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## ENGLISH AS IT IS BROKEN

Not sure what is good English and what is not? Write to The Sunday Times and we will get language experts to answer your queries. This is the start of a new series in support of the Speak Good English Movement.

### Drink or drinks?

THE debut of English As It Is Broken last week took off as we hoped it would — stirring controversy and generating much feedback. Many readers came back to us with questions and suggestions.

"The choice of 'food and drinks' for the coffee shop sign 'Outside Foods and Drinks are not allowed to be consumed in this premises' drew quite a few responses. Some thought it should have been 'food and drink'."

The master teachers say they would accept 'food and drink' as another possibility too.

They say: "We do say 'a few drinks' but not 'a few foods'. The singular form of 'food' is more commonly used in everyday speech. 'Foods' is used only when we want to point out different types of food."

"On the other hand, we do use the countable form of the word, 'drink', quite frequently in everyday speech. So we chose 'drinks' over 'drink'. It sounds more natural in daily speech."

ROOM  
IN ALL AREAS

急征:  
需要整间房屋或房间出租, 欢迎房客及屋主来电  
097715 0333

Having problem renting out your room / whole unit or looking for a room / whole unit? Kindly leave your problem to us by calling  
Mr. Lim at 97715 0333

For fast and reliable result with no time wasting  
We have a lot of ready owner & tenants waiting, so why still waiting, call us now with fast result.

### Familiar with this notice?

This ad has many glaring errors.

First of all, the heading should read "Rooms in all areas". The plural form of "room" has to be used since the reference is to "all areas".

We would also make the following changes:

- ▶ "Having problem renting out..." is incorrect. You could say "Having problems renting out...?"
- ▶ The advertiser appears to be targeting his ad at two groups of people: those who wish to rent out one of their rooms or an entire unit and those who wish to rent a room or an entire unit.
- For clarity, it is better to put the two ideas in two separate sentences.
- ▶ "Kindly leave..." "Kindly" is rather formal. A simple "Please" would do.
- ▶ "Kindly leave your problem to us..." is incorrect. You could say "Let us solve your problems."
- ▶ "For fast and reliable result..." is wrong. It should be: "For quick and reliable results"
- ▶ "with no time wasting" is phrased wrongly. It should be: "with no time wasted"
- ▶ "why still waiting" is also incorrect. It should be: "What are you waiting for?"

A clearer sign would be:

"Having problems renting out one of your rooms, or the whole unit? Looking for a room or a whole unit? Let us solve your problems. Just call Mr Lim at xxxxxxx for quick and reliable solutions. We have a ready pool of owners and potential tenants. Don't hesitate. Call us now!"

If you spot a sign with bad English, send an MMS to 75557 or e-mail 75557@stomp.com.sg

### HOW TO SEND IN YOUR QUERIES

Please use the keyword  
<english> SMS/MMS: 75557  
Email: 75557@stomp.com.sg



OUR LANGUAGE EXPERTS are (left to right): Mrs Joy Lee, Mrs Regina Davamoni, Ms Connie Seng and Mrs Jyalyaxmy Ayaduray. All four are master teachers in English language — experts who help teachers develop good teaching practices and programmes.