was walking to the library when the rain started pouring.
 - We were walking to the library when the rain start pouring.
 - We were walking to the library when the rain started pouring.
 - Us was walking to the library when the rain started pouring.
- Which is the STANDARD English revision of this sentence? 'He don't never bring his homework to class on Mondays.'
 - He doesn't ever bring his homework to class on Mondays.
 - He don't ever bring his homework to class on Mondays.
 - He doesn't never bring his homework to class on Mondays.
 - He never don't bring his homework to class on Mondays.
- Which sentence uses the past tense of 'see' correctly in standard English?
 - I seen that movie three times already this summer.
 - I seen that movie when it came out last June.
 - I have saw that movie three times already this summer.
 - I have seen that movie three times already this summer.
- Which sentence is in STANDARD English?
 - Me and my cousin builds model airplanes every weekend.
 - My cousin and I build model airplanes every weekend.
 - My cousin and me builds model airplanes every weekend.
 - My cousin and I builds model airplanes every weekend.



5. Which is the standard-English fix for this sentence? 'You should of told the coach you was sick yesterday.'
- A. You should of told the coach you were sick yesterday.
 - B. You should have told the coach you was sick yesterday.
 - C. You should have told the coach you were sick yesterday.
 - D. You should had told the coach you were sick yesterday.
6. In which context is non-standard English MOST appropriate?
- A. A character's dialogue in a realistic short story showing how the character actually speaks.
 - B. A formal book report submitted for a final grade.
 - C. A research essay on climate change for the school newspaper.
 - D. A cover letter applying for a volunteer position at the library.
7. Which sentence contains a DOUBLE NEGATIVE?
- A. We hardly ever go to the beach in the winter months.
 - B. I never want to taste that strange soup again.
 - C. The team didn't lose a single game all season.
 - D. There wasn't no milk left in the fridge this morning.
8. Which is the BEST standard-English revision? 'Them cookies what Grandma baked is on the counter.'
- A. Them cookies that Grandma baked are on the counter.
 - B. Those cookies that Grandma baked are on the counter.
 - C. Those cookies what Grandma baked is on the counter.
 - D. Them cookies that Grandma baked is on the counter.
9. Which sentence is in STANDARD English?
- A. Aiden don't want to go to the science museum on Saturday.
 - B. Aiden don't wants to go to the science museum on Saturday.
 - C. Aiden doesn't want to go to the science museum on Saturday.
 - D. Aiden doesn't wants to go to the science museum on Saturday.
10. Rewrite the following sentence in STANDARD English. Fix every non-standard form you find: 'Me and him don't never go nowhere without asking our mom first.'



Answer Keys

- 1 A B C D
- 2 A B C D
- 3 A B C D
- 4 A B C D
- 5 A B C D

- 6 A B C D
- 7 A B C D
- 8 A B C D
- 9 A B C D
- 10

Explanations

1. C	Standard English uses 'were' with the plural subject 'we'. C is correct. A uses non-standard 'we was' (singular verb with plural subject). B fixes 'were' but breaks the second verb ('rain start' should be 'started'). D uses objective 'us' as a subject AND keeps 'was'.
2. A	Two errors to fix: (1) 'He don't' → 'He doesn't' (third-person singular). (2) 'don't never' is a double negative → use one negative ('doesn't ever' or 'never'). A fixes both. B keeps 'don't' with 'he'. C keeps the double negative. D rearranges but still has 'never don't'.
3. D	Standard forms of 'see' are: present 'see', past 'saw', past participle 'seen' (used with have/has/had). D uses 'have seen' correctly. A and B use non-standard 'I seen' (participle without a helping verb). C uses 'have saw' (past tense after a helping verb).
4. B	Two checks: (1) Pronoun case — both are subjects → 'My cousin and I'. (2) Subject-verb agreement — plural subject takes 'build' (no -s). B has both. A uses 'me' as a subject AND singular 'builds'. C uses 'me' as a subject. D uses singular 'builds' with a plural subject.
5. C	Two errors: (1) 'should of' is a mishearing of 'should've' = 'should have'. (2) 'you was' → 'you were'. C fixes both. A fixes only the second error. B fixes only the first. D uses non-standard 'should had' (should have + past participle, not 'had').
6. A	Dialogue should sound like real speech — non-standard forms can reveal character, region, or background. A is appropriate. B, C, and D are all formal writing tasks where standard English is required.
7. D	D uses two negatives ('wasn't' + 'no') for one negative idea — a double negative. Standard fix: 'There wasn't any milk' or 'There was no milk'. A uses 'hardly' (one negative idea). B uses 'never' (one). C uses 'didn't' + 'a single' — 'a single' is not a negative word.
8. B	Three errors to fix: (1) 'Them cookies' → 'Those cookies' (demonstrative). (2) 'what' as a relative pronoun → 'that'. (3) 'is' with plural 'cookies' → 'are'. B fixes all three. A keeps 'them'. C keeps 'what' and 'is'. D keeps 'them' and 'is'.
9. C	With a third-person singular subject ('Aiden'), the helper 'doesn't' takes the BASE form of the main verb: 'doesn't want'. C is correct. A uses 'don't' with a singular subject. B is doubly wrong (don't + wants). D adds an -s to 'want' after 'doesn't'.
10.	Answer: He and I never go anywhere without asking our mom first. (Or: He and I do not go anywhere without asking our mom first.) Four errors to fix: (1) 'Me and him' → 'He and I' (subjective case, and 'I' goes last). (2) 'don't never' is a double negative → 'never' or 'do not...anywhere'. (3) 'go nowhere' is the second half of the double negative → 'go anywhere'. (4) Verb form must agree with the plural subject. Accept any revision that fixes all four issues. Mark wrong if any non-standard form remains (double negative, 'me and him' as subject, 'nowhere' with 'don't').



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