

## The *Instructions of Shurruapak* (2600 BCE)

[The *Instructions of Shurruapak* are words of wisdom given by Shurruapak to his son Ziusudra.]



A long time ago, Ziusudra was given instructions by his wise father Shurruapak, who was the son of Ubara-Tutu.<sup>1</sup> Shurruapak said, “Ziusudra, my son! Let me give you instructions, and you should pay close attention! Do not neglect my instructions! Do not disregard my advice! The instructions of an old man are precious, and you should obey them!”

- Don’t construct a well in your field, because people will trample on your field if you do so.
- Don’t build your house next to a plaza, for there always will be a crowd gathering there.
- Don’t steal, because a thief is like a lion: once he has been caught, he becomes a prisoner.
- Don’t eat stolen food.
- Don’t start a fight, and don’t take part in an ongoing fight.
- Don’t misspeak, because it will come back to haunt you.
  - If you want people to trust your word, then don’t brag/boast, because bragging/boasting makes people suspect trickery. Alas, you cannot increase your possessions using only your mouth!
  - Don’t curse, because it will come back to haunt you.
  - Insults give advice to the wicked.
  - Arrogance is like an herb that sickens the stomach.
- By grasping the neck of a huge ox, you can cross the river.
- When it is about someone's else bread, it is very easy to say, “I will give you their bread,” but the time of actual giving might be as far away as the sky. Indeed, if you go after the man who said, “I will give you their bread,” he’ll say, “I cannot give you their bread, because all of their bread has just been eaten. Sorry!”
- Nothing at all is to be valued, but life should be sweet.  
You should not serve things. Instead, things should serve you.
- A loving heart maintains a family; a hateful heart destroys a family.
  - Don’t speak harshly toward your mother, because you’ll be *hated*.
  - Don’t question the words of your mother, because your mother gave birth to you.
  - Don’t question the words of your personal god, because your personal god decided that you would be born.
  - Obey your father’s instructions, because his words are *trustworthy*, and they can make you *wise*.
- As bad as it is for a dog to get lost, it’s even worse for a man.

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<sup>1</sup> To be clear, Ziusudra was Shurruapak’s son, and Shurruapak was Ubara-Tutu’s son, so Ziusudra was Ubara-Tutu’s grandson. In other words, Ubara-Tutu was Shurruapak’s father, and Shurruapak was Ziusudra’s father, so Ubara-Tutu was Ziusudra’s grandfather.

## Questions about the *Instructions of Shurruk*.

Answer the following 15 questions.

1. Consider how Shurruk said, "Do not start a fight." Using a personal pronoun followed by a modal auxiliary verb (such as "should", "ought", "may", or "must"), rephrase what he said. Accordingly, rephrase his *imperative* sentence as a *declarative* sentence.

Albeit not always, Shurruk *often* supported his advice with an *explanation* for his advice. For questions 2 through 6, consider how Shurruk said, "Don't curse, because it will come back to haunt you." One of the two sentences is his *advice*, and the other one of the two sentences is his *explanation* for his advice.

2. Which one of the two sentences is his *advice*?  
(A) "Don't curse."  
(B) "It will come back to haunt you."
3. Which one of the two sentences is his *explanation* for his advice?  
(A) "Don't curse."  
(B) "It will come back to haunt you."
4. What key word introduces his *explanation* for his advice? (Hint: It is a *conjunction*.)
5. What kind of sentence is his *advice*?  
(A) Declarative Sentence  
(B) Imperative Sentence
6. What kind of sentence is his *explanation* for his advice?  
(A) Declarative Sentence  
(B) Imperative Sentence

Sometimes, Shurrukpa's words of wisdom did not state both the instructions & the explanation together. In some cases, he stated only the *instructions*. In other cases, he stated only the *explanation* for the instruction. For questions 7 through 10, only questions 7 and 9 will be graded on the basis of accuracy. Questions 8 and 10 will be graded on the basis of how thoughtful your short-answer responses are.

7. Consider how Shurrukpa said, "Insults give advice to the wicked." Which was he stating?
  - (A) only his *instructions*
  - (B) only his *explanation* for his instructions
8. If you selected (A), then what might have been his *explanation* for his instructions?  
If you selected (B), then what might have been his *instructions*?
9. Consider how Shurrukpa said, "Don't eat stolen food." Which was he stating?
  - (A) only his *instructions*
  - (B) only his *explanation* for his instructions
10. If you selected (A), then what might have been his *explanation* for his instructions?  
If you selected (B), then what might have been his *instructions*?

For the remaining 10 questions, there is no *one* correct answer. Accordingly, you will *not* be graded on the basis of *accuracy*. Yet, your answer to each question should be thoughtful, so you will be graded on the basis of how *thoughtful* your explanations are.

11. Discouraging bragging or boasting, Shurrukpa said, "If you want people to trust your word, then don't brag or boast, because bragging or boasting makes people suspect dishonesty. You cannot increase your possessions using only your mouth!"  
Why might bragging or boasting make people suspect dishonesty?

12. Shurrukpa said, "By grasping the neck of a huge ox, you can cross the river."  
Explain his metaphor for how to reach some goal. What was he encouraging? What might *crossing the river* symbolize? What (or whom) might the ox symbolize?
13. Shurrukpa said, "Arrogance is like an herb that sickens the stomach." What advice was he suggesting about being arrogant? What instructions was he implying? (Hint: Try to express your answer as an imperative sentence ending with "...be arrogant".)
14. Shurrukpa said, "When it is about someone's else bread, it is very easy to say, 'I will give you their bread,' but the time of actual giving might be as far away as the sky. Indeed, if you go after the man who said, 'I will give you their bread,' he'll say, 'I cannot give you their bread, because all of their bread has just been eaten. Sorry!'" According to Shurrukpa, should you trust someone who promises to give you something that isn't theirs? Why or why not? Explain.
15. Consider the following two sentences: "don't steal" and "you ought not to steal". Obviously, the two sentences differ *grammatically*. On the one hand, "don't steal" is an imperative sentence. On the other hand, "you ought not to steal" is a declarative sentence. Yet, is there a *real* difference between the two sentences? (In other words, is there a *non*-grammatical difference between the two sentences?) *Why* or *why not*? Explain. If there *is* a real difference between the two sentences, *what* is that difference? Explain.